

Human Rights

PSCI 4357

Fall 2023

Tuesday and Thursday: 1:00pm-2:15pm

Room: JO 3.601

Professor: Rebecca Cordell

Email: Rebecca.Cordell@utdallas.edu

Student Hours: Tues 3pm-4pm

Other Information: [MS Teams](#)

Website: www.rebeccacordell.com

Teaching Assistant: Hanna Shin

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Student Hours: Fri 1pm-3pm

Other Information: [MS Teams](#)

Course Description

What are human rights? Why are human rights violated? How can we measure human rights violations? How can international human rights law be enforced? From state sponsored violence to limitations on freedom of speech and the press, human rights affect our lives in numerous ways. This course examines the politics of human rights in a scientific and rigorous way. Students will gain an understanding of how to ask and answer questions on the causes and consequences of human rights violations from a social science perspective.

We begin the course by exploring major concepts of human rights and transition to an overview of what motivates the state to engage in human rights violations. We proceed to consider how we can measure and analyze human rights violations around the world, over time, and then explore how human rights violations can be prevented and how perpetrators can be held accountable. The course concludes by exploring contemporary debates in human rights and a discussion of what the future holds for human rights.

This course's goal is to teach undergraduates the major theories and explanations of the politics of human rights as well as how to critically evaluate human rights issues in different countries and in different time periods. The readings for this course survey major explanations of human rights violations and how human rights have emerged in domestic and international law. Students will be exposed to theoretically driven as well as empirical research.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- Gain familiarity with the major theories of state violence and human rights.
- Gain understanding with concepts in human rights research and contemporary debates in human rights.
- Be able to apply explanations of repression and human rights to the explanation and understanding of real-world scenarios.
- Be able to explain historical cases in light of the theories presented in class.
- Be able to read and understand empirical research in the social sciences.

Assignments & Academic Calendar

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READING	ASSESSMENT / ACTIVITY	DUE DATE
1	Introduction: History and Concepts	Carey, Gibney, and Poe. 2010. Chapter 1. Donnelly and Whelan. 2017. Chapter 1.		
2	Theories of Human Rights	Donnelly and Whelan. 2017. Chapter 2. Carey, Gibney, and Poe. 2010. Chapter 2.	Reading Quiz	08/28
3	International Law, NGOs and Human Rights	Simmons. 2009. Chapter 2. Clark. 2001. Chapter 2.	Reading Quiz	09/04
4	Universalism and Relativism	Donnelly. 2003. Chapter 6. Kalev. 2004.	Reading Quiz Refugee Reports	09/11 09/15
5	Psychology of Human Rights	Smeulers. 2004. Baisley. 2014.	Reading Quiz	09/18

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READING	ASSESSMENT / ACTIVITY	DUE DATE
6	State Repression	Davenport. 2007. Mason and Krane. 1989.	Reading Quiz	09/25
7	Politics of Human Rights	Carey, Gibney and Poe. 2010. Chapter 5. Sikkink. 2017. Chapter 6.	Reading Quiz	10/02
8	Catch-up, Review and First Exam		First Online Exam	10/12-10/13
9	Measuring Human Rights I	Cordell. 2017. Landman and Kersten. 2016. Chapter 8.	Reading Quiz	10/16
10	Measuring Human Rights II	Brysk. 1994. Fariss and Dancy. 2017.	Reading Quiz	10/23
11	Intervention and Human Rights	Carey, Gibney and Poe. 2010. Chapter 6. De Meritt. 2014.	Reading Quiz Human Rights Comparative Paper	10/30 11/03
12	Accountability and Human Rights	Carey, Gibney and Poe. 2010. Chapter 7. Zvobgo. 2019.	Reading Quiz	11/06 11/10
13	Contemporary Issues in Human Rights	Donnelly and Whelan. 2017. Chapter 12. Cordell. 2019.	Reading Quiz Refugee Data	11/13 11/17
14	No Classes: Fall Break/Thanksgiving			

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READING	ASSESSMENT / ACTIVITY	DUE DATE
15	The Future of Human Rights	Carey and Ghodes. 2021. Ghodes. 2020.	Reading Quiz	11/27
16	Catch-up, Review and Second Exam		Second Online Exam	12/07-12/08

Required Textbooks and Materials

All book chapters and journal articles are available to students free of charge. They can be accessed via the eLearning course homepage.

