Comparative Issues in Human Rights
HMRT 3500 (4 Credits)

International Honors Program (IHP)
Human Rights: Movements, Power, and Resistance

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

> …*it takes a lot of things to change the world:*
> *Anger and tenacity. Science and indignation,*
> *The quick initiative, the long reflection,*
> *The cold patience and the infinite perseverance,*
> *The understanding of the particular case and the understanding of the ensemble:*
> *Only the lesson of reality can teach us to transform reality*
> *Bertolt Brecht*

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to provide a broad (conceptual / historical) framework of analysis that will allow us to make sense of human rights promises and limitations within and between the countries we will visit. The ideal of human rights is the establishment of a series of basic rules -promoted and enforced by national and international institutions- that would ensure the welfare and dignity of every individual in the ways they are treated and their abilities to live a 'good life'. However, as Mamdani (2020) argues, the practice of human rights has been reduced to a juridical [and reactive] framework that depoliticize violence and focuses on individual perpetrators who violated human rights rules, instead of framing those violation in a political framework that explains how/why certain practices that generate human rights 'limitations' become permissible or even justifiable. Recognizing human rights as an international normative framework with the expectation that they will become enacted through everyday practice, the course engages students in both a systemic level of analysis and a personal exploration of what it means to be immersed in the logic and practices of injustice, to advocate for and embody human rights today. In this course we will ask questions that push us to consider different vantage points and perspectives, destabilizing accepted narratives and welcoming a multiplicity of perspectives. Issues related to human dignity, coloniality, the rationality of modernity, the geopolitics of conflict, and the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism (and their implications in power relations) will be of particular importance.

In this course we will attempt to locate the human rights frameworks of analysis and political practices in the context of three interconnected (historical/material) dimensions: <u>power, people,</u>

and place/territory. The 'power' dimension aims to account for the historical forces shaped unequal material conditions, but also the logic by which we justify practices and naturalize outcomes. It is in this context that the ideals of human rights have been in constant tension with legacies of coloniality, modernity and capital flows. While the power dimension invites us to interrogate broad historical forces, the 'people' dimension forces us to look at the differences between actors (class, race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) that are constitutive of how power relations are lived. This dimension will raise questions about the naturalization of social hierarchies, and the multiple and conflicting subjectivities it implies. Lastly, the 'place/territories' dimension makes reference to the specificities that marks how people live with and engage with interconnected fields of power. In short, this triad will allow us to critically engage with human rights as sets of ideals, institutional practices and struggles embedded in a long history of systems of oppression, discrimination and exploitation.

Course Methodology

The course will use a combination of short lecture presentations, seminar discussions, and individual reading activities. The intention is to create a learning community where students actively contribute ideas and questions, and everyone helps and challenges everyone else to learn. The readings are designed as a springboard to frame in-class discussions about what we experience in a particular city. The course aims to make the most of the richness and variety of the classroom and experiential learning opportunities.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- To **build an analytical framework** in order to discuss how intellectual current of analysis that become a political project, and how political projects that become common sense have material implications in the spatial/social organization of societies --or the normative ideals of what societies should be and do.
- To **engage with the framework of power, people and places/territories** through discussion, dialogue, and observation in reflective and substantive ways, towards effectively evaluating multiple, often contradictory narratives of human rights.
- To learn to critically understand how seemingly 'marginal', 'radical' or "innocuous" **practices provide powerful insights into thinking about alternative** policy/political frameworks.
- To experience, observe, start to understand, and respond to the **multi-scalar impacts and manifestations** of government policy, citizen action, and regional and global forces on the ideals and practices related to human rights.
- To develop critical assessment and analytical skills to **connect theory to practice to outcomes** in order to formulate one's own position on course-related concepts, including coloniality, development, democracy, the rationality of modernity, the geopolitics of conflict, and the hegemony of the neoliberal project.
- To **interrogate our political positionality** as we learn about the choices and challenges other actors face in their particular historical contexts. This means that while

we are learning about "others" we are aiming to draw lessons about our own social contexts.

