

Spring 2025: HIST 33805

## History of Human Rights

MWF 10:30-11:20 in BRWN 1154

Professor Klein-Pejšová (PAY-show-vah) (RKP)

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Eleanor Roosevelt holding the Spanish-language version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Palais de Chaillot, Paris, December 1948.

The concept of – and struggle for – human rights is powerful, pervasive. Its origins, development, and strategies of implementation contested. Have human beings always had the "right to have rights"? How did the concept of "rights" arise? What does it mean, and how has it been used? This course explores human rights' genealogy and uneven historical evolution from the European Enlightenment through the late twentieth century human rights revolution and experience of globalization. We will examine Atlantic Revolutionary era articulations of "rights of man" and "human rights," the interwar institutionalization of rights, the post-WWII shift from minority to individual human rights, the human rights revolution of the late 1970s, and the relationship between globalization and human rights using a variety of primary and secondary sources, with special attention to relations between human rights and mass atrocity prevention. This course fulfills a core requirement for the Human Rights minor.

### Required Texts:

- Peter N. Stearns, *Human Rights in World History 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (Routledge, 2023): **eBook link** <https://www.routledge.com/Human-Rights-in-World-History/Stearns/p/book/9781032332109>
- Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (Norton, 2007)
- Scott Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*: **free pdf download; or \$2.99 Kindle version** <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/reports-and-resources/fundamentals-of-genocide-and-mass-atrocity-prevention>
- **Additional required readings available on Brightspace, marked with a "B" (B).**

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course, you will have:

- 1) Gained a deeper understanding of the patterns and processes, ruptures and continuities in the human rights history narrative which have shaped today's world, its politics, ideas, and ambitions;
- 2) Explored how human rights connects us to other people, places, and times;
- 3) Used primary source and secondary source evidence to analyze fundamental problems in human rights history;
- 4) Engaged in an environment of open inquiry to exchange ideas and interpretation of concepts, with the understanding that scholarly inquiry is a multidimensional conversation.
- 5) Become better prepared to negotiate the variable applications of human rights concepts in today's globalized world.

**Course Requirements and Grading: 300 possible points**

- I) **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory following Purdue guidelines. Arrive on time. If there is a reason that you must leave early, notify me before class begins and sit near an exit.
  - Class success depends on: (1) respect for each other (students, grader, professor); (2) collegiality and civility of discourse; (3) being fully present, meaning: your attendance, your professional courtesy of arriving on-time, silencing your phones and other devices; (4) your commitment to the hard work of engaging with largely new and often difficult material with many unfamiliar names of people and places and terms.
  - This is an inclusive classroom. Purdue University and the Department of History are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. A hyperlink to Purdue's full Nondiscrimination Policy Statement is included in our course Brightspace under University Policies and Statements.
- II) **Reading Questions (20 cumulative points):** *The better we each do, the better we all do.* We will be using collaborative methods to keep us all engaged with the course readings. I will be sending you reading questions on shared google docs for asynchronous coursework. Each response is worth one (1) point. Once you reach 20 points, additional points will accumulate as extra credit.
- III) **Informal In-Class Writing (30 cumulative points):** We will be taking part in a range of informal, exploratory in-class writing exercises using the "Quiz" tool on

Brightspace. You will need to use a device (laptop, phone) through which you can access Brightspace. Each exercise is worth two (2) points. Once you reach 30 points, additional points will accumulate as extra credit.