Baisley, Elizabeth. 2014. "Genocide and constructions of Hutu and Tutsi in radio propaganda." *Race & Class* 55(3): 38-59.

Brysk, Allison. 1994. "The Politics of Measurement: The Contested Count of the Disappearance in Argentina" *Human Rights Quarterly* 16(4):676-692.

Carey, Sabine C and Anita R. Gohdes. 2021. "Understanding Journalist Killings." *Journal of Politics* 83(4): 1216-1228.

Carey, Sabine C., Mark Gibney, and Steven C. Poe. 2010. *The Politics of Human Rights: The Quest for Dignity*. Cambridge University Press.

Clark, Ann Marie. 2001. *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms*. Princeton University Press.

Cordell, Rebecca. 2017. "Measuring Extraordinary Rendition and International Cooperation." *International Area Studies Review* 20(2): 179-197.

Cordell, Rebecca. 2019. "Security-Civil Liberties Trade-offs: International Cooperation in Extraordinary Rendition." *International Interactions* 45(2): 369-400.

Davenport, Christian. 2007. "State Repression and Political Order." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 1-23.

De Meritt, Jacqueline, H. R. 2014. "Delegating Death: Military Intervention and Government Killing." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(3): 428-454.

Donnelly, Jack, and Daniel Whelan. 2017. *International Human Rights*, 5th ed. Routledge.

Donnelly, Jack. 2003. "Human Rights and Cultural Relativism." *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. Cornell University Press. Chapter 6.

Fariss, Christopher J., and Geoff Dancy. 2017. "Measuring the Impact of Human Rights: Conceptual and Methodological Debates." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 13: 273-294.

Gohdes, Anita R. 2020. "Repression Technology: Internet Accessibility and State Violence." *American Journal of Political Science* 64(3): 488-503.

Hayner, Priscilla B. 2010. "Truth Commissions and the International Criminal Court." In *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions*, 2nd ed. Routledge Press. Chapter 9.

Kalev, Henriette D. 2004. "Cultural Rights or Human Rights: The Case of Female Genital Mutilation." *Sex Roles* 51(5-6): 339-348.

Landman, Todd, and Larissa C. S. K. Kersten. 2016. "Measuring and Monitoring Human Rights." In Goodhart, Michael. *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*, 3rd ed. Oxford University Press. Chapter 8.

Mason, T. David, and Dale A. Krane. 1989. "The Political Economy of Death Squads: Toward a Theory of the Impact of State-Sanctioned Terror." *International Studies Quarterly*, 33(2):175-198.

Sikkink, Kathryn. 2017. *Evidence for Hope: Making Human Rights Work in the 21st Century*. Princeton University Press.

Simmons, Beth A. 2009. *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Smeulers, Alette. 2004. "What Transforms Ordinary People into Gross Human Rights Violators." In Sabine C. Carey, and Steven C. Poe. *Understanding Human Rights Violations*. Ashgate Publishing Limited. Chapter 13.

Zvobgo, Kelebogile. 2019. "Designing Truth: Facilitating Perpetrator Testimony at Truth Commissions." *Journal of Human Rights* 18(1): 92-110.

Grading Policy

Assignments and Exams

Attendance and Participation (10% of your grade): Students will be evaluated on 1) attendance 2) completion of class exercises 3) contributions to class discussions.

Weekly Reading Quizzes (20% of your grade): Once a week there will be a quiz on eLearning designed to assess your comprehension of the weekly readings. **Due every Monday at midnight before class via eLearning.**

Refugee Rights Data Project (15% of your grade): For this assignment, you will gain experience in assessing how governments around the world treat refugees and asylum seekers. In groups, you will be assigned two tasks during the semester that contribute toward a new academic research project measuring violations of refugee rights using the World Refugee Survey (WRS) country reports. This project requires students to work as a team to fulfill the data collection and coding briefs and communicate clearly and regularly to ensure that the work is completed on time.

