

International Humanitarian Law

UGRA_016740

Departments	Department of International, European Union and Comparative Law
Teaching Languages	English
ECTS	6
Teacher responsible	Alesia Zhuk - alesia.zhuk@esade.edu

Course Goals

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

- Explain the sources and key principles of IHL.
- Distinguish IHL from other branches of international law.
- Analyse legal issues in armed conflicts and propose solutions.
- Apply IHL principles to case studies and hypothetical scenarios.

Evaluate enforcement mechanisms and compliance challenges.

Previous knowledge

Students should have a basic understanding of international law or general legal principles. Familiarity with contemporary global conflicts and basic human rights concepts will be helpful but not strictly required.

Prerequisites

No formal prerequisites are required for enrolment.

Recommended: Completion of an introductory course in International Law.

Teaching methodology

Teaching methodology

The course combines theoretical lectures with practical exercises to ensure applied learning:

- Lectures – Present key IHL concepts, legal frameworks, and historical context.
 - Case Studies – Analyse historical and contemporary armed conflicts, including ICC / ICTY cases.
 - Interactive Discussions – Encourage debates on complex or controversial IHL issues.
 - Simulations / Mock Trials – Role-play scenarios to apply IHL principles in practice.
 - Student Presentations – Small groups present case studies or research topics to foster critical thinking.
- Multimedia and Reading Assignments – Videos, legal texts, and scholarly articles to complement lectures.

Description

Short description

This optional course introduces students to the principles, sources, and applications of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Students will study the legal norms governing armed conflicts, protection of civilians, treatment of combatants and prisoners, and accountability mechanisms. The course combines lectures, case studies, and practical exercises.

Bibliography

Shaw, M. N. (2021)., International Law (9th ed.). Chapter 20, pp. 103-1070., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (Book)

Sassòli, M. (2024)., International Humanitarian Law. Chapters 1,2,4,7., Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, (Book)

, Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field ., (Geneva Convention I, 12 August 1949) (Legal Document)

Geneva Convention II, 12 August 1949, Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (Legal Document)

Geneva Convention III, 12 August 1949, Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Legal Document)

(Geneva Convention IV, 12 August 1949)., Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Legal Document)

Protocol I, 8 June 1977, Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Legal Document)

Protocol II, 8 June 1977, Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Legal Document)

adopted 17 July 1998, entered into force 1 July 2002, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Legal Document)

Henckaerts, J. M., & Doswald-Beck, L., Customary International Humanitarian Law., (1997). (Book)

Pictet, J. (1985), Development and Principles of International Humanitarian Law., The Hague/Geneva: M. Nijhoff, Henry-Dunant Institute. (Book)

Tsagourias, N., & Morrison, A. (2023), International Humanitarian Law: Cases, Materials and Commentary (2nd ed.)., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Book)

Roscini, M. (2024)., International Law and the Principle of Non-Intervention: History, Theory, and Interactions with Other Principles., Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter VII. (Book)

Content

#	Topic
1	Introduction to International Humanitarian Law
2	Core Principles of IHL: Distinction, Proportionality, and Humanity
3	Classification of Armed Conflicts
4	Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Assistance
5	Combatants and Prisoners of War: Rights and Obligations
6	Means and Methods of Warfare
7	Enforcement Mechanisms and Accountability
8	Case Studies in Historical Conflicts
9	Contemporary Challenges in IHL
10	IHL and Human Rights Law: Interactions and Complementarity

Assessment

Tool	Assessment tool	Category	Weight %
Participation in program activities	Active contribution to discussions, debates, and case study exercises, as well as consistent attendance.	Retake and ordinary round	10.00%
Learning report analysis	Short written assignments analysing selected conflicts or legal issues, applying IHL principles	Retake and ordinary round	25.00%
Individual or team exercises	Collaborative presentation or role-play based on a case study or mock tribunal, demonstrating applied understanding.	Retake and ordinary round	25.00%
Written and/or oral exams	Written exam evaluating knowledge of IHL principles, application to case studies, and legal reasoning.	Retake and ordinary round	40.00%

PROGRAMS

113-Law Exchange Program (Undergraduates: Law)
113 Year 1 (Optative)

113S-Law Exchange Program (Undergraduates: Law)
113S Year 1 (Optative)

DD05-Double Degree Program (exchange) (Undergraduates: Law)
DD05 Year 1 (Optative)

GBD20-Double Degree in Business Administration and Law (Undergraduates: Law)
GBD20 Year 1 (Optative)
GBD20 Year 5 (Optative)

GDL20-Double Degree in Law and Global Governance, Economics and Legal Order (Undergraduates: Law)
GDL20 Year 5 (Optative)

GED20-Bachelor in Law (Undergraduates: Law)
GED20 Year 4 (Optative)