



**HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES 2800E (570)**  
**Introduction to Human Rights**  
**Fall/Winter 2025 - 2026**

Instructor: Dr. Dorotea Gucciardo  
Email: [dguccia@uwo.ca](mailto:dguccia@uwo.ca)

---

**Course Information**

**Calendar Description:**

This course examines the historical development and philosophical foundations of human rights, and the efficacy of legal, diplomatic and political frameworks designed to protect human rights. Topics include women's rights; the rights of minorities; refugees and displaced persons; remedies for human rights violations in domestic and international law.

**Prerequisite(s):** 0.5 essay course at the first-year level in any discipline.

**Antirequisite(s):**

**Extra Information:** 3 hours, 1.0 course.

**Course Weight:** 1.00

**Breadth:** Category A

**Subject Code:** HUMANRS

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

## **HIS 2800E**

### Introduction to Human Rights

**Description:** This course examines the historical development and philosophical foundations of human rights, and the efficacy of legal, diplomatic and political frameworks designed to protect human rights. Topics include women's rights; the rights of minorities; refugees and displaced persons; remedies for human rights violations in domestic and international law.

**Prerequisite(s):** 0.5 essay course at the first-year level in any discipline.

**Antirequisite(s):** None

**Instructor:** Dr. Dorotea Gucciardo

**Email:** [dguccia@uwo.ca](mailto:dguccia@uwo.ca)

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**In-class Instruction:** September 4, 2025 to April 2, 2026

**When:** See OWL

**Extra Information:** 3 hours, 1.0 course.

**Course Weight:** 1.00

**Breadth:** Category A

**Subject Code:** HUMANRS

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Discuss philosophical considerations of the meaning of human rights and explain some of the major criticisms of the idea and application of universal human rights;
- Explain the nature and role of major international institutions that are responsible for protecting human rights;
- Explain the basic logic of international human rights law; recall the idea of ‘generations’ of human rights and discuss key issues and controversies concerning the meaning and application of key civil and political rights;
- Demonstrate reading comprehension, written communication, and critical reflection skills;
- Engage in lifelong learning by applying ideas, concepts, and issues addressed in this course when following issues in the news, engaging in activism, and performing self-advocacy.

### **Readings:**

There are no required textbook purchases for this course. However, students are required to read assigned articles, which are available on the OWL course website. You will be tested on these readings.

### **Evaluation**

Précis	Due: Ongoing	20%
Participation	Due: Ongoing	20%
Midterm	Due: TBD - December*	25%
Final Exam	Due: TBD – April *	35%

\*Midterm and Final Exam dates are scheduled by the Registrar’s Office.

### **Précis – 20% (10 précis, 2% each)**

Throughout the year, you will complete a series of short writing assignments called *précis*, which will take the place of a final essay. These assignments are designed to help you actively engage with the course readings and build your analytical and critical thinking skills over time. Each *précis* is a concise, two-page (double-spaced) response to an assigned reading. Over the course of the year, you are required to complete at least 10 *précis*, each focusing on a different text.

A successful *précis* will do the following:

- Summarize the author’s main argument(s) clearly and accurately
- Identify key concepts or ideas introduced in the reading
- Analyze the significance of the text within the context of the course & relate to other course readings (building a literature review)
- Offer thoughtful critique, interpretation, or raise relevant questions

Note: You must submit your *précis* **at the start of the class session** in which the reading was scheduled to be completed. You may not write a *précis* on a reading that we have already discussed in class. Late submissions or write-ups on past readings that have been discussed will not be accepted.

*Précis* assignments will be assessed based on clarity of writing, depth of analysis, understanding of the text, and engagement with course themes. Completing them regularly will help you stay on top of the material and develop your voice as a critical thinker.

### **Participation (20%)**

Participation is a vital part of your success in this course and a key element of your final grade. Each week, class time will be divided into a two-hour lecture followed by a one-hour tutorial. The tutorial sessions are your opportunity to actively engage with the material, ask questions, explore ideas, and build on what was introduced in lecture.

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and engage thoughtfully with the major themes, arguments, and questions raised in the material. This means completing the reading beforehand and coming to class ready to contribute ideas, respond to others, and participate in group activities or discussions.

Participation will be evaluated based on:

- Consistent attendance and punctuality
- Preparation and familiarity with the assigned readings
- Willingness to contribute to discussion in a respectful, thoughtful way
- Active listening and engagement with others’ ideas
- Participation in small group or collaborative work during tutorial sessions

This is not about having the “right” answers, but about showing intellectual curiosity, effort, and a commitment to learning in community with others.

Active engagement deepens your understanding of the course content, allows you to test and refine your ideas, and strengthens your critical thinking and communication skills. Tutorial discussions often help clarify difficult concepts and expose you to multiple perspectives. Your voice adds value to the learning environment, both for yourself and your peers.

**Midterm – 25%**

The midterm will consist of short answer and essay-style questions and will cover all course materials up to that point, including assigned readings, lectures, and in-class discussions. The purpose of the midterm is to assess your understanding of key concepts, themes, and arguments introduced in the course, as well as your ability to critically analyze and synthesize information across different sources.

You can expect a combination of short answer and essay-style questions, and you must

- Demonstrate knowledge of key texts, thinkers, and themes:
- Draw on lecture content and tutorial discussions
- Make clear, well-organized arguments supported by evidence from the course

You will be given more details on the structure and expectations closer to the date. The exam will take place in-class and must be completed individually and without outside sources unless otherwise specified. Strong preparation will include keeping up with readings, reviewing lecture notes, and actively participating in tutorials.

**Final Exam – 35%**

The final exam will follow a format similar to the midterm, consisting of short answer and essay-style questions, but it will cover the entire course — including all assigned readings, lectures, and in-class discussions from the beginning of the term to the end. The final is designed to evaluate your ability to recall and explain key concepts, themes, and arguments from across the course, analyze ideas from multiple sources, and make-clear, well-supported arguments that reflect critical engagement with the material.

Like the midterm, the final will be completed in-class, individually, and without external sources unless otherwise specified. Strong performance will reflect consistent engagement with the course over the term.

## **1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences**

### **Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)**

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

### **Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at

[https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses\\_enrollment/exams\\_and\\_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf](https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

### **Absences from Final Examinations**

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a "Multiple Exam Situation" (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered.

The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

## 2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

[https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/)

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

### GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing [Care@kings.uwo.ca](mailto:Care@kings.uwo.ca) or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html)

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

## 3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

**Use of Electronic Devices:** Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

**Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom:** King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not

directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/> Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

#### **4. Statement on Academic Offences**

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with your instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see

<https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

#### **5. Copyright of Course Material**

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

#### **6. Use of Recordings**

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

#### **7. Policy on Attendance**

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.