

Human Rights & World Politics
GOV 365W (38755) & WGS 340 (46065)
Spring 2021

Class Meetings: Meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5:00- 6:15pm.

Course Mode: Online, synchronous delivery.

Instructor: Dr. Rhonda Evans (she/her/hers)

Email: revans@austin.utexas.edu

Rhonda Evans has directed the Edward A. Clark Center for Australian and New Zealand Studies and served as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Government since 2012. She was previously an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at East Carolina University. Dr. Evans holds a Ph.D. in Government from UT-Austin, a J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh, and a B.A. in Political Science from Kent State University's Honors College, graduating phi beta kappa. As a lawyer licensed to practice in her home state of Ohio, she served as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for Tuscarawas County and as a Staff Attorney with Southeastern Ohio Legal Services. Her research is interdisciplinary in nature and reflects her training in law and political science. Dr. Evans is especially interested in how apex courts set their agendas as well as the roles that they play in policymaking processes. Dr Evans is co-author of *Legislating Equality: The Politics of Antidiscrimination Policy in Europe* with Oxford University Press (2014). She teaches undergraduate courses on Australian politics and human rights.

Office Hours:

ALL office hours will be held via this zoom link: <https://utexas.zoom.us/j/92249422500>

Individual office hours (15 min. meetings), Mondays 2:30 – 4:30pm. **Sign-up required here:**

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1EhcWuZBZYM_chQf9KeToAsEbmm92IaoDE7Jt4BewK1g/edit?usp=sharing

Human Rights “Happy Hour” (group office hours), Mondays 4:30 – 5:30 pm. **No sign-up required.**

Note: This syllabus is subject to change. Students who miss class are responsible for learning about any changes the syllabus. Changes will be announced in class, sent via email, or posted to Canvas.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Human rights feature prominently in contemporary world politics. Today there exists a large and highly legalized international human rights regime consisting of the United Nations (UN) and several regionally-based human rights systems. Focusing on the UN, this course introduces you to the legal, political, and policy dimensions of international human rights. In so doing, it addresses: (1) legal and institutional infrastructures and processes that exist at domestic and international levels for the promotion and protection of human rights; (2) the main actors involved in human rights advocacy, including states, international organizations, activists, nongovernmental organizations; (3) the interests of these actors as well as the tactics that they employ to advance their interests; and, (4) the challenges of assessing the effectiveness of human rights advocacy and how these challenges can be met by employing basic precepts of quantitative and qualitative political science research.

By the semester's end, students should be able to answer the following questions: What is international human rights law? How does international human rights law figure into human rights advocacy? How effective is international human rights law, and under what conditions does it work? And finally, how do we know whether or

not it works? Considering the significant resources and efforts that are devoted to international human rights institutions and advocacy each year, these are clearly very important questions.

And yet, you may be surprised to learn that much remains to be learned about the efficacy of international human rights law. In exploring why this is so, we will consider the various challenges to studying international human rights law from an empirical (as opposed to a strictly normative) perspective. You should emerge from this course with an enhanced understanding of the mechanics of human rights advocacy and an improved ability to evaluate its effectiveness. This course is designed to increase your knowledge about human rights, but more importantly, it is designed to help you develop your general analytical skills. The latter are fungible skills in which prospective employers are often most interested.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education at UT; therefore, we will not tolerate acts of cheating, plagiarism, falsification or attempts to cheat, plagiarize, or falsify with regard to quizzes, take-home exams, or the writing assignment. Should we determine that an academic integrity violation has taken place, we will follow the University's formal process for dealing with such matters. You are expected to be familiar with the UT Honor Code: <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>. We refer you specifically to *Subchapter 11-400. Prohibited Conduct* in its entirety. Also consult the section on **sharing course materials and intellectual property policies** that appear in the final, **must-read** section of the syllabus.

Why is it that nearly all students despise “group-work” but are only too eager to collaborate on compiling group documents? I have my own theories. Because I understand that group discussions among students can facilitate the learning process, I do not discourage those. I do, however, prohibit the construction of group documents. This is a distinction with a difference. I will be happy discuss it in class.

I am a former Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for the State of Ohio. Do not give me a reason to slip back into prosecutorial mode. Note that failure to know and understand the policy (i.e., ignorance) is not a defense.

Course Requirement	Percentage of Final Grade	Due Date
Take-Home Exam 1	20%	Released 02/04 by 5:00 pm; due 02/07 by 11:59 pm
Quizzes	25%	Weeks 5-8 & 10-13; due every Sunday by 6:30 pm
Writing Assignment	25%	Due 04/15 by 11:59 pm
Take-Home Exam 2	30%	Released 05/06 at 7:00 pm; due 05/13 by 10:00 pm

*** All of the above requirements must be submitted in order to receive a passing grade for the course.**

Quizzes: Eight online quizzes will be administered through Canvas for weeks five through eight and weeks ten through thirteen (week nine is spring break). They will consist of 10 to 20 multiple choice and/or T/F questions. Each week's quiz will open up at 6:30 pm on Thursday and close at 6:30 pm on Sunday.