Course Materials

Required readings will be available at the beginning of the launch of the program and upon arrival to each country. All required work is listed in the syllabus. *Students are expected to complete the required readings before each class session and to use them in fulfilling assignments.*

Assignments and Evaluation

- **Class participation** (15%) → Assessment of participation is based on the level of engagement during course activities. Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Showing up receives the minimum passing participation grade. Missing or being late to class will negatively affect your participation assessment. What qualifies as "good" participation? The short answer is intellectual engagement. This means active participation: **critically reflective** (think about what you have been experiencing), be **intellectually present** (listen to the comments of others and help in the production of a collective dialogue), and **dynamically interactive** (comments that relate to the readings and experiences).

- **Reading matrix** (20%) → Nepal, Jordan.
  IHP is an intense program. Things will move fast and information will become a blur as we move along. The reading matrix is intended as a tool to establish a strategy of systematizing the readings we will do during the semester that may be of use for your group research. For this assignment you will fill the matrix (available via USB or you can ask the professor to email it to you). It is highly recommended that you keep up with the readings in each country. You will submit the matrix at the end of each country.

- **Position papers** (30%) → Nepal, Jordan, Chile.
  The position paper will be a short (no more than one page) paper in which you take a stance in relation to the argument presented in one of the readings for a session. The basic elements of the position paper will be:

  - What is the main argument made by the author(s)?
  - Discuss the evidence presented in relation to the argument.
  - Take a position (support – critique) in relation to the argument/ evidence and explain why you take that position.

  You will write position papers during the semester (at least 1 in each country) In order to avoid everyone submitting the paper for the same session, you will submit the position paper according to your number in the group.

  You will upload the position paper in XX before 8pm the night before the session. Everyone, regardless whether you posted a position paper or not, will

read over all the other position papers prior to class. This will be the basis for the discussion and debate: the different positions in relation to the arguments presented by the authors we read, and the type of experiences (site visits, guest lectures, your own CA research, etc.) we have been having in the particular country.

- **Final exam** (35%) → Chile
  In this comprehensive exam you will address a series of questions that aim to connect what we read with what you witnessed/experience during the semester. This is one reason why the reading matrix (and the country memo – FECRM) will become important work during the semester.

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.
Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D

below 64   F

SIT Policies and Resources
Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services,](#) [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

NEPAL

Session 1: Looking back, looking at the margins, searching for the invisiblilized
The universal ideal of human rights reflects a modernist conception of 'equality under the law'. However, we will begin the journey of 'provincializing' (Chakrabarty, 2000) human rights or 'moving the center' (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1993) from which we think about human rights by interrogating those universal ideals from the perspective of coloniality. This means to pay close attention to the historical residues that informs who is (in)visible, who has voice, who deserves.

- de Sousa Santos, Boaventura. 2013. "Human rights: a fragile hegemony". In F. Crépeau and C. Sheppard (eds.) *Human Rights and Diverse Societies: Challenges and Possibilities*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Pp. 17-25.
- Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. 2017. "On the coloniality of human rights". *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*. Nº 114, Pp. 117-136.
- Kapur, Ratna. 2011. "Human rights in the 21st Century: take a walk on the dark side". In A. Singh Rathore & A. Cistelecan (eds.) *Wronging Rights? Philosophical Challenges for Human Rights*. Routledge. Pp. 23-55.

Further readings
- Mignolo, Walter. 2012. "Who speaks for the 'human' in human rights? Dispensable and bare lives". In M. Tlostanova & W. Mignolo. *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. The Ohio State University Press. Pp. 153-174.
- Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. 2007. "On the coloniality of being: contributions to the development of a concept". *Cultural Studies*. Vol. 21, Nº 2, Pp. 240-270.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 2020. *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*. Harvard University Press.

Session 2: Development: thinking about human rights from above and from within
This session has two purposes: to reflect on the type of insights we gain from looking at human rights from above (from the perspective of historical process, from broad legal and political frameworks) and from within (peoples daily lives: hopes, aspirations, etc.); and the connections between development (1949), human rights (1948) and coloniality.

