LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
LOYOLA ROME

PLSC 213: International Human Rights
Loyola Rome
Spring 2027
Tuesdays | 6:45-9:15 pm
Dr. Nicola Di Mauro
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

Perhaps more than at any other point in recent history, human rights are being contested. From a range of positions, they are interpreted and reshaped according to political pressures. Yet a codification exists that defines their contours with clarity. That codification is itself the product of history and its transformations. This course sets out to examine international human rights as a site of contention, as the outcome of the uneven and combined relations that shape processes of becoming and the law itself.

The course is organized in two parts. The first traces the contemporary history of human rights and the path toward their internationalization and codification, culminating in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. The second part turns to the profound challenges that the present poses to this codification, examining some of the central issues of our time and the rights bound up with them: structural racism, migration and citizenship, the governance of difference, the concept of genocide, and the possibilities and limits of intervention by international law and institutions.

Ultimately, the course invites students to reflect on forms of justice and on the different paths toward building it. To this end, it is grounded in collective discussion and joint analysis, and it offers students the opportunity to undertake short research projects with International Organizations, NGOs, or grassroots organizations in Rome that enhance overall academic performance and culminate in reflections shared during the final sessions.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course students should be able to:

- Develop well-argued critical reflections on justice and human rights, drawing on collective discussion and collaborative analysis;
- Determine how the codification of international human rights is shaped by historical processes and by uneven and combined relations;
- Assess the challenges that contemporary issues, such as structural racism, migration and citizenship, the governance of difference, and genocide, pose to the existing human rights framework;
- Identify the key moments, actors, debates, and conceptual frameworks that have shaped international human rights.

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Required Text / Materials

Assigned readings and other assigned material shall be posted and/or linked on the course's Sakai page.

Main reference for the first part of the course:

1. [Chapters] Ishay, M. R. (2008) *The History of Human Rights : From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* . University of California Press [Available online].

Main references for the second part of the course:

1. Bradley, A. S. (2019) "Human Rights Racism". *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 32, 1-58 [Available online]
2. Spijkerboer, T. (2018) "The Global Mobility Infrastructure: Reconceptualising the Externalisation of Migration Control". *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 20 (4), 452-469
3. Segal, R., Daniele, L. (2026) "Gaza as Twilight of Israel Exceptionalism: Holocaust and Genocide Studies from Unprecedented Crisis to Unprecedented Change". *Journal of Genocide Research*, 28 (1), 69-78 [Available online]

Attendance Policy

It is expected that students will attend and participate actively in all class meetings both on-campus and on-site. Class participation is an essential part of the grading policy of each instructor. All Loyola Rome courses adhere to the same attendance policy as is indicated explicitly on course syllabi.

In accordance with the Loyola Rome mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, and in compliance with full-time student visa status, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy:

Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student and synonymous with academic success. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Lateness or leaving class early will impact the course grade at the professor's discretion. All absences, including medical absences, will be treated the same, unless they are documented long-term conditions or emergencies. Such situations will be evaluated case-by-case by the Academic Affairs office.

Students with approved accommodations in relation to attendance should consult with the Student Accessibility Center before traveling to Rome and consult with the Rome Center Academic Affairs office upon arrival.

Once-a-week classes:

- After 1 absence, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 3 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

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Assessment Components

- Participation 10 %
- Midterm Exam 20 %
- Research Paper 20 %
- Presentation 20 %
- Final Exam 30 %

Grading

94-100: A
90-93: A-
87-89: B+
84-86: B
80-83: B-
77-79: C+
74-76: C
70-73: C-
67-69: D+
60-66: D
59 or lower: F

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable at the Loyola Rome and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: https://catalog.luc.edu/academic-standards-regulations/undergraduate/. You are responsible to comply with the LUC University Catalog.

Late or Missed Assignments & Exam Policy

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. *As per the Loyola Rome academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given for emergencies/grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given on a case-by-case basis.*

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) requiring academic accommodations should contact the Academic Affairs office at Loyola Rome during the first week of classes.

Statement on Title IX

Loyola Rome follows Loyola's Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation and will comply with those as indicated and instructed.

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Course Schedule

Session 1 (19/Jan): **What are Human Rights? Course Intro and Overview**
[No readings]

Session 2 (26/Jan): **The Roots of Human Rights**
Ishay, M. R. (2008). "Early Ethical Contributions to Human Rights". In *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era*. University of California Press, 15-62.

Session 3 (2/Feb): **Personal Liberties**
Ishay, M. R. (2008). "Human Rights and the Enlightenment: The Development of a Liberal and Secular Perspective on Human Rights". In *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era*. University of California Press, 63-116.

Session 4 (9/Feb): **Social and Economic Equity**
Ishay, M. R. (2008). "Human Rights and the Industrial Age: The Development of a Socialist Perspective on Human Rights". In *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era*. University of California Press, 117-172.

Session 5 (16/Feb): **Communal and National Solidarity**
Ishay, M. R. (2008). "The World Wars: The Institutionalization of International Rights and the Right to Self-Determination". In *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era*. University of California Press, 173-244.

Session 6 (23/Feb): **Human Rights for Whom? A Site of Contention**
Recap & Focus Groups [No readings]

Session 7 (2/Mar): **Midterm Exam**
During this session, we will start setting up the short research projects focused on International Organizations, NGOs, or grassroots organizations in Rome [No readings]

Session 8 (16/Mar): **What is Racism?**
Bradley, A. S. (2019) "Human Rights Racism". *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 32: 1-58

Session 9 (23/Mar): **Migration as a New Field of Law**
Spijkerboer, T. (2018) "The Global Mobility Infrastructure: Reconceptualising the Externalisation of Migration Control". *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 20 (4), 452-469.

Session 10 (30/Mar): ***La Haine* - Structural Racism in the West**
Kassovitz M, Kanopy. *La haine.* Kanopy Streaming; 2016 [No readings]

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Session 11 (6/Apr): **Voices from the Field: Meeting Human Rights Activists in Rome**
On-site visit to the Tiburtina Welcome Center [No readings]

Session 12 (13/Apr): **What is Genocide?**
Segal, R., Daniele, L. (2026) "Gaza as Twilight of Israel Exceptionalism: Holocaust and Genocide Studies from Unprecedented Crisis to Unprecedented Change". *Journal of Genocide Research*, 28 (1), 69-78

Session 13 (20/Apr): **Research Paper & Presentations**

Session 14 (27/Apr)[5:30-7:30 PM]: **Final Exam**

Please note: The course syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced to the class.