Because we will drop your two lowest quiz grades, your quiz grade for the course will be the average of six quizzes. Quizzes will test your comprehension of basic ideas and concepts covered in that week's assigned materials and lectures. Because they are meant to test *your individual* knowledge, you may use your notes (content that you created), but you may not use group-generated documents. See *Sec. 11-402 Academic Dishonesty, especially subsections (b) and (c)1-8*.

Take-Home Exams: There will be two take-home exams that will require you to demonstrate your understanding of the material covered. Take-home exam 1 will focus on material assigned in weeks one through four. Take-

home exam 2 will be cumulative in nature, focusing on major issues covered in the class. In terms of format, both exams will be comprised of a set of essay questions from which you will choose a designated number of questions to answer. I will provide a required word-count for your answers, probably between 400 and 500 words.

Grades will be based on completion of the exam; demonstrated ability to answer the specific questions posed; depth of understanding and comprehension of the issues raised in the questions; familiarity with the relevant substantive content of the course; ability to critically analyze and/or construct an argument, marshalling specific evidence and reason in your analysis; ability to construct and clearly communicate an argument that demonstrates comprehension of the material; ability to engage with the relevant scholarly literature; and, the overall quality of the writing. Questions will not ask you to simply repeat information learned in the course.

Because take-home exams are meant to test *your individual* knowledge rather than constitute a group effort, you may use your notes (content that you created), but you may not use group-generated documents. See *Sec. 11-402 Academic Dishonesty*.

Writing Assignment: You will be given a special reading and a prompt to which you will be required to respond in 750 words.

Class Participation: Attendance and participation do not factor into your grade, but I have found that grades typically correlate with a student's attendance, advance preparation, and level of engagement during class meetings, i.e., those who regularly attend and pay attention tend to earn higher grades than those who do not. Being "prepared for class" means that you have read and engaged the assigned materials by making use of the key terms and discussion questions provided. You are expected to have read the assignments and engaged this material **before** the designated class meeting.

Grading Scale and Policies: A 10-point grading scale will be used for final course grades. All grades will be recorded as a percentage of a perfect score of 100 points. All grades, including the final course grade, will be rounded up only if the grade is within .5 of the next letter-grade. Thus, an 89.5 would be rounded up, whereas an 89.4 would not.

Extra Credit or Make-Up Work: There will be none.

COURSE MATERIALS

All course materials have been made freely available to you through Canvas. Materials for each class meeting are contained in a module designated for that class meeting as either PDFs or external URL links. If you have difficulty opening a URL link in Canvas, simply click the blue box labelled "Open Site in New Window." Just in case that doesn't work, I've also provided links below. If that doesn't work, Google it.

You are expected to read, watch, or listen to all of the required materials prior to the class meeting. It's worth repeating. You are expected to read, watch, or listen to all of the required materials prior to the class meeting.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1:

01/18: Introduction to the course.

The syllabus

01/21: The puzzle of international human rights.

Ann Marie Clark, “Human Rights Norms as Challenges to State Sovereignty,” in *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 3-11; 21-27.

WEEK 2:

01/26: The origins of the international human rights system: The role of structure.

Beth A. Simmons, “Why International Law? The Development of the International Human Rights Regime in the 20th Century,” from *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 23-36.

01/28: The political development of the international human rights system: The role of actors.

Beth A. Simmons, “Why International Law? The Development of the International Human Rights Regime in the 20th Century,” from *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 36-56.

WEEK 3

02/02: The politics of treaty creation: The Convention Against Torture (CAT).

Ann Marie Clark, “Torture,” in *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 37-69.

02/04: The legitimacy of international human rights.

Jack Donnelly, “A Brief History of Human Rights,” *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 75-92.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

WEEK 4

02/09: The power of international human rights.

Michael Goodhart, “Human Rights and the Politics of Contestation,” in Mark Goodale (ed.), *Human Rights at the Crossroads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 31-44.

02/11: Guest Speaker: Dr. Sonia Palmieri, Policy Fellow, Australian National University

Working in International Human Rights and Development—Live from Australia!