- Escobar, Arturo. 1995. "Introduction: development and the anthropology of modernity". In *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press. Pp. 3-17.
- Shrestha, Nanda. 1995. "Becoming a development category". In J. Crush (ed.) *Power of Development*. Routledge. Pp. 259-270.
- Butcher, Stephanie. 2021. "Differentiated citizenship: The everyday politics of the urban poor in Kathmandu, Nepal". *International Journal or Urban and Regional Research*. Vol. 45, N° 6, Pp. 948-963

Further readings
- Paudel, Dinesh & Katharine Rankin. 2020. "Decolonizing development: An agenda for Nepal geographies". *Studies in Nepali History and Society*. Vol. 25, N° 1, Pp 209–224.
- Escobar, Arturo. 1984. "Discourse and power in development: Michel Foucault and the relevance of his work to the Third World". *Alternatives*. Vol. 10, N^o Pp. 377-400.
- Des Chene, Mary. 2007. "Is Nepal in South Asia? The condition of non-postcoloniality". *Studies in Nepali History and Society*. Vol. 12, N° 2, Pp. 207-223.
- Cooke, Bill. 2003. "A new continuity with colonial administration: Participation in development management". *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 24, N° 1, Pp. 47-61.

Session 3: Neoliberalization of human rights
The neoliberal project has become the main framework for understandings and informing practices of human rights. Premised on the principles of unfettered freedoms, market fundamentalism, and attempts to create a particular function of the state, in this session we will discuss aspects of the neoliberal project and its implications of human rights thinking and practice.

- O'Connell, Paul. 2007. "On reconciling irreconcilables: neo-liberal globalisation and human rights". *Human Rights Law Review*. Vol. 7, N° 3, Pp. 483-509.
- Paudel, Dinesh, Katharine Rankin & Philippe Le Billon. 2020. "Lucrative disaster: financialization, accumulation and post-earthquake reconstruction in Nepal". *Economic Geography*. Vol. 96, N° 2, Pp. 137-160.

Further readings
- Peck, Jamie. 2010. *Construction of Neoliberal Reason*. Oxford University Press.
- Rankin, Katharine. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Markets: Economic Liberalization and Social Change in Nepal*. Pluto Press.

- Slaughter, Joseph. 2018. "Hijacking human rights: neoliberalism, the new historiography, and the end of the Third World". *Human Rights Quarterly*. Vol. 40, Nº 4, Pp. 735–775.
- Whyte, Jessica. 2019. "Neoliberalism, human rights and the 'shabby remnants of colonial imperialism'". In *The Morals of the Market: Human Rights and the Rise of Neoliberalism*. Verso. Pp. 102-134.
- Odysseos, Louiza. 2010. "Human rights, liberal ontogenesis and freedom: producing a subject for neoliberalism?" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. Vol. 38. Nº 3, Pp. 747–772.

Session 4: Within and beyond borders: labor migration (those who leave and those who stay behind)
We live in times in which finance capital can freely move across the planet, while the vast majority of people face insurmountable obstacles and challenges to organize dignified lives. In this 'bridge' session we will focus on the interactions between borders (social, economic political, etc.) and people, and how labor mobility becomes a way of analyzing power, people and place/territories in the context of human rights.

- Mezzadra, Sandro & Brett Neilson. 2013. "Figures of labor" In *Border as Method, or, The Multiplication of Labor*. Duke University Press. Pp. 95-130.
- Pyakurel, Uddhab. 2018. "Restrictive labour migration policy on Nepalese women and consequences". *Sociology and Anthropology*. Vol. 6, Nº 8, Pp. 650-656.
- Adhikari, Jagannath & Mary Hobley. 2015. "'Everyone is leaving – Who will sow our fields?' The livelihood effects on women of male Migration from Khotang and Udaypur districts, Nepal, to the Gulf Countries and Malaysia". *Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*. Vol. 35, Nº 1, Pp. 11-23.

Further readings
- Patel, Ian Sanjay. 2021. *We're Here Because You Were There: Immigration and the End of Empire*. Verso.
- Zharkevich, Ina. 2021. "'We are in the process': The exploitation of hope and the political economy of waiting among the aspiring irregular migrants in Nepal". *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. Vol. 39, Nº 5, Pp. 827–843.
- Jones, Reece. 2016. "Movement as a political act" In *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*. Verso. Pp. 146-161.
- Adamson, Fina & Gerasimos Tsourapas. 2020. "The migration state in the global south: nationalizing, developmental, and neoliberal models of migration management". *International Migration Review*. Vol. 54, Nº 3, Pp. 853-882.

JORDAN

Session 5: Border and frontiers: violence and displaced bodies
In this second part 'bridge' session we will continue to discuss the articulation of power, people, place/ territories from the perspective of those who have been involuntarily displaced

(refugees). Specifically, we will discuss the geopolitics of displacement and border-making, and the implications on representation and embodiment.

