

Human Rights in History
Winter Semester 2024

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A master's level course in the history of human rights as the bearer of the claim that what human beings have in common outweighs their differences and that these common needs and obligations should be protected with rights.

After a session on precursors of modern human rights, the course will focus exclusively on the post 1948 period and the emergence of universal human rights, alongside the Nuremberg Trials, the Genocide Convention, the Geneva Conventions, and the Refugee Convention. After explaining how these pillars of the new architecture of international law were put into place after 1945, the course explores the role of human rights, during the 1950's and 1960's, in dismantling European imperialism and segregation in the United States. Two classes will be devoted to the role that human rights played in the 'rights revolution' in European and North American societies from the 1960's onwards, focusing upon feminism and gay liberation. A class will consider the role that human rights played in the Eastern European revolutions of the 1980's which overthrew the Soviet Empire. In the post 1989 period, the focus will be upon the revival of humanitarian intervention and the 'responsibility to protect' and conclude in the 21st century with the supposed 'end times of human rights': the apparent exhaustion of human rights and the re-emergence of claims of difference—by nation, race, creed, gender, and class-- that contest the status of universal rights claims.

Biography

Michael Ignatieff is Rector Emeritus and professor of history at CEU.

Ignatieff came to CEU after serving as Edward R. Murrow Chair of Press, Politics, and Public Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School.

He served in the Canadian Parliament and was Leader of the Liberal Party. His books include *The Rights Revolution* (2000), *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (2001), *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* (2004), *Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics* (2013), and *The Ordinary Virtues: Moral Order in a Divided World* (2017). His latest book is *On Consolation: Finding Solace in Hard Times*.(2021)

Assignments and Grading:

All readings are available on Moodle. Class attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to do the reading and contribute to class discussion. Please inform the instructor if illness or urgent family matters require you to miss a class.

30%. A book report of 1000 words on one of the readings. Assigned February 13, due February 20.

50%. A 3000-word essay on a human rights theme in a historical context. An office hour meeting on the choice of topic is advisable. Due April 8, 2024.

20%. Student presentations, in the last 30 minutes of class. Group presentations encouraged. 10 minutes maximum.

Plagiarism

All work submitted by students must be written by them in their own words. Students must footnote all use of words, phrases or sentences taken from other sources. Students who pass off the work of others as if it were their own are guilty of plagiarism. The sanction for plagiarism is a failing grade in the course and a disciplinary proceeding.

The history department allows use of generative AI—Chat GPT, Bard, Bing etc—but students are responsible for declaring any use they make of it. Failure to do so is presumptive evidence of plagiarism. If generative AI is used at any stage in the composition of a text, the prompts used as input for the AI and a digital copy (pdf) of the AI's answer or output must be submitted along with any written work. The final version of written work must show clear evidence of expansion and elaboration regarding its academic form, content, and intellectual engagement with the subject.

Office Hours by Appointment

In B-205

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Course Syllabus

Week 1: Tuesday January 9, 2024

Human Rights Foundations

Michael Ignatieff *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*, (Princeton, 1999), ch 1 ps 3-48

Hunt, Lynn. *Inventing Human Rights: a History*, pp. 113-145

Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, (1789)

Week 2: Tuesday January 16, 2024

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Genocide Convention, 1948

Johannes Morsink *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, Drafting, Intent* (1999), introduction, chapter 1, ps. ix-35

Mark A. Lewis' "The Genocide Convention: The Gutting of Preventative Measures, 1946–48" in *The Birth of the New Justice: The Internationalization of Crime and Punishment, 1919-1950* (2014) (pp. 181–228).

American Anthropological Association "Statement on Human Rights", 1947

Week 3: January 23, 2024

Nuremberg Trials, 1945, and the Geneva Conventions, 1949

Boyd Van Dijk *Preparing for War*, pp. 30-51.

David Luban "The Legacies of Nuremberg" in G. Mettraux (ed) *Perspectives on the Nuremberg Trial*, (Oxford, 2008), pp. 638-672

Week 4: January 30, 2024

"The Right to have Rights" Statelessness, and Migration, 1951-

UN International Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp 267-302

K. Kirisci "The 1951 Convention is Falling Short of its Mission" Brookings, July 26, 2021 <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-1951-refugee-convention-is-falling-short-of-its-mission-could-the-global-compact-on-refugees-help/>

Week 5: February 6, 2024

Human Rights and the End of Empire, 1945-1960

Burke, Roland. *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights*. The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010; pp. 149-167

William Schabas "The International Legal Order's Color Line" (2023)

Martin Luther King "The Birth of a New Nation," Sermon Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church April 7, 1957."

B.R. Ambedkar "Speech at Mahad" (1927)

Week 6: February 13, 2024

Human Rights and the Cold War, 1975-89

Foot, Rosemary. "The Cold War and Human Rights." In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 3:445–65. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

D.C. Thomas *The Helsinki Effect* (2001), ps. 257-288

Vaclav Havel "The Power of the Powerless" (1978)
<https://hac.bard.edu/amor-mundi/the-power-of-the-powerless-vaclav-havel-2011-12-23>

FIRST ASSIGNMENT ASSIGNED, FEBRUARY 13

Week 7: February 20, 2024

Human Rights and US foreign Policy, 1976-

Sam Moyn *The Last Utopia*, prologue

Michael Ignatieff "American Exceptionalism and Human Rights" pp. 1-26

David Forsythe "Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect"

Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 105, No. 3 (1990), pp. 435-454

FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE FEBRUARY 20, 2024

Week 8: February 27,2024

Women's Rights as Human Rights

Martha Nussbaum "Women's Progress and Women's Human Rights" *Human Rights Quarterly*, 38,3, August 2016, pp. 589-622

Diane Elson "Gender Justice, Human Rights and Neo-Liberal Economic Policies" in M. Molyneux and Shahra Razavi (eds) *Gender Justice, Development and Human Rights*, (2001), pp.78-114

Week 9: March 6, 2024 : LGBT Rights

Laura Belmonte *The international LGBT rights movement: a history*,(London: 2021), pp. 107-70

Week 10: March 12,2024

Human Rights and Terrorism

Michael Ignatieff *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* (Princeton, 2004), pp. 1-24

Louise Richardson *What Terrorists Want*,(2007),pp. 3-20; pp. 71-103

Week 11: March 19,2023

Human Rights and 'Humanitarian Intervention'

Gary J. Bass *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention*,(2008), pp. 3-23

International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), 2001. *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on*

Intervention and State Sovereignty. Ottawa: The International Development Research Centre. <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/57/303>

Annan, Kofi “Secretary-General Reflects On ‘Intervention’ In Thirty-Fifth Annual Ditchley Foundation Lecture | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.” 2021. Un.org. 2021. <https://www.un.org/press/en/1998/19980626.sgsm6613.html>.

Week 12: March 26,2024

The End Times of Human Rights?

Hopgood, Stephen. “Challenges to the Global Human Rights Regime: Are Human Rights Still an Effective Language for Social Change?” *International Journal of Human Rights*, (2014)

Moyn, Samuel. *The Last Utopia : Human Rights in History* (Harvard: 2010),epilogue.

Kathryn Sikkink *Evidence for Hope: Making Human Rights Work in the 21st Century*, (Princeton,2021), ps. 3-21

Anne Applebaum “There Are No Rules Anymore” *The Atlantic*, October 9,2023