

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, Winter 2024
New Topics in Sociology:
SOC498H1 – Sociology of Human Rights

Schedule: Wednesday 1:10 pm-3 pm; **Location:** TBA

Professor: Heiko Beyer - heiko.beyer@utoronto.ca

Face to Face Office Hours: Wednesday 10 am – 11 am or by appointment

Email Office Hours: Tuesday 10 am – 11 am

OVERVIEW AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Legal texts are both the result and the prerequisite of normative orders in societies—the result, as they express the status quo of socially shared values of a legal community; prerequisite because existing law changes the normative structure of a society by legalizing or illegalizing previously unsanctioned behavior. The undoubtedly most significant corpus of such state-codified social norms is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and corresponding global institutions and treaties. However, international human rights are not always directly implemented in national constitutions, and recourse to human rights does not necessarily guarantee their enforcement in individual nation-states. And even where both occur, there is sometimes civil society resistance against the “hegemony” of human rights policies perceived as “western” or “elitist”. This seminar approaches this tension field of human rights from a sociological perspective and provides an overview of the various theoretical approaches of the sociology of human rights as well as their empirical problem areas. We will clarify the different conceptual dimensions hidden behind the concept of “human rights”, the societal contexts in which human rights policies emerge, and how they manifest themselves socially beyond their abstract legal validity - even in unintended forms.

Course Prerequisite: The prerequisites to take this course is 1.0 SOC FCE at the 300+ level. Students without one of these prerequisites will be removed from the registration list at any time discovered and without notice.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will acquire knowledge about sociological theories of human rights
- Students will become familiar with empirical methods to investigate human rights related phenomena
- Students will be able to reflect and discuss the challenges of human rights politics

Accommodation: If you require accommodations or have any **accessibility concerns**, please visit: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca as soon as possible. If you have documentation that you have an accommodation, please see Professor Beyer to discuss how best to assist you in the course.

Class Structure and Expectations: This is a two-hour class. At the beginning of the session, we will repeat the main topics we discussed in the previous session. To be prepared, make sure you review your notes and material of the previous meeting. After that, Professor Beyer will give a brief introduction to the topic of the day's session. The core of our discussion will be focused on understanding and critically discuss the main points of the texts assigned for this session. So, it's important that you read those texts beforehand.

Students are expected to **read the course material** before each class and to attend each class. Attendance is very important, both in terms of class participation and discussion and because classes are designed to supplement as well as clarify readings (e.g., if you miss classes, you have missed valuable material). For these reasons, you should not take this class if you routinely **miss sessions**.

LEARNING COMPONENTS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Requirement	Fraction of final grade	Due date
Class participation	15%	ongoing
Presentation	25 %	one of the sessions
Term paper proposal	20 %	March 1*
Term paper	40 %	April 5*

* You have to submit the proposal and the term paper electronically on Quercus by 11:59p.m. at the due date. Course Grades are calculated using a weighted sum of each assignment resulting in a grade between 0 and 100.

Readings: We will read (mostly) one or (sometimes) two journal articles/chapters per week. The sessions build on this literature, and it is expected that you have read the assigned texts ahead of class. Please bring a copy of the assigned readings with you to class. It is critical that you keep up with these readings. They form the basis for the writing assignments.

Presentation (fraction of final grade 25%): Each student will present one of the texts. The 15-minute presentations should include a) basic biographical information about the author(s), b) the core arguments of the text, c) critical reflections of the core arguments (e.g., from the perspective of other authors), d) three discussion questions for the seminar discussion. Use visual illustrations (ppt, handouts, blackboard).

Class participation (fraction of final grade 15%): Students are expected to attend every class meeting. Short lecture elements will cover material not included in the readings and expand on the assigned texts. More importantly, classes will offer opportunities for seminar style discussion where students can apply concepts and debate ideas with other students and the professor to deepen learning and build intellectual community.

Term paper proposal (fraction of final grade 20%): This 750-word (plus references) outline should include the research question and an outline of the structure of the paper as well as a list of additional (to class readings) books and/or articles you plan to include in your paper. Outlines are due on March 1 and will be returned in class on March 6.

Term paper (fraction of final grade 40%): You will write a 2,500-word (plus references) term paper for this class. Term papers answer a clear research question, either theoretically (e.g., via theory comparison) or empirically (e.g., by reviewing empirical studies or analyzing data). Term papers are due on April 5 and will be returned electronically on April 19.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT AND PENALTIES FOR MISSED DEADLINES

You are asked to complete your proposal for the term paper by March 1 and the term paper by April 5. You are asked to **turn in the assignments** via **Quercus** (submitted by 11:59p.m. on the day the assignment is due). Assignments not submitted via Quercus will receive a grade of zero (0 %). There is a penalty for late submission of 5% per day.

Students who are late in submitting an assignment for medical reasons, need to email Professor Beyer, and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN). Students who are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

By uploading your term paper to Quercus students will submit their assignments to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

For your term paper, we will be using the software Ouriginal. It uses text matching technology as a method to uphold the University's high academic integrity standards to detect any potential plagiarism. Ouriginal is integrated into Quercus. For the assignments set up to use Ouriginal, the software will review your paper when you upload it to Quercus. To learn more about Ouriginal's privacy policy please review its [Privacy Policy](#).