- Betts, Alexander. 2015. "The normative terrain of the global refugee regime". *Ethics & International Affairs*. Vol. 29, N° 4, Pp. 363-375.
- Salih, Ruba. 2017. "Bodies that walk, bodies that talk, bodies that love: Palestinian women refugees, affectivity, and the politics of the ordinary". *Antipode*. Vol. 49, N° 3, Pp. 742-760.
- Rajaram, Prem. 2002. "Humanitarianism and representations of the refugee". *Journal of Refugee Studies*. Vol. 15, N° 3, Pp. 247-264.

Further readings
- AlAwadhia, Dina & Jason Dittmer. 2020. "The figure of the refugee in superhero cinema". *Geopolitics*.
- Shekhawat, Seema, Debidatta Aurobinda Mahapatra & Emanuela C. Del Re (2018) "Introduction: borders, violence and gender". In S. Shekhawat, Seema & E. Del Re (eds.) *Women and Borders: Refugees, Migrants and Communities*. I.B. Tauris. Pp. 1-20.
- Achilli, Luigi. 2014. "Disengagement from politics: Nationalism, political identity, and the everyday in a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan". *Critique of Anthropology*. Vol. 34, N° 2, Pp. 234–257.
- Arar, Rawan Mazen. 2016. "How political migrants' networks differ from those of economic migrants: 'strategic anonymity' among Iraqi refugees in Jordan". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Vol. 42, N° 3, Pp. 519-535.
- El Qadim, Nora; İşleyen, Beste; Ansems de Vries, Leonie; Hansen, Signe Sofie; Karadağ, Sibel; Lisle, Debbie; Simonneau, Damien. 2021. "(Im)moral borders in practice". *Geopolitics*. Vol. 26 N° 5, Pp.1608-1638.
- Allen, William, Bridget Anderson, Nicholas Van Hear, Madeleine Sumption, Franck Düvell, Jennifer Hough, Lena Rose, Rachel Humphris & Sarah Walker. 2018. "Who counts in crises? The new geopolitics of international migration and refugee governance". *Geopolitics*. Vol. 23, N° 1, Pp. 217-224.

Session 6: Of experts and humanitarians - knowledges and practices
Humanitarian workers are at the frontlines of human rights work, aiming to mitigate the worst types of human rights abuses and suffering. While it cannot be denied that their work is crucial, these actors are embedded in systems of knowledge (or epistemic communities) that produce particular ways of understanding and acting. In this session we will discuss how knowledge frameworks inform agendas, practices, and their unintended consequences.

- Dunlop, Claire. 2016. "Knowledge, epistemic communities, and agenda setting". In N. Zahariadis (ed.) *Handbook of Public Policy Agenda Setting*. Edward Elgar. Pp. 273-294.
- Farah, Reem. 2020. "Expat, local, and refugee: 'studying up' the global division of labor and mobility in the humanitarian industry in Jordan". *Migration and Society*. Vol. 3, N° 1, Pp. 130–144.

Further readings

- Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. University of California Press.
- Ivanovic, Mladjo. 2019. "Echoes of the past: colonial legacy and eurocentric humanitarianism". In E. Zeiny (ed). *The Rest Write Back: Discourse and Decolonization*. Brill. Pp. 82-102.
- Malkki, Liisa. 1996. "Speechless emissaries: refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization". *Cultural Anthropology*. Vol. 11, Nº 3, Pp. 377-404.
- Moyn, Samuel. 2014. "Spectacular wrongs: On humanitarian intervention". In *Human Rights and the Uses of History*. Verso. Pp. 41-52.

Session 7: A feminist take on human rights
Feminists across the political and ideological spectrum have pointed to the fallacy of the 'universal' promise of human rights. Patriarchy -as a particular expression of coloniality, modernity and capital- has been a framework that tended to invisibilize half of humanity: their predicaments, their suffering, their resistance and practices. In this session we will focus on feminist arguments about the expectations and shortfalls of human rights institutions.