Dr. Palmieri is a Policy Fellow, focusing on gender, in the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia. Over the last 15 years, she’s worked across academic, development and parliamentary institutions, principally with the interest of understanding and improving women’s political leadership and participation. She’s held positions with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (in Geneva, Switzerland), the United Nations Development Program (in Hanoi, Vietnam), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality

and Women's Empowerment (in New York, USA), and the Australian Parliament. As an independent development practitioner, she's engaged with current and aspiring women in politics in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and - most prominently - the Pacific, and has designed and evaluated development projects for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Dr. Palmieri will discuss her work in international human rights and development and offer insights into career pathways in these fields.

WEEK 5

02/16: Assuming and avoiding treaty obligations: Ratification, reservations, and derogations.

Rhona K.M. Smith, "Human Rights in International Law" in Goodhart (ed.), *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*, 2nd ed., pp. 26-44.

02/18:

The law and politics of "enforcing" international human rights treaties. Part 1.

Rhona K.M. Smith, "Human Rights in International Law" in Goodhart (ed.), *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*, 2nd ed., pp. 26-44.

Zhang Xuelian. 2019. "On the "Concluding Observations" of the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies," 18(3) *The Journal of Human Rights* 351-64.

WEEK 6

02/23: The law and politics of "enforcing" international human rights treaties. Part 2.

Claire Callejon, et al. *Treaty Bodies Individual Communications Procedures: Providing Redress and Reparation to Victims of Human Rights Violations* (The Geneva Academy of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, 2019), pp. 12-21.

Mallene Alleyne and Felix Kirchmeier, "Small states face big challenges in engaging UN treaty bodies," *Open Global Rights*, 4 December 2019 (4 pages).

02/25: The law and politics of interpreting international human rights treaties.

Cecilia Medina, "The Role of International Tribunals: Law-Making or Creative Interpretation?" in Dinah Shelton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Human Rights Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 649-55.

WEEK 7

03/02: The law and politics of interpreting international human rights treaties: An in-class exercise.

ICCPR.

03/04: Does international human rights law work?

Eric Posner, "The Case against Human Rights," *The Guardian*, 4 December 2014 (9 pages);

Beth A. Simmons, "What's Right with Human Rights," *Democracy Journal*, Winter 2015, No. 35 (10 pages);

Human Rights Measurement Initiative and Universal Rights Group, *Is the global situation of human rights improving or deteriorating? Making the case for the empirical measurement of human rights change*, 2019 (2 pages of text).

WEEK 8

03/09: Why do states ratify (or not) international human rights treaties? Theories of commitment.

Beth A. Simmons, “Theories of Commitment,” from *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 57-80.

03/11: Why do states comply (or not) with international human rights treaties? Theories of compliance.

Beth A. Simmons, “Theories of Compliance,” from *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 112-55.

WEEK 9

Spring Break! Rejoice!!!

WEEK 10

03/23: Evaluating the effectiveness of international human rights law: Social science research, Part 1.

Janet Buttolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, “The Empirical Approach to Political Science” and “The Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research: Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables,” *Political Science Research Methods*, 7th ed. (Sage/CQ Press, 2012), pp. 33-48; 102-115; 119-126.

03/25: Evaluating the effectiveness of international human rights law: Social science research, Part 2.

Janet Buttolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, “The Importance of Theory” and “The Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research: Measurement,” *Political Science Research Methods*, 7th ed. (Sage/CQ Press, 2012), pp. 43-46; 127-134; 136; 149-153.

WEEK 11

03/30: How to measure international human rights. Part 1.

Todd Landman, “Measuring Human Rights: Principles, Practice and Policy,” 26 *Human Rights Quarterly* (2004): 906-21.

04/01: How to measure international human rights. Part 2.

Todd Landman, “Measuring Human Rights: Principles, Practice and Policy,” 26 *Human Rights Quarterly* (2004): 921-31.

Is the global situation of human rights improving or deteriorating? Making the case for the empirical measurement of human rights change (Human Rights Measurement Initiative and Universal Rights Group, 2019) (7 pages).

WEEK 12

04/06: Does international human rights law work? A quantitative perspective.

Emilie Hafner-Burton and Kiyoteru Tsutsui, 2005, "Human Rights in a Globalizing World: The Paradox of Empty Promises," 110(5) *American Journal of Sociology*, pp. 1373-1411.

04/08: How do international human rights work? Theorizing the politics of international human rights.

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 1998, "Transnational Advocacy Networks in International Politics: Introduction," *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), pp. 1-37.

