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## Course Updates & News

MARCH 7, 2014

Dear Learners,

Congratulations for those of you who have managed to complete **section 2** of the course. We hope you are now feeling more comfortable and fluent in the grammar of human rights.

**Section 3** of *International Human Rights* opened this morning. In this new section we will be discussing when, and under which conditions, human rights may be restricted.

We have been monitoring the discussion forums with great attention and have taken a number of requests into consideration. One recurrent issue has been the tight schedule and the existence of deadlines for the exams and exercises.

Given the technical limits of what can be done on the edX platform, we have decided to implement a compromise solution to this issue that, we hope, will respond to the concerns and interests of the greater number:

- We will retain deadlines for the exams and exercise completion problems, as figured in the indicative timeline and syllabus;
- We will, however, **extend the grace period** for all exercises to three weeks; so, for instance, the first section exam, which was due on the 28 February, can be submitted until Friday 21 March, 23h30 UTC. This is applicable to all exercises in the course. Therefore, if you need to take more time to answer, please do so (however, be aware that you will then have to move even faster in the later sections of the course!);
- You will be able to see the **correct answers** to the exam questions (listed as a set of 10 multiple-choice questions at the end of each section) as soon as you submit your response, but discussion of the questions in the forums will not be allowed until the grace period for that exam is over. (Note that there are no explanations provided for the answers to these exam questions; the answers can be found in the materials of the section concerned).

The decision concerning deadlines and grace periods increases the flexibility afforded in terms of scheduling and completing the exercises. This will not affect the other components of the course, such as discussion fora, however.

Our forum moderators will give priority to interaction in the fora of the current section. In other terms, it is recommended to “remain within the flow”, and to keep with the deadlines indicated, to maximize the opportunities for interaction.

Dear Learners,

Congratulations for completing **Section 1**. For many of you, these last days will have been the arduous first steps in the field of international human rights law, or even in law, generally. As you will see, the next sections will be shorter and thematically more focused, but we will continue on the same pace, with one week -- opening and closing on Fridays -- for each section from now on.

Today, **Section 2** becomes accessible to the entire learner community. Although the **deadline for exercises and the section questionnaire for section 1 is 23h30 UTC today**, you will of course continue have access to the first section and all of its materials.

So, **don't forget to submit your questionnaire by the deadline**, and to provide the right answers in the 'exercise completion' problems, so as to obtain the highest possible score for section 1.

Some of you have asked what the *purpose* of the '**exercise completion**' problems is. I would like to take this opportunity to point out that those exercises are conceived to assess your *participation* and *thoroughness* in engaging with the problems and discussions we propose. They are *not simply quizzes to assess what you've already learned*: they are, rather, moments in the course in which we ask you to reflect on an underlying problem and respond in a mostly intuitive, reflective manner. What do *you* think about the question or problem? For these exercises, *reading and understanding the explanations is much more important than getting the answer right* in the first go. After answering intuitively, the explanation gives you new elements to consider, *new* and *crucial* information that you will be using later on in the course. **You are not penalized for getting these problems wrong**, you have as many attempts as you want to get the 'correct' answer.

You will have noticed that, following demand from the community of learners, we have provided captions and transcripts not only for the videos produced by the staff, but also for all other videos. We have also done so retroactively to those in Section 1. If you had difficulties following materials in the first section, it might be useful to have a look at those videos one more time now.

We have seen the forums be transformed into the central hub of interaction between learners and staff, as well as among learners themselves. We understand that interface problems may have made the enjoyment of the experience more difficult for some, particularly when discussion fora become very long, and we are considering other options for increasing the quality of the discussion in the forums. Until a better arrangement can be found, we must ask you to *read the instructions for posting in each forum attentively*, and to *follow them scrupulously*.

We have decided to create a specific discussion forum to respond to **questions regarding the section exam**, since many of you have asked for this. It will be opened over the weekend, and we will respond to your questions regarding the section one questionnaire next week.

So that's it for today. Welcome to Section 2, and keep up the excellent work!

Olivier De Schutter  
FEBRUARY 18, 2014

## Important Announcement

We have realized that instructions regarding the forums were not sufficiently clear and in order to ensure a good flow of the discussions in the forums, the Course staff and community TAs will have to start deleting the large number of threads that have been created inadvertently by the community. Please follow the following instructions:

- **DO NOT respond to discussion forums by pressing the blue 'New Post' button.** This is the source of the unmanageable amount of threads in the forums.
- **Only Staff members are allowed to create new threads.** Such discussion forums will be clearly identified by brackets ('[ ]') and by a title corresponding to the part of the course under discussion.
- **Follow the instructions** appearing immediately before the discussion forums *strictly*.
- Learners are expected only to **add responses** to threads or **add comments** to their colleagues' opinions;
- Use the **'add a response'** button *exclusively* to give your personal opinion on a given subject;
- Use the **'add a comment'** field *exclusively* to comment on your peers' opinions (**attention:** comments cannot be deleted by their authors or by the forum moderators);
- Starting this evening, **forum moderators will start to delete any message** that is not a response to the adequate thread. If you are not sure if your contributions were adequately posted, look them upon the general discussion forum interface.

**Watch the following video attentively** and keep the above guidelines in mind prior to posting in the forums.

The Forum Moderators  
FEBRUARY 17, 2014

Welcome to International Human Rights, one of the four courses being offered by the University of Louvain on the edX platform!

Your first task in this course will be to watch two introductory videos in section 0 of the courseware and familiarize yourself somewhat with the schedule of the course.

If you are not familiar with the edX platform, you may find the tutorials prepared by our team useful for learning how to make the best use of the tools and features put at your disposal.

We also recommend that you check out the guidelines and links on the "Course Handouts" bar, to the right of this post.

Once you are done with that, you will plunge directly in the first section of the course, entitled 'What are human rights?'. Unlike the other sections of this course, we have allotted a full ten days, from Monday 17 February to Friday 28 February for you to cover this contents of section 1.

Given the large amount of materials discussed in this first section, and the fact that many of you may not have a background in legal studies, we recommend that you work diligently from the start, as there is much for you to understand and engage with in this first section. Indeed, this is a bit like plunging in cold water: it is a bit scary, it may be a bit disagreeable in the beginning, but the more you swim, and the better it feels. (Nobody ever learned to swim without plunging into water.) Section 1 is, by far, the most voluminous of all, and it is one of the most difficult too due to some of it being quite technical -- but it provides the building blocks for most of the rest of the course.

So good work, I hope you will enjoy this course, and see you soon in the forums.

[Don't forget the course has both Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/Louv201XIHR?ref=hl>), Google+ (<https://plus.google.com/u/1/b/11319324192973333397/11319324192973333397/about>) pages. You can also follow us on Twitter (@Louv201XIHR).]

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