- IV) Five Short Papers (SPs) (20 pts. each, 100 points total):** These are *concise, substantive* (about 300 words – about 1 page) problem-driven responses to the directed question concerning the week’s readings, which you will find listed on the syllabus under the relevant Friday entry. **SPs are due on Brightspace by 10am on the indicated Fridays.**
- V) Case Study Project (100 points):** This project is intended to connect your examination of human rights instruments and institutions established in the postwar period and in the 1990s with mass atrocity prevention. You will be randomly assigned one of the following case studies to examine, each of which represents developments in how the international community has confronted mass atrocities: Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, East Timor, Libya, Sudan, and Syria. There are many other cases, but these examples help us to understand the precedents the international community draws on for today’s policy making. Your case study project will take the shape of five (5) slides, each answering a directed question. People working on the same case study will meet as groups on Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup> during class time and complete a slide worth 10 points of the final individual project grade. More details to follow in class. **Due on Brightspace by 5pm on Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>.**
- VI) Exit Essay: (50 points):** What is one thing you have learned this semester that made you sit up and take notice? Write this *concise, substantive* 1-page (300-word) essay as if you were sitting down over coffee explaining a topic, theme, or idea that clicked with you during the semester. **Due on Brightspace by 5pm on Monday, May 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**Grade scale:** A+ = 98-100; A = 93-97; A- = 90-92; B+ = 88-89; B = 83-87; B- = 80-82; C+ = 78-79; C = 73-77; C- = 70-72; D+ = 68-69; D = 63-67; D- = 60-62; F = 0-59

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**Schedule of Classes** (You will learn of changes to the schedule in advance):

- Week 1: What are Human Rights? What is Human Rights History?**
- M, 1/13: Course introduction & course logistics
- W, 1/15: Stearns, ch.2, “Challenges in Framing Human Rights History,” pp. 6-27.
- F, 1/17: Hoffmann, “Genealogies of Human Rights,” pp. 1-26. **(B)**
- How does Hoffmann explain human rights genealogies? We will discuss how he traces the progression through “Rights, Nations, and Empires since 1800,” and “Competing Universalisms since 1945.”
- Week 2: Rights & Responsibilities**
- M, 1/20: *MLK Day – no class*
- W, 1/22: Sikkink, ch.1, “What Together We Can Do,” pp. 1-25. **(B)**

- F, 1/24: Donnelly & Whelan, ch.1, "Human Rights in Global Politics: Historical Perspective," pp. 3-19. **(B)**  
**(SP #1)** "What explains the change in human rights norms and practices over time?" The authors offer 3 possible explanations on page 17: changing moral sensibilities, changes in the character of international relations, changes in national human rights practices. With which explanation are you most likely to agree? Why?
- Week 3: **Premodern Traditions: Legal, Philosophical, Religious**  
M, 1/27: Legal: Stearns, ch.3, "Regional Traditions before Human Rights," pp. 28-37.  
W, 1/29: Phil: Stearns, ch.3, "Regional Traditions before Human Rights," pp. 37-43.  
F, 1/31: Rel: Stearns, ch.3, "Regional Traditions before Human Rights," pp. 43-61, including the "premodern legacy" section of the chapter.
- Week 4: **The Rights of Man – What Changes?**  
M, 2/3: Concepts: Stearns, ch.4, "The Push for New Rights," pp. 63-78.  
W, 2/5: Application: Stearns, ch.4, "The Push for New Rights," pp. 78-95.  
F, 2/7: Jews as Test Case: "Jews Through Jewish and Non-Jewish Eyes," from ch.10 in Efron, et al, *The Jews: A History* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 268-272; and see map of Jewish Emancipation in Europe. **(B)**  
**(SP #2)** What do you think about the arguments presented in the European debates about whether Jews should gain civic equality and be admitted to citizenship? How did this debate represent a change in human rights norms and practices?
- Week 5: **"We hold these truths to be self-evident."**  
M, 2/10: Hunt, "Introduction," pp. 16-34: consider terms and phrasing, their meaning and usage: "universal", "self-evident", "natural", "equal", "rights", "torture", "the Creator."  
W, 2/12: Hunt, ch.1, "Torrents of Emotion," pp. 35-69.  
F, 2/14: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract" (1762) **(B)**
- Week 6: **Trajectories**  
M, 2/17: Hunt, ch.2, "Bone of Their Bone," pp. 70-112.  
•How did Eighteenth-century readers learn to empathize "across more broadly defined boundaries"? To what extent do you find Hunt's argument convincing?  
W, 2/19: Hunt, ch.3, "They Have Set a Great Example," pp. 113-145.  
•Why do declarations serve as milestones, and evidence of attitude transformation, according to Hunt? In what ways?  
F, 2/21: Hunt, ch.4, "There Will Be No End of It," pp. 146-175.  
**(SP #3)** What does Hunt mean when she cites the quotation "there will be no end of it?" How does this sentiment relate to the cascading rights demands argument? Do you agree that "there will be no end to it?"

