

Comparative Issues in Human Rights

HMRT 3500 (4 credits)

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

This syllabus is representative of a typical 3-country program. Note that program locations may change due to Covid-19 precautions. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

The aim of this course is to create space for critical comparative reflection on how human rights are exercised, negotiated, and contested in the countries we visit. Recognizing human rights as an international normative framework enacted through everyday practice, the course engages students in both a systemic level of analysis and a personal exploration of what it means to advocate for and embody human rights today. We examine various historical and contemporary practices that produce and violate human rights, with special attention to how processes of colonialism, capitalism, development, and humanitarianism have shaped experiences of social exclusion, oppression, and dehumanization; we consider the possibilities for human rights to shape humanizing alternatives. Acknowledging that the history of human rights most commonly heard (and that which most often orients practices) is one that emerges from particular geographical and political contexts, 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, colonial heritage, the geopolitics of conflict, and global capital will be of particular importance.

Course Aims

- Comparatively analyze historical dynamics of power that shape local social hierarchies, forms of oppression and dehumanization.
- Analyze how experiences of colonialism, capitalism, development, and globalization shape local human rights governance and resistance.
- Critically consider the notion of “comparison” and develop cross-context analysis of the dynamics that shape local human rights violations and protections.
- Cultivate skills in critical analysis, communication, self-awareness, and collaborative learning. Collaboratively co-construct a learning environment that embodies the praxis of human rights

Course Materials

Required readings will be available at the beginning of the start 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 and contribution to learning environment (20%)

This is an intensive writing and critical thinking course that will require your full attendance and active participation. We will conduct this course in a seminar format, using class discussions to make sense of the readings and the contexts we are experiencing. As such, your participation in the course will depend on keeping up with the readings and writing assignments and coming to class sessions prepared to actively contribute to the intellectual growth of the group by thoughtfully engaging the materials and each other, and integrating the information and experiences from field visits, other courses, observations, conversations with home-stay families as well as through daily life in the city. Our aim will be to collaboratively create a reflective and critical learning environment, where everyone's voice is heard and valued.

Class participation for the CIHR course is broadly framed to include not only your participation in class sessions for the course, but also your participation on *all* program related site visits, guest lectures, excursions, debriefs, synthesis sessions—in sum all out of the classroom and in classroom activities of the program. How each of you interacts with the program's guest speakers and site visit hosts is a crucial site for each of you to demonstrate preparedness, critical analysis, and thoughtful engagement with the course and program material.

Double-entry Journal and Final Reflection Paper (80%)

The main writing assignment for this course will consist of an ongoing double-entry journal, designed to offer you an opportunity to reflect on the key issues arising from our course readings and discussions.

For each class session (for sessions 2-10), you are expected to complete 250-300 words engaging the week's readings. You will follow the format of "double-entry", which consists of selecting one (or several) quote(s) from the readings and writing a response/reflection for this quote. This form of writing invites a close engagement with the text, whereby the aim is not to summarize or paraphrase the reading, but rather to "make sense" of it by analyzing and responding to it. As mentioned above, this course aims to complement the rest of our collective study abroad experience (courses, site visits, lectures, home-stays, etc.), as such you may opt to weave these in to your reflections on the readings, thereby using the reading and writing you do for this course as a means for also "making sense" of what you are experiencing and learning throughout the program.

You may also opt to draw on your own personal history, identity and past learning experiences. Overall, these entries should reflect your process of grappling with the themes that emerge from our readings, discussions and experiences. Your writing may convey the confusion and contradictions of your emergent thought processes, natural to the difficulty and complexity of meaningful learning and dialogue. We will find that we are often faced with the need to hold contradictions and tensions in this process.

High quality entries will reflect the student's:

- Grasp of the content of the assigned readings;
- Ability to make critical connections with observations, experiences, course themes;
- Inquisitiveness and ability to raise questions; and
- Ability to contribute constructively to class understandings.

You are expected to bring your entries to each class (hand-written) or send them before class via email; you will share them with your peers and professors as part of our reading and collaborative inquiry.

At the end of each country program, you will expand on one week journal entries. You will also share these on a Google drive folder (more details will be provided to you in class on how to do this).

