

Graduate Seminar
Religion and Society: Approaches to Human Rights
Syllabus

Course #: 032:231; Approved GE: None

Meeting Time & Location: 2:30-5:00pm W; Room: 2058 LIB. Please check online for updates at:

<https://isis6.uiowa.edu/isis/>

Final Exam Schedule: There is no final examination; your research paper is due during the last week of instructions.

In all cases however, we will post current information on ICON to avoid any confusion.

Instructor: AHMED SOUAIAlA

Office Hours: T&TH 2:30-4:00

Office: 404 Gilmore Hall

Email: ahmed-souaiaia@uiowa.edu

Websites: <http://souaiaia.com>

About the Course:

Approaches to Human Rights is a seminar for graduate students with interest in the study of law, religion, and society. It is a reading course; it is interdisciplinary, and it is intensive. Students must be prepared to read the assigned materials in time, lead class discussions, and write a substantive research paper about a relevant topic. All students must read the assigned books and chapters, however, each week, one or two students will be selected to summarize the week's reading assignments, identify the main thesis of the work, determine the disciplinary approach (or approaches) employed by the author(s); and moderate the ensuing discussion. In a sense, while this course is primarily a learning experience, it is also a training opportunity for future teachers and professionals.

We will discuss the various theoretical approaches to human rights issues and consider the ways the theories apply in actual cases from the recent history or current events. To be sure, we will discuss the various theories from a number of disciplinary perspectives including, but not limited to, philosophic/analytic, normative/legal, and descriptive/historic approaches. Specifically, we will discuss the relevance of current events to human rights, women's rights, minority rights, human rights and *shari`ah*, and political and social order in the Islamic world.

Undergraduate students may enroll in this course but must consult the Instructor before or during the first week of the semester.

COURSE READINGS:

In addition to the textbooks below, there will be additional reading materials to be made available to students online. Students are expected to make use of the World Wide Web and to read current events relevant to the course's theme as they become available in-print or on the Internet.

Textbooks:

Required:

- [*Which Rights Should Be Universal?*](#), by William Talbott
- [*The Idea of Human Rights: Four Inquiries*](#), Michael J. Perry
- [*The Politics of Justice and Human Rights: Southeast Asia and Universalist Theory \(Cambridge Asia-Pacific Studies\)*](#), by Anthony J. Langlois
- [*Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari`a*](#), Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na`im
- [*Reading Packet*](#) (Selection of book chapters and articles)

Optional:

Other Recommended Texts:

- [*Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*](#), An-Na`im
- [*The Power of Human Rights*](#), Edited by Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, Kathryn Sikkink
- [*Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*](#), by Jack Donnelly
- [*Toward a Theory of Human Rights: Religion, Law, Courts*](#), by Michael J. Perry
- [*Inventing Human Rights: A History*](#), by Lynn Hunt
- [*International Human Rights in Context*](#), by Steiner et al

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Class Participation: Each student will lead at least one class discussion.
2. Homework Assignments: There will be weekly reading assignments. Students must read assigned materials before each class session in order to participate and benefit from the lecture presentations.
3. Research Papers: A final substantive research paper—topic, scope, and timeline to be decided in a meeting with Instructor. Every week, each student must write a short (1 page preferred but 2 when necessary) review/summary of the reading assignments; this will serve as an outline for the participation in class, then students must turn it in at the end of each class session. There will be no quizzes and no exams. The final research paper must be typed, double-spaced, and about 30 pages in length (average).

GRADES:

Grades will be based on the following distribution:

- Class participation and weekly papers: 60%
- Research Paper and Presentations (including leading sessions) 40%

Notes:

➤ **Note about Writing Credit” option** (for professional students):

Students taking this course with the “writing credit” option submit a 40-page paper (minimum excluding footnotes and end matter; you will receive faculty comment on a penultimate draft before the final draft is submitted for grading and credit. Students are expected to hand in their drafts on time as indicated in the schedule to allow enough time for comments. Nonetheless, all students are expected to take full advantage of the support provided by the Writing Center.

➤ **Note about Grades:**

Although undergraduate students from CLAS may be allowed to take this course, CLAS grade distribution (appended below as required by the College) will not apply to graduate seminars with enrollment under 20 students; therefore the median will be 3.3 (a B+).

Instructors of this course *will* evaluate each student's work fairly and without bias and will assign grades based on valid academic criteria. Fairness to students also implies reasonably consistent grading among courses of the same level, other things being equal. For this course, the grades distribution—based on the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences historical data—will be roughly as follows:

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------|
| Course's Level | A | B | C | D | F | Average |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------|

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----|----|----|---|---|------|
| Elementary | 15 | 34 | 40 | 8 | 3 | 2.50 |
| Intermediate | 18 | 36 | 39 | 5 | 2 | 2.63 |
| Advanced | 22 | 38 | 37 | 3 | 1 | 2.77 |

Students final grade will reflect the plus/minus grading.

Reminders and Resources:

This is a graduate seminar: there is a substantive amount of readings and students **are required** to finish the readings before each class session.

A tentative schedule and assignments will be made available online, but changes may occur; students must check regularly for updates that will be reflected in the online version.

The University of Iowa relies on email system to disseminate information and reach students regarding academic matters; it is the student's responsibility to establish an email account and check his/her email regularly for updates relevant to this course.