- Week 7: **19<sup>th</sup> Century Advances and Retreats**  
 M, 2/24: Stearns, ch.5, "Human Rights on a World Stage," pp. 96-117.  
 W, 2/26: Stearns, ch.5, "Human Rights on a World Stage," pp. 117-124.  
 F, 2/28: Human Rights in the Industrial Age **(B)**
- Week 8: **Interwar Institutionalization of Rights**  
 M, 3/3: Stearns, ch.6, "Human Rights between the World Wars," pp. 125-136.  
 W, 3/5: Mark Mazower, ch.2, pp. 41-75 in "Empires, Nations, Minorities," in *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. **(B)**  
 F, 3/7: The Polish Minorities Treaties. **(B)**
- Week 9: **Postwar**  
 M, 3/10: Deák, ch.10, "Purging Hitler's Europe," pp. 191-209 in *Europe on Trial*. **(B)**  
 • *discussion of Case Study Project*  
 W, 3/12: Waller, ch.1, pp. 3-40 "A Crime without a Name," in *Confronting Evil*. **(B)**  
 F, 3/14: **Complete SP#4 – No Class meeting**  
 Crimes Against Humanity: Marrus, pp. 51-60 in *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945-46*. **(B)**  
**(SP #4)** How did the Allied powers explain the introduction of the new "crimes against humanity" charge at the Nuremberg Trials? Do you agree that this charge was a necessary precedent?
- Week 10: 3/17-3/21: **Spring Break – no class**
- Week 11: **Regime of Rights**  
 M, 3/24: **Complete Reading Questions – No Class Meeting**  
 • Ishay, ch.4, "After World War II: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," pp. 211-225. **(B)**  
 W, 3/26: Stearns, ch.7, "The Global Expansion of Human Rights," pp. 137-149.  
 F, 3/28: Refugee Convention (1951)& Joskowitz, "Romani Refugees and the Postwar Order" **(B)**
- Week 12: **Decolonization & Internationalization of Rights**  
 M, 3/31: Stearns, ch.7, "The Global Expansion of Human Rights," pp. 149-161.  
 W, 4/2: Brad Simpson, "The Biafran Secession and the Limits of Self-Determination" **(B)**  
 F, 4/4: Allida Black, ch.6, "Are Women 'Human'? The UN and the Struggle to Recognize Women's Rights as Human Rights," pp.133-155. **(B)**
- Week 13: **Geographies of Rights**  
 M, 4/7: Stearns, ch.7, "The Global Expansion of Human Rights," pp. 161-176.  
 W, 4/9: Donnelly & Whelan, ch.11, "Globalization, the State, and Human Rights," pp. 201-215 **(B)**  
 F, 4/11: Human Rights and the State: see question 2 page 213-214 in Donnelly & Whelan:

**(SP #5)** “Human rights advocates typically focus on states as a threat to human rights. This chapter suggests that globalization is forcing human rights advocates to emphasize the role of the state as protector. Has there really been a change? Has not the role of the state as protector always been central?”