At the end of the semester, you will read through your entries and write a final reflection paper (1000 words). The final reflection paper will offer a synthesis of your learning process throughout the semester. You will submit your complete journal and final reflection paper to your professor as one document.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

As the learning process of this course is dependent on your continuous and reflective engagement with the course materials, the experiential aspects of our stay in each country, and your learning community (including your peers, faculty and other program staff), grading will serve as an accountability mechanism for these elements. The grading will function on a basis of points. At the end of the term, your cumulative point score will be calculated to determine your final letter grade for the course.

It is useful for faculty and students to view final grades in this way. An “A” represents truly outstanding work, exemplifying rigorous analysis, superior insights, and precise presentation. A “B” signifies highly competent work that completes the assignment very well, with considerable thought, reasonable analytical results and an effective presentation. A “C” represents acceptable work, satisfying the basic requirements, but lacking distinction, original analytical insights or organization. A “D” grade indicates poorly or partially completed work, reflecting a lack of initiative, inconsistent analytical conclusions and/or a disorganized presentation. Pluses and minuses for the four-letter grades indicate better or poorer work. There is no “A+” grade.

Grading Scale					
94-100%	A	Excellent	74-76%	C	Average
90-93%	A-		70-73%	C-	
87-89%	B+		67-69%	D+	
84-86%	B	Above Average	64-66%	D	Below Average
80-83%	B-		below 64	F	Fail
77-79%	C+				
Note: Where decimal points are used in grading, below 0.5 will be rounded down, while 0.5 and above will be rounded up. For example, 93.4 will be an A-, while 93.5 will be an A.					

Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates’, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

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 Organization and Required Readings

Nepal

Session 1. Introduction to the course: Debating the universality of human rights

- Mignolo, W. 2012. Who speaks for the “human” in human rights? Dispensable and bare lives. Chapter in M. Tlostanova & W. Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Ohio State University Press, pp. 153-174.
- Mutua, M. W. 2001. Savages, victims, and saviors: The metaphor of human rights. *Harvard International Law Journal*, 42(1): 201-245.

Session 2. Facing the legacies of colonial violence

- Maldonado-Torres, N. 2017. On the Coloniality of Human Rights. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 114, pp. 117-136.
- Dirks, N. 2001. Castes of mind. *Colonialism and the making of Modern India*. Princeton University press. pp. 19-42.

Session 3. (Un)Making development

- Escobar, A. 1995. Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World. Princeton University Press, pp. 3-13; pp. 21-54.
- Ferguson, J., & Gupta, A. 2002. Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality. *American Ethnologist*, 29(4), pp. 981-1002.

Session 4. Embodying inequalities

- Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. 2004. Symbolic violence. In Scheper-Hughes, N. & Bourgois, Violence in war and peace: An anthology. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp.272-274.
- Fanon, F. 1952. Introduction (pp.xi-xviii), Chapter 1 (pp.1-23), and Chapter 5 (pp.89-119). *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Jordan

Session 5. Producing borders & illegality

- Anzaldúa, G. 1987. La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a new consciousness; Movimientos de rebeldia y las culturas que tradicionan. Chapters in *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, pp. 37-45; pp. 99-113.
- Anderson, R. 2017. Rescued and caught. The humanitarian-security nexus at Europe’s frontiers. *The borders*

of “Europe”. *Autonomy of Migration, tactics of Bordering*, pp. 64-93.

Session 6. Intervening as humanitarians

- Fassin, D. 2007. Humanitarianism as a politics of life. *Public Culture*. (19) 3, pp. 499- 520.
- Calhoun, C. 2004. “A World of Emergencies: Fear, Intervention, and the Limits of Cosmopolitan Order”. The 35th Sorokin Lecture. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 41.4, pp. 373-95.

Session 7. Gendering human rights

- Mohanty, C. 2003. “Under Western Eyes” revisited: Feminist solidarity through anti- capitalist struggle. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press, pp. 221-251.
- Merry, S. 2006. *Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle*. *American Anthropologist*, 108(1), pp. 38-51.

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

Session 9. Finding justice in memory

- Nascimento Araújo 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.

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.