- Mohanty, Chandra. 2003. "Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses". In *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press. Pp. 17-42.
- Lokot, Michelle. 2019. "The space between us: feminist values and humanitarian power dynamics in research with refugees". *Gender & Development*. Vol. 27, Nº 3, Pp. 467-484.
  - Parisi, Laura. 2010. "Feminist Perspectives on Human Rights". *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. 32pp.
  - Binion, Gayle. 1995. "Human Rights: A Feminist Perspective." *Human Rights Quarterly*. Vol. 17, Nº 3, Pp. 509-526.
  - Collins, Dana, Sylvanna Falcón, Sharmila Lodhia & Molly Talcott. 2010. "New Directions in Feminism and Human Rights". *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Vol. 12, Nº 3-4, Pp. 298–318.

Further readings

- Al-Abdeh, Maria & Champa Patel. 2019. "'Localising' humanitarian action: reflections on delivering women's rights-based and feminist services in an ongoing crisis". *Gender & Development*. Vol. 27, Nº 2, Pp. 237-252.
- Mendoza, Breny. 2016. "Coloniality of gender and power: from postcoloniality to decoloniality". In L. Disch & M. Hawkesworth (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 100-121.

CHILE

Session 8. Uncovering neoliberal violence

•   Harvey, D. 2007. A brief history of neoliberalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Freedom's just another word…", pp.5-38

•   Standing, G. 2011. The precariat. The new dangerous class, pp. 1-25

Further readings

Nicolás M. Somma, Matías Bargsted, Rodolfo Disi Pavlic & Rodrigo M. Medel (2021) No water in the oasis: the Chilean Spring of 2019–2020, Social Movement Studies, 20:4, 495-502, DOI: 10.1080/14742837.2020.1727737

Human Rights Watch. (2019, November 26). Chile: Police reforms needed in the wake of protests. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/26/chile-police-reforms-needed-wake-protests

Session 9. Finding justice in memory

•   Nascimento Araúj M.P & M. Sepúlveda dos Santos. 2009. History, Memory and Forgetting: Political Implications. RCCS Annual Review, 1, pp. 77.94

•   Thompson, J. 2001. Historical Injustice and Reparation: Justifying Claims of Descendants. Ethics, 112(1), pp. 114-135.

Further readings

Aguilar, Paloma and Kovras, Iorif (2019) Explaining disappearances as a tool of political terror, International Political Science Review.

Ortiz, Nicolas (2021) Political Subjectivation, Generation, and Postmemory. Understanding the Activists of the 2011 Chilean Student Movement, Latin American Perspectives.

Session 10. Embracing uncertainty/shaping futures

•   Bloch, E. 1983. The principle of hope. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 195-223.

•   Crapanzano, V. 2003 Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and Psychological Analysis. Cultural Anthropology 18(1), pp.3-32.

Further readings

Tricot Victor. (2021), Please Mind the Gap: Autonomization and Street Politics. In: Navarrete B., Tricot V. (eds) The Social Outburst and Political Representation in Chile. Latin American Societies (Current Challenges in Social Sciences). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70320-2_5

Position paper

One of the biggest rewards of the IHP semester is to be able to interact with people and spaces, and to witness the type of conceptual/critical reflections we are readings about. This will have many dimensions during the semester: from discussion between students and with the people you meet (from how homestay families to residents); reflections on your research project, to discussion and debates in the classroom. Similarly, one of the biggest challenges of the semester will be to craft an argument based on the data/evidence you collect during the semester. The position paper will provide elements to accomplish two goals: 1) to provide the conditions to have a lively and meaningful discussion/debate during the class sessions; 2) to visualize and understand how authors from different academic disciplines craft arguments and present evidence to support it. This will be crucial for your research project.

The position paper will be a short (no more than one page) paper in which you take a stance in relation to the argument presented in one of the readings for a session. The basic elements of the position paper will be:

- What is the main argument made by the author(s)?
- Discuss the evidence presented in relation to the argument.
- Take a position (support – critique) the argument and explain why you take that position.

You will write **x position papers** during the semester (at least 1 in each country: Nepal, Jordan, Chile). You will upload the position paper in Canvas before **8pm the night before the session**. Everyone, regardless of whether you posted a position paper or not, will read over all the other position papers prior to class. This will be the basis for the discussion and debate: the different positions in relation to the arguments presented by the authors we read, and the type of experiences (site visits, guest lectures, your own research, etc.) we have been having in the particular country.