- Week 14: **Cold War: Social & Economic Rights vs. Civil Rights**  
 M, 4/14: •Ishay, pp. 225-229  
 •Moyn, Samuel. *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*, 2019, Introduction, pp. 1-10. **(B)**  
 W, 4/16: Richardson-Little, et al, “New Perspectives on Socialism and Human Rights in East Central Europe since 1945: Introduction to the Thematic Issue” **(B)**  
 F, 4/18: Neier, Aryeh. *The International Human Rights Movement: A History*. Human Rights and Crimes against Humanity. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020, chapter 1, “The Movement,” pp. 1-26. **(B)**
- Week 15: **Atrocity Prevention: Upstream, Midstream, Downstream**  
 M, 4/21: James Waller, “You’re One or the Other”: Social Identities in Deeply Divided Societies,” ch.1 from *A Troubled Sleep: Risk and Resilience in Contemporary Northern Ireland* (Oxford, 2021) **(B)**  
 W, 4/23: Straus, ch.2, “Risk Factors”  
 F, 4/25: Straus, ch. 6, “Tools and Approaches.”
- Week 16: **Reading Week**  
 M, 4/28: Wrap-Up Discussion today: Stearns, ch.9, “Conclusion: Revisiting Major Issues,” pp. 203-209  
 W, 4/30: **No Class: case study discussion groups meet & complete a project slide together (worth 10 points of total individual project grade)→ more information to follow in class**  
 F, 5/2: **No Class: Case Study Project due by 5pm today**
- Finals Week: 5-10 May: **Exit Essay due by 5pm, May 5th**

**Have a Great Summer!**

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### UNIVERSITY POLICIES

#### DISCLAIMER

In the event of a major campus emergency, the above requirements, deadlines and grading policies are subject to changes that may be required by a revised semester calendar. Any such changes in this course will be posted on Brightspace once the course resumes or can be obtained by contacting the professor via email.

**EMAIL ETIQUETTE**

Outside of class or office hours, communicate with your professor by email. State the reason for your email in the subject line (ex: “question about essay”). Include a full salutation (ex: “Dear Professor”) and closing with your full name (ex: “Sincerely, Eleanor Roosevelt”). Use full sentences, correct grammar, and punctuation. If you fail to follow this etiquette, I will not respond to your email. I will usually respond to your emails within 24 hours, except for weekends.

**CHEATING / PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Plagiarism refers to the reproduction of another's words or ideas without proper attribution. University Regulations contain further information on dishonesty. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will be treated as such in this class. **You are expected to produce your own work and to accurately cite all necessary materials.** Cheating, plagiarism, and other dishonest practices will be punished as harshly as Purdue University policies allow. Any instances of academic dishonesty will likely result in a grade of F for the course and notification of the Dean of Students Office. Please make sure that you are familiar with Purdue’s academic integrity policies:

<https://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academic-integrity/undergraduate.html>

Using an AI-content generator such as ChatGPT to complete assignments without proper attribution violates academic integrity. By submitting assignments in this class, you pledge to affirm that they are your own work, and you attribute use of any tools and sources.

**GRIEF ABSENCE POLICY**

Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS). Students will be excused from classes for funeral leave and given the opportunity to complete missed assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student’s family.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Purdue University is committed to providing equal access and equal opportunity to university courses, activities, and programs for students with disabilities. Students with documented disabilities that substantially limit a major life activity, such as learning, walking, or seeing, may qualify for academic adjustments and/or services. If you have a disability that requires special academic accommodation, please make an appointment to speak with me within the first three weeks of the semester in order to discuss any adjustments. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the Disability Resource Center of any impairment/condition that may require accommodations and/or classroom modifications. To request information about academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, or services, please contact the Disability Resource Center in the Office of the Dean of Students, 830 Young Hall, (765) 494-1247 (V/TTY), [drc@purdue.edu](mailto:drc@purdue.edu).

**NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT**

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and

mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life.

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a veteran. The University will conduct its programs, services and activities consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and orders and in conformance with the procedures and limitations as set forth in Executive Memorandum No. D-1, which provides specific contractual rights and remedies.

**VIOLENT BEHAVIOR POLICY**

Purdue University is committed to providing a safe and secure campus environment. Purdue strives to create an educational environment for students and work environment for employees that promote educational and career goals. Violent behavior impedes such goals. Therefore, violent behavior is prohibited in or on any university facility or while participating in any university activity.