

Human Rights in Central and Eastern Europe

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Outline of the course: The course aims to provide an interdisciplinary understanding of the international human rights framework in Central and Eastern Europe where human rights system mirrors historical developments of the countries within the globalizing world. The course invites students from all disciplines to explore and make sense of current human rights issues, cases and problems in the region, contextualized in the broader challenges of human rights at the beginning of 21st century. We will discuss how current political crises (refugees and migration, housing issues, digital rights) shape the debate about human rights in the CEE region and beyond. Rather than offering simple answers, the aim of the course is to allow for critical thinking and discussions. This course offers an immersion into the human rights system not only through the academic prism but also through active engagement with human rights practitioners and activists.

Grading policy: Throughout the course students will have weekly readings and assignments. Each student will present a summary of requested readings and prepare questions for discussions. A mid-term sit-in exam and a final research paper are required.

Active class participation: 40%
Mid-term exam: 30%
Final research paper and oral presentation: 30%

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A	93-100	Outstanding work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

UPCES Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The UPCES program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristic, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

UPCES Diversity Policy

UPCES fully embraces diversity and strives to create a safe and welcoming environment for students from all backgrounds. Prague is a wonderfully diverse community and UPCES is no different. All students should feel at home while studying abroad and UPCES will do its utmost to make sure that becomes a reality. Although unique challenges may arise, we believe that students from all walks of life will encounter wonderful opportunities for enrichment as they explore a new culture while studying abroad.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: UPCES Orientation Lecture Series

Lectures and site visits on subjects of history, culture, politics, and the economies of the Czech Republic and Central Europe in order to establish a common interdisciplinary background and vocabulary for all courses.

Week 2: Introduction

Overview of the course, requirements and motivations.

Introductory lecture and discussion: What are human rights? Are human rights truly universal and do they exist in practice?

Readings:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Week 3: The shaping of current human rights system in a bi-polar world

Readings:

- Shelton, D. (2007). An Introduction to the history of the international human rights law.
- Ulrich, G. (2001). Human rights an unfinished project, in: K. Hastrup (Ed.), Human Rights on Common Grounds. The Quest for Universality, New York, Kluwer Law International

Week 4: What are human rights today? Current critiques and discussion of the concept of human rights

Readings:

- Hafner-Burton, E. M. and Tsutsui, K. (2005). Human rights in a globalizing world: The paradox of empty promises. *American Journal of Sociology*, 5:1373–1411.
- Mutua, M. (2001). Human rights As Metaphor, in: *Human Rights, A Political and Cultural Critique*. University of Pennsylvania Press

Week 5: Czech Republic and human rights – historical development and current status.

Readings:

- Havel's letter to Husak
- Charter of Human rights
- Blaive, M. (2005). The Czechs and their Communism, Past and Present. In: *Inquiries into Past and Present*, ed. D. Gard, I. Main, M. Oliver and J. Wood, Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, Vol. 17

Week 6: Student homework / preparations of midterm exams materials

Week 7: Midterm exam

Week 8: Human rights and minorities in Central and Eastern Europe

Readings:

- Case study: D.H. AND OTHERS V. THE CZECH REPUBLIC, all case materials available at: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2945>
- Romea.cz coverage of the case of Stanislav Tomáš:
<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/romani-man-dies-after-czech-police-kneel-on-his-neck-they-say-drugs-caused-his-death.romani-activists-see-parallels-to> + ERRC video:
<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/european-roma-rights-centre-it-may-take-years-to-legally-resolve-the-death-of-stanislav-tomas-information-cannot-be>

Week 9: Migration in Eastern Europe: the “refugee crisis”, right to asylum and human rights violations

Readings:

- Pushed Back At The Door – Denial of Access to Asylum in Eastern EU Member states, Hungarian Helsinki Committee Report, 2017
- Jungwirth, T. (2018).: Domestic Political Aspects of Migration in the Czech Republic, in: Kucharczyk, J. and Mesežnikov, G: Phantom Menace – Politics and Policies of Migration in Central Europe, Heinrich Boell Stiftung Prague, p. 126 – 148.

Week 10: Housing as Human Right? Current issues and challenges in the CEE region

Readings:

- Bratt, R. G., Stone, Michael E. and Hartman, Ch (2006): Why A Right to Housing Is Needed and Makes Sense, in: Right to Housing: A New Social Agenda, Temple University Press, 2006)
- Kolocek, M.(2013) The Human Right to Housing in the 27 states of European Union, in: European Journal of Homelessness, 7:1
- Farha, L. (2020). When governments sell out to developers, housing is no longer a human right, Feb 29, 2020, The Guardian:
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/29/governments-developers-housing-human-right>

Week 11: Human rights in cyberspace – are digital rights human rights?

Readings:

- Karppinen, K. (2017). Human Rights and the Digital. In: Tumber H and Waisbord, S. (2017). Routledge Companion to Media and Human Rights
- Hate speech on the Internet and decision-making of Czech courts (2020). Public Defender of Rights – survey report

Week 12: Gender backlash, gender politics and LGBTQ+ rights in the CEE region

Readings:

- Grudzinska, A. (2021). Make Misogyny Great Again. “Anti-gender” politics in Poland, in: Mejstřík M. and Handl, V. (2021). Current Populism in Europe – Gender Backlash and counter-strategies, Heinrich Boell Stiftung Prague, p. 23 – 37.
- Sata, R. (2021). In the Name of the Family: The Populist Turn Against Gender in Hungary, in Mejstřík M. and Handl, V. (2021). Current Populism in Europe – Gender Backlash and counter-strategies, Heinrich Boell Stiftung Prague, p. 37 – 54.

Week 13: The future of human rights

Presentation of final research papers outlines and discussion

Readings:

- Steen, D. (2013). The future of human rights in Europe. The Netherlands human rights committee conference reader, p. 19-28.
- Salomon, M. (2012). The future of human rights. Global Policy, 3 (4), p. 455-457
- Drahokoupil, Š. Heřmanová, M. (2017). A Bastion of Democracy or Half Way Down the Slippery Slope? Liberal Values and Illiberal Tendencies in the Czech Republic, Cultures of History Forum, <https://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/focus/lex-ceu/a-bastion-of-democracy-or-half-way-down-the-slippery-slope-liberal-values-and-illiberal-tendencies-in-the-czech-republic/>