Students not wishing their assignment to be submitted through Ouriginal will not be assessed unless a student instead provides, along with their work, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own.

All assignments should be **written in English**. If you have difficulties in writing, please check www.writing.utoronto.ca. Also see these tips: <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/student-pdfs/> I encourage you to use the university's writing resources, which are described on their website.

See: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus>

Also see: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic offenses include **plagiarism and re-submitting works submitted in other classes**. Academic offenses will not be tolerated and students who commit academic offenses will face serious penalties. By enrolling in this course, students agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar.

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication and punishment. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Penalties can be severe, including a grade of zero (0) for the assignment or for the course and a notice of plagiarism may be placed on your transcript.

You are expected to have read and be familiar with the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" (<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>) and Code of Student Conduct (<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-student-conduct-december-13-2019>)

As a student in this course, you are expected to inform yourself on how not to plagiarize. Please see <http://oneresearch.library.utoronto.ca/faq/how-do-i-avoid-plagiarism>.

Remember, that submitting someone else's work as your own constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism includes unacknowledged text, using another person's paper, and/or purchasing a paper, even if you use only part of such material. Using substantial amounts of web-based text or extensive use of quotations also can constitute plagiarism. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred to the Office of Academic Integrity.

USE OF GENERATIVE AI IN ASSIGNMENTS AND TERM PAPERS

Students are encouraged to make use of technology, including generative artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to their understanding of course materials. Students may also use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids or to help produce assignments. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit. Students must submit, as an appendix with their assignments, any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool, and the prompt used to generate the content. Any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool must be cited appropriately (please use this style guide: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>). Students may choose to use generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the assignments in this course; this use must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work. Note that some generative AI applications may require a subscription fee. Please feel free to opt-out of using a system if they have concerns about the cost, privacy, security or other issues related to the technology.

OTHER THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. Students wishing to record one or more lectures or other course material in any way are required to ask the instructor's explicit permission, and may not do so unless permission is granted. ***It is absolutely forbidden for a student to*** publish an instructor's notes, to place them on a website or sell them in other form without formal permission from the instructor.

Course Website: This website is open to students enrolled in the course. On it you will find the course Syllabus (this document); announcements as they are made; grades; and lecture relevant slides. Remember although the lecture material in the course is made available to you for academic purposes, it is copyrighted.

OTHER COURSE RELATED INFORMATION

I encourage you to come by my office to discuss matters of concern. If you cannot make it during scheduled **office hours**, please let me know and we can make an appointment. **If you don't understand a concept: ask in class, I will always be happy to explain things again!**

E-mail office hours: if you contact me via e-mail, please be aware that I have "e-mail office hours" and will be answering course related e-mails only during this time. **I do not answer to e-mails with questions that are answered in the syllabus.**

You are required to use your **UofT email address** for course related e-mails. The university advises faculty not to reply to e-mails that use Gmail, yahoo etc. or other web accounts. Please indicate the course number (SOC498H1) and a brief reason in the subject header.

SOC498H1 READINGS (all readings are required)

January 10: *Introduction*

January 17: *Concept and History of Human Rights*

Reading: Joas, Hans. 2013. The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights, Georgetown University Press, Chapter 1 (pp. 9-36)

January 24: *The classics I: Karl Marx*

Reading: Marx, Karl. 1843. On the Jewish Question.

January 31: *The classics II: Emile Durkheim*

Reading: Durkheim, Emile. 1969 [1898]. "Individualism and the Intellectuals" [translated by and with a foreword from Steven Lukes]. Political Studies 17(1):14–30.

February 7: *The classics III: Max Weber*

Reading: Kelly, Duncan. 2004. "Max Weber and the Rights of Citizens". Max Weber Studies 4(1):23–49.

February 14: *Anthropological Approaches*

Reading: Turner, Bryan S. 1993. "Outline of a Theory of Human Rights". Sociology 27(3):489–512.

February 20: *reading week, no class*

February 28: *Systems Theory*

Reading: Luhmann, Niklas. 2008. "Are There Still Indispensable Norms in Our Society?" *Soziale Systeme* 14(1): 18-37.

March 6: *Rational Choice Theory*

Reading: Posner, Eric A. 2014. *The Twilight of Human Rights*. Oxford University Press, Chapter 5 (pp. 79-122)

March 13: *Critical Theory*

Reading: Benhabib, Seyla. 2007. "Another Universalism: On the Unity and Diversity of Human Rights". *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 81(2):7-32.

March 20: *Neo-institutionalism*

Reading: Boyle, Elizabeth Heger, and John W. Meyer. 1998. "Modern Law as a Secularized and Global Model: Implications for the Sociology of Law". *Soziale Welt* 49(3):213-32.

March 27: *Empirical Studies*

Readings:

- Hafner-Burton, Emilie M., and Kiyoteru Tsutsui. 2005. "Human Rights in a Globalizing World: The Paradox of Empty Promises". *American Journal of Sociology* 110(5):1373-1411.
- Cole, Wade M. 2005. "Sovereignty Relinquished? Explaining Commitment to the International Human Rights Covenants, 1966-1999". *American Sociological Review* 70(3):472-95.

April 3: *Conclusion and final discussion*