Please contact me during my office hours if you are one who has a disability which may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made.

The Writing Center is available to any U of Iowa student, faculty, or staff for help with any kind of writing, academic, personal, or professional. All writers can use feedback on their writing and someone to act as a sounding board for their ideas. Three programs are available: the Enrollment (twice a week program), the Evening and Friday appointment program, and E-mail tutoring through the web site at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~writing/> Tutors help you with any aspect of writing--from brainstorming an assignment to comma placement.

Please be advised of the university policy on [plagiarism and cheating](#), as any such act will be dealt with as outlined therein.

Students who wish to complain about the course, the Teaching Assistants, and/or the Instructor may follow the [College's policy](#) as summarized below:

- The student should to resolve the matter with the person of concern first.
- If the complaint is not resolved to the student's satisfaction, the student should discuss the matter further with the course supervisor (A. Souaiaia), the departmental executive officer, another faculty member designated to receive complaints if available.
- If the matter remains unresolved, the student may submit a written complaint to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs, 120 Schaeffer Hall (335-2633). (Graduate students should be directed to the offices of the Graduate College, 205 Gilmore Hall, 335-2137.)

Disability Statement:

"I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability which may require seating modifications or testing accommodations or accommodations of other class requirements, so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please contact me during my office hours."

Addendum

Admin. College: [College of Liberal Arts & Sciences](#)

Home Department: Religious Studies

Department Office: 314 Gilmore
Department Director (DEO): Diana Fritz Cates
DEO e-mail: diana-cates@uiowa.edu

Telephone: 319-335-2164
DEO Office: 316 Gilmore Hall
DEO Telephone: 319-335-2162

This course is given by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. This means that class policies on matters such as requirements, grading, and sanctions for academic dishonesty is governed by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Students wishing to add or drop this course after the official deadline must receive the approval of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Details of the University policy of students enrolled outside their college or degree program may be found at: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~provost/deos/crossenroll.doc>

Academic Fraud

Plagiarism and any other activities that result in a student presenting work that is not his or her own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is reported to the departmental DEO and then to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences who deals with academic fraud according to these guidelines:

www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml

Department/Collegiate Complaint Procedures:

If at any time you have an issue regarding classroom activities or instructor actions, you should bring the matter to the instructor's attention so an attempt can be made to resolve the issue. If this is unsuccessful, the matter should be taken to the Director of the Department of Religious Studies. If you remain unsatisfied you may submit a written complaint to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs, 120 Schaeffer Hall. All complaints must be made as soon as possible. For more information visit, [Student Complaints](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml#5) at http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml#5

Accommodations for Disabilities

Students seeking academic accommodations first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with a counselor in that office who determines eligibility for services. Students approved for accommodations arrange to meet privately with course instructors. See <http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/>.

Understanding Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the University. It subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Visit <http://www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu> for definitions, assistance, and the full University policy.

Work Expectation:

In planning their schedules, students should be aware that each semester hour of discussion or lecture normally entails at least two hours of outside preparation for the average student (e.g., in a three-credit-hour course, standard out-of-class preparation is six hours). This standard is the basis on which the Registrar's Office assigns hours of University credit for courses.

Student Classroom Behavior

The ability to learn is lessened when students engage in inappropriate classroom behavior, distracting others; such behaviors are a violation of the Code of Student Life found at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~vpss/policies/ii/a.shtml#main>. When disruptive activity occurs, a University instructor has the authority to determine classroom seating patterns and to request that a student exit the classroom, laboratory, or other area used for instruction immediately for the remainder of the period. One-day suspensions are reported to appropriate departmental, collegiate, and Student Services personnel (Office of the Vice President for Student Services, web site: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~vpss/welcome/index.html> and Dean of Students).

Resources for Students

Writing Center 110 English-Philosophy Building, 335-0188, www.uiowa.edu/~writingc

Speaking Center 12 English-Philosophy Building, 335-0205, www.uiowa.edu/~rhetoric/centers/speaking

Mathematics Tutorial Laboratory 314 MacLean Hall, 335-0810, www.uiowa.edu/mathlab

Tutor Referral Service Campus Information Center, Iowa Memorial Union, 335-3055,
www.imu.uiowa.edu/cic/tutor_referral_service

University Examination Policy

Final Examinations. An undergraduate student who has two final examinations scheduled for the same period or more than three examinations scheduled for the same day may file a request for a change of schedule before the [published deadline](#) at the Registrar's Service Center, [17 Calvin Hall](#), 8-4:30 M-F, (384- 4300).

Missed exam policy. University policy requires that students be permitted to make up examinations missed because of illness, mandatory religious obligations, certain University activities, or unavoidable circumstances. Excused absence forms are required and are available at the Registrar web site: <http://www.registrar.uiowa.edu/forms/absence.pdf>

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather

The University of Iowa Operations Manual section [16.14](#) outlines appropriate responses to a tornado (i) or to a similar crisis. If a tornado or other severe weather is indicated by the UI outdoor [warning system](#), members of the class should seek shelter in rooms and corridors in the innermost part of a building at the lowest level, staying clear of windows, corridors with windows, or large free-standing expanses such as auditoriums and cafeterias. The class will resume, if possible, after the UI outdoor warning system announces that the severe weather threat has ended.