- 1) **Refugee Reports:** First, your group will *collect data* on a set of countries assigned to you by the Teaching Assistant using the Refugee Reports Data Collection Instructions and annual World Refugee Survey reports (see eLearning for further details). **Deadline: September 15 at midnight via eLearning.**
- 2) **Refugee Data:** Second, you will *code data* extracted from these reports using a coding handbook (see eLearning for further details). The data will be used to help researchers identify global patterns and explanations on the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing persecution and violence. **Refugee Data: November 17 at midnight via eLearning.**

Human Rights Comparative Paper (15% of your grade): Compare two Amnesty International Annual Country Human Rights Reports published in the same year for two different countries in the same geographic region. In the paper you should describe 1) Why you chose these two countries 2) How the human rights situation is similar and/or different in the two countries compared 3) What theory can be used to explain these similarities and/or differences. Students should discuss their case selection with the Teaching Assistant at least two weeks prior to the due date for this assignment. 4 pages (12-point font, 1-inch margin, double spaced). **Paper due: November 03 at midnight via eLearning.**

First Online Exam (20% of your grade): The first exam will cover material in the first half of the semester. The exam will contain multiple choice questions only. **Exam: October 12-13 at midnight via eLearning.**

Second Online Exam (20% of your grade): The second exam will cover material in the second half of the semester. The exam will contain multiple choice questions only. **Exam: December 07-08 at midnight via eLearning.**

Grading Scale:

A+ = 97-100%

A = 94-96%

A- = 90-93%

B+ = 87-89%

B = 84-86%

B- = 80-83%

C+ = 77-79%

C = 74-76%

C- = 70-73%

D+ = 67-69%

D = 64-66%

D- = 60-63%

F = 0-59%

Course & Instructor Policies

Attendance and Participation: Regular attendance and participation in class is essential to your success in this course and will be considered in the calculation of your final grade. Students are expected to arrive in class before the start of the class period. Students who arrive late will only be able to achieve a maximum grade of 50% for their attendance that day. Student participation will be assessed on the quantity and quality of contributions to class discussions and class group exercises. Students are permitted two class absences, no questions asked, over the course of the semester. Students do not need to inform the Professor about these absences.

Additional excused absences granted by the Professor are limited to religious and cultural holidays, official UTD events/business, and extreme emergency or serious illness. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Late assignments and missed exams: Written assignments are due on the date assigned, in the form specified. Students who submit their assignments late will have points deducted from their assignment (10% within 1 hour, 25% within 12 hours, 50% within 24 hours, 75% within 48 hours, 100% more than 48 hours). The Professor reserves the right to make exceptions to this policy as circumstances warrant, usually only with prior approval or under instances of extreme emergency or serious illness. Appropriate documentation might be required in some cases.

Grade disputes: If you have questions or concerns regarding your grade, you must wait 48 hours after your assignment/exam has been returned to you before contacting the Teaching Assistant or Professor. You should always email the Teaching Assistant before the Professor to discuss your grade as they will have

graded your assignment/exam and are in the best position to provide you with the reasons for your grade. In your email, you must provide an argument explaining why you believe your grade should be changed. If your conversation with the Teaching Assistant has not resolved the issue, you can request that I regrade the entire assignment/exam. I reserve the right to raise your grade or lower it on any part of the assignment/exam.

Email Communication: The best way to get in touch with the Professor and Teaching Assistant outside of the class sessions and student hours is to contact us via email. We will try to respond to your email within 3 business days. When you contact the Professor or Teaching Assistant, you should communicate professionally and avoid informal salutations and unprofessional or casual language. The appropriate salutations in emails to the Professor are “Dr. Rebecca Cordell” or “Professor Cordell”. Your email should be clear and concise, state what course you are taking, and end with a signature e.g., “Yours Sincerely, Student”. You should always consult the syllabus and course materials on eLearning before emailing the Professor or Teaching Assistant to see if the answer to your question can be found there. The ability to write effective emails is an important job skill that will help you to succeed in your future career.

Student Hours: Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the Professor and Teaching Assistant during student hours via MS Teams. We are committed to answering your questions and concerns. If you would like the Professor or Teaching Assistant to provide specific feedback on your work during student hours, you should send via email the relevant materials 24 hours in advance. Student hours provide an excellent opportunity for you to gain feedback on ideas for your assignments and for us to get to know you. This is especially helpful if you require a reference letter for graduate school, a professional college, or job at a later date.