WEEK 13

04/13: Guest Speaker: Amy Price, Director of Development and Communications, Front Steps

Human Rights Issues in Austin: Homelessness

Amy Price joined [Front Steps](#) in February of 2019. She has been a Director of Development for several Austin-area nonprofits in her 20+-year career—raising over \$120 million dollars for programming to make our community a better place. She is a sought-after presenter and trainer in her field, and one of her public/private fundraising ventures was recognized by the US Forest Service as “one of the most significant conservation events of 2012.” Amy grew up in San Antonio and came to Austin to attend the University of Texas at Austin—and no matter where else she moved after college—Austin always called her back. She volunteers at the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, where her daughter is a high school senior. Her son is an activist and currently working on an organic farm in Washington State. She’s on the Board of Directors for Out Youth Austin, a local nonprofit that offers youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities a place where they are loved and accepted for exactly who they are. Amy is currently working on a book about nonprofit development work to share the lessons she has learned with an even larger audience—she is often heard to say that, “this work is a relay, not a prize fight, and nonprofits and their staff should lift each other and share resources/opportunities for the good of the community.”

04/15: How do international human rights work? Applying the theory of transnational advocacy networks.

TBD

WEEK 14

04/20: How do international human rights work? A qualitative perspective.

Sally Engle Merry, 2006, "Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle," 108(1) *American Anthropologist* 38-51.

04/22: A critical perspective on measuring international human rights.

Sally Engle Merry, "A World of Quantification," from *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 1-22.

Is the global situation of human rights improving or deteriorating? Making the case for the empirical measurement of human rights change (Human Rights Measurement Initiative and Universal Rights Group, 2019) (7 pgs.).

WEEK 15

04/27: Critiques of international human rights.

Makau Mutua. 2002. "Human Rights as Metaphor," *Human Rights: A Political & Cultural Critique*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 10-38.

Recommended: Mutua, Preface, pp. ix-xi; Introduction, pp. 1-9.

04/29: The future of the international human rights system.

Piccone, Ted. 2018. *China's Long Game on Human Rights at the United Nations*. Brookings Institution (24 pgs.).

WEEK 16

05/04: Guest Speaker: Representative from Allies Against Slavery

05/06: Reflections on the legitimacy, effectiveness, and future of international human rights.

TBD

IMPORTANT (MUST-READ) ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Accommodations for Religious Holidays and Students with Disabilities: By UT Austin policy, you must notify us of your pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, (512) 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/dcce/ssd/>.

Intellectual Property Policy: This course was created by Dr. Evans, and as such, it is her intellectual property. Students are, therefore, not permitted to disseminate by any means any of the course content created by Dr. Evans, including lecture recordings, power point presentations and slides, or other learning materials. Students who do so without permission will face legal action in a court of law.

"Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited: No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course."

The Professional Environment: I expect to be addressed in person as either “Dr. Evans” or “Professor Evans.” We will personally address you by your own preferred name.

Personal Pronouns: Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name, unless they have added a “preferred name” with the Gender and Sexuality Center

(<http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and-resources/>). We will honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc.). Please advise us of any changes early in the semester so that we may make appropriate updates to our records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit

<https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/profile-pronouns>.

Email Policy: The text of your email should be addressed to either “Dr. Evans” or “Professor Evans.” It should clearly state the nature of your inquiry, the name of the course, and either your name as it appears on the course roster or the preferred name that you provided to us. All email correspondence from us to you will be automatically sent to your official UT email address. Therefore, you should know your official UT email address, and as a matter of practice, you should check your account regularly. I have endeavored to make this syllabus as thorough and clear as possible. Before emailing questions about the course, review the syllabus. It just may contain the answer that you seek. Substantive questions about the course material that require lengthy explanations or discussion will only be answered in class (where they are especially welcomed) or during office hours. I will not respond to these types of questions by email.

Classroom Behavior: This applies with equal force in the online world. It’s important that we have a classroom atmosphere that optimizes teaching and learning, and we all share the responsibility for creating a civil and non-disruptive forum. Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that does not disrupt teaching or learning. Here are some guidelines for classroom behavior: (1) unless internet issues prevent you from doing so, turn your camera on during class and leave it on for the entire class; (2) pay attention during class; (3) classroom discussion should be civilized and respectful to everyone and relevant to the topic we are discussing; and, (4) any discussion from class that continues on any listserv or class discussion list should adhere to these same rules and expectations. It is a good rule to let professors know at the start of class if you will need to “leave” early.

TITLE IX REPORTING AND TEXAS SB212

Reporting Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university’s relevant policies.

Beginning 1 January 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 **requires all employees of Texas universities**, including faculty, to **report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking** that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported.

We are Responsible Employees and MUST (we are legally required to) report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed to us in writing, discussion, emails, or one-on-one exchanges. Before talking with us, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX-related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee.

If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, including the types of conduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

Safety Matters: This is less relevant, but we are nevertheless required to include it. Occupants of buildings on the UT-Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, the UT-Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency. The Office of Campus Safety and Security can be reached at 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>, and the Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL) can be reached at 512-232-5050.