TEACHING GUIDE - 2026-2027

Human Rights Protection

UGRA_005397

Departments	Department of International, European Union and Comparative Law
Teaching Languages	English
ECTS	4
Teacher responsible	Tommaso Amico di Meane - tommaso.amicodimeane@esade.edu

Course Goals

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

> Develop an understanding of the concept of law and its diverse interpretations across contemporary world.
> Explain the historical evolution of the modern State, constitutionalism, and fundamental rights, identifying the key developments that have shaped contemporary systems of rights protection.
> Demonstrate a clear understanding of the origins, structure, and functioning of the main international and regional human rights protection systems.
> Critically evaluate the role of States, international organizations, courts, treaty bodies, and civil society actors in the promotion and protection of human rights.
> Apply interdisciplinary perspectives and analytical tools to assess contemporary human rights challenges and engage critically with current debates in global governance and international affairs.

Previous knowledge

Students are expected to have acquired a basic understanding of law, Public International Law, and International Relations through previous coursework within the GEL programme. While such knowledge is not a formal requirement, it will facilitate engagement with the topics covered throughout the course.

Prerequisits

There are no formal prerequisites for this course. All students enrolled in the programme are welcome.

Teaching methodology

The course combines assigned readings, face-to-face lectures, and classroom discussion. Particular emphasis is placed on active student participation. Students are encouraged to engage not only through class interventions and debates, but also through group presentations and discussions with guest speakers. These activities are designed to foster critical thinking, collaborative learning, and the ability to connect theoretical concepts with real-world legal and social issues.

Description

Course contribution to program

This course contributes to the objectives of the Bachelor in Global Governance, Economics and Legal Order (GEL) by providing students with a foundational understanding of human rights as one of the key pillars of contemporary governance, constitutional democracy, and the international legal order. In a world increasingly characterized by global interdependence, human rights have become a common language through which questions of justice, legitimacy, accountability, and public policy are debated at both the domestic and international levels. The course reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the GEL programme by approaching human rights not solely as a legal phenomenon, but also as a political, social, historical, and cultural construct. By drawing on perspectives from law, political science, sociology, anthropology, and history, students are encouraged to develop a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape the recognition, interpretation, and implementation of human rights across different societies and institutional settings.

The course also strengthens the programme's global perspective by exposing students to the diversity of legal traditions and conceptions of rights that exist around the world. Through the study of both domestic constitutional systems and international human rights regimes, students gain a deeper appreciation of how legal norms interact with different cultural, political, and social contexts. This comparative and global outlook is particularly relevant for a programme dedicated to understanding governance challenges beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. Finally, through its emphasis on critical discussion, active participation, case studies, and engagement with current events, the course contributes to the development of the analytical, communication, and critical-thinking skills that are central to the GEL educational model. It encourages students to critically evaluate competing claims, understand the relationship between law and power, and engage thoughtfully with some of the most pressing issues facing contemporary societies.

Short description

Human rights have become one of the defining features of the contemporary international order and are today recognized as fundamental values within most constitutional systems. This course offers an introduction to the protection of human rights from legal, political, and governance perspectives, providing students with the conceptual tools necessary to understand both the foundations and the contemporary challenges of human rights protection.

The course begins by exploring the concept of law itself, highlighting how different legal traditions, cultures, and societies have developed distinct understandings of the relationship between law, authority, justice, and social order. Particular attention is devoted to demonstrating that the

Western conception of law is neither universal nor exclusive, and that alternative normative systems, including those found in non-Western and Indigenous communities, provide valuable perspectives on the regulation of social life. Building on these foundations, the course examines the historical evolution of the modern state and the gradual emergence of constitutionalism and fundamental rights. Students will explore how different forms of state have been accompanied by an expanding recognition of individual rights and freedoms, culminating in the constitutional frameworks that characterize many contemporary democracies. The course then turns to the international dimension of human rights protection. Particular attention is devoted to the profound transformation of the international legal order after the Second World War, which marked the emergence of human rights as a matter of legitimate international concern. Students will be introduced to the main international and regional human rights systems, the institutions responsible for their implementation and monitoring, and the legal and political mechanisms through which rights are protected and enforced. The course will also examine the role played by international organizations, courts, treaty bodies, states, and civil society actors in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Consistent with the philosophy of the GEL programme, the course adopts an explicitly interdisciplinary and law in context approach. Legal questions will be examined alongside insights drawn from sociology, anthropology, political science, history, and related disciplines, allowing students to develop a broader and more nuanced understanding of the social, cultural, and political dimensions of human rights. Teaching combines lectures with a strong emphasis on active student participation. Classroom discussions, group presentations, guest speakers, and other interactive activities will provide opportunities to connect theoretical concepts with contemporary events and real-world challenges. The overall aim is to enable students not only to understand the legal architecture of human rights protection but also to critically engage with the complex issues that human rights face in today's global society.

Activities

In-class discussions and debates

Written and/or oral exams

Quizzes/tests

Group presentations

Readings

Interaction with visiting guest professionals

Content

#	Topic
1	Theory of Human Rights
2	Practice of Human Rights

Assessment

Tool	Assessment tool	Category	Weight %
Written and/or oral exams	Final Exam	Retake and ordinary round	70.00%
Participation in program activities		Retake and ordinary round	30.00%

PROGRAMS

GDL20-Double Degree in Law and Global Governance, Economics and Legal Order (Undergraduates: Law)
GDL20 Year 4 (Mandatory)

GDL23-Double Degree in Law and Global Governance, Economics and Legal Order (Undergraduates: Law)
GDL23 Year 4 (Mandatory)

GEL19-Bachelor in Global Governance, Economics and Legal Order (Undergraduates: Law)
GEL19 Year 3 (Mandatory)

GEL23-Bachelor in Global Governance, Economics and Legal Order (Undergraduates: Law)
GEL23 Year 3 (Mandatory)