Academic misconduct: Students are expected to do their own assignments, and not in collaboration or consultation with others. The Professor will follow all UTD rules and processes regarding academic dishonesty including plagiarism, collusion, cheating and fabrication. For more information see: <https://conduct.utdallas.edu/dishonesty/>.

Generative AI: Cheating includes using unauthorized materials to complete an assignment (UTD Student Code of Conduct - [source](#)). AI-generated content including tables, code, analysis, or images should not be presented as your own work. TurnItIn or other methods may be used to detect the use of AI. Under UTD rules about due process, referrals may be made to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct. Inappropriate use of AI may result in penalties, including a 0 on an assignment.

Classroom conduct: Classroom discussion should be civilized and respectful to everyone and relevant to the topic we are discussing. All students are expected to be courteous and considerate of their classmates. Disrespectful language and

personal attacks will not be tolerated. Students whose behavior is disruptive and/or threatening either to the Professor, Teaching Assistant or other students will be asked to refrain from such behavior or, in severe cases, to leave the classroom.

Technology in the classroom: Students are allowed to use laptop computers to take class notes or when instructed to do so by the Professor. All other technology must be turned off and stowed away. Students violating this rule will be asked to leave the class for that day.

Diversity in the classroom: It is the Professor's intention to create a learning environment that is intentionally inclusive and appreciative of diversity in all its forms including ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, religion and culture. Students may share their preferred names and pronouns to the class or privately to the Professor. These gender identities and expressions should be honored by the Professor, Teaching Assistant and students.

If you need help: There are many issues that you might be dealing with in your college career or personal life that can prevent you from succeeding on this course. At UTD, you are not alone. There are many free resources available on campus to help support you during times of struggle, including the Student Success Center, the Student Wellness Center, and Student Counselling Center. For more information, see here:

<https://studentwellness.utdallas.edu/>.

Sexual misconduct: UTD prohibits sexual misconduct as defined in the University Policy Statement. The University will promptly discipline any individuals or organizations within its control who violate this Policy. If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, harassed, or been a victim of relationship violence or stalking, you can find the appropriate resources here: <https://institutional-initiatives.utdallas.edu/title-ix/>. Students considering sharing personal information in email, in person, or within assignments or exams should be aware that faculty members and teaching associates/assistants and graduate/research assistants are required by UTD policy to report information about sexual misconduct to the UTD Title IX Coordinator. Per university policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy - UTDBP3102, faculty have been informed that they must identify the student to the UTD Title IX Coordinator. Students who wish to have confidential discussions of incidents related to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct should contact the Student Counseling Center (972-883-2575 or the 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 972-UTD-TALK or 972-883-8255), the, a health care provider in the Student Health Center (972-883-2747), a clergyperson (or other legally recognized religious advisor) of their choice, or an off-campus resource (e.g., rape crisis center, doctor, psychologist). Students who are sexually assaulted, harassed, or are victims of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, or stalking, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the UTD Police Department at 972-883-2222 or to the

Title IX Coordinator at 972-883-5202. Additional information and resources may be found at <https://institutional-initiatives.utdallas.edu/title-ix/>.

Accommodations for persons with disabilities: It is the policy and practice of UTD to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodations for this class, you are encouraged to register with the Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA). Some aspects of the course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is typically taught may be accommodated to facilitate your participation and progress. OSA will assist you in determining academic accommodations that are appropriate for your situation. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. To avoid any delay, please contact OSA as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and disability accommodations cannot be provided until an OSA Letter of Accommodation has been given to the instructor. Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact OSA for a confidential discussion. OSA is located in the Student Services Building, AD 2.224 They can be reached by phone at 972-883-2098, or by email at studentaccess@utdallas.edu.

Course website: The syllabus, all announcements, information on assignments, and other materials related to the course will be available on the eLearning course homepage.

Class Materials

The instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Class Recordings

Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the

class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

Academic Support Resources

The information contained in the following link lists the University’s academic support resources for all students.

Please see <http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources>.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please review the catalog sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) or [pass/fail](#) grading option and withdrawal from class.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.