



HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES 2800E (570)
Introduction to Human Rights
Fall/Winter 2026 - 2027

Instructor: Dorotea Gucciardo
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Course Information

Mode of Instruction: in-person

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

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Prerequisite: 0.5 essay course at the first-year level in any discipline

Antirequisite: None

Instructor: Dr. Dorotea Gucciardo

Email: dguccia@uwo.ca

Office Hours: By Appointment

In-Class Instruction: 10 September to 8 April 2025

See Student Centre for location & class times

Course Weight: 1.0

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 Brightspace.

Evaluation:

Human Rights Case Lab:	Ongoing deadlines (see below)	70%
Final Exam:	April 2027, TBD	30%

Please note, Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

Human Rights Case Lab: Throughout the year, you will conduct an in-depth investigation of a contemporary human rights issue through a series of connected research activities. Rather than writing a single paper at the end of the course, you will develop a Human Rights Case Lab (HRCL): a research portfolio that documents your evolving understanding of a complex human rights problem.

The goal of this assignment is to critically analyze a human rights issue. Your final submission will bring together the stages of your research into a short analytical essay supported by the research materials and reflections you have developed throughout the term.

Your grade will be based on:

- Quality and depth of research
- Strength of analytical argument
- Engagement with human rights concepts and debates
- Ability to recognize complexity and competing perspectives
- Participation in the research process, including workshops and peer feedback
- Growth and revision throughout the semester

Each component of the project represents a necessary step in the research process. The project components are intentionally scaffolded. Each stage builds on the previous one and contributes to the development of the final submission. As a result, successful completion of the project requires engagement with the full process. Students who do not complete all stages of the process will not demonstrate the full set of learning outcomes associated with this assignment. Therefore, **failure to submit or complete any required component constitutes failure to complete the project as a whole.**

Grade Breakdown

5 Minute Research Pitch	October 1, 2026	7%	(4.9% of overall grade)
Annotated Bio & Reflection	November 5, 2026	15%	(10.5% of overall grade)
Stakeholder Map Context Analysis	December 3, 2026	10%	(7% of overall grade)
Critical Analysis	February 4, 2027	13%	(9.1% of overall grade)
HRCL Presentation	March 2027 (rolling)	15%	(10.5% of overall grade)
Final Essay & Reflection	April 8, 2027	40%	(28% of overall grade)

Together, these components comprise 100% of the Case Lab grade, which is worth 70% of the final course grade. The Human Rights Case Lab is designed to reward sustained inquiry, critical thinking, and intellectual development. For more information on the assignment particulars, visit the Assessments tab on Brightspace.

Final Exam

The Final Exam will be held in April 2027 and scheduled by the Registrar's Office. It will be written format, with students expected to contextualize broad ideas discussed throughout the year.

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (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 at [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible, and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>.

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this which assessment has been designated as requiring documentation for consideration (that is, exempt from undocumented absences).
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

If an instructor has built flexibility into their assessments (e.g., “complete 8 of 10 quizzes”), this flexibility will already address consideration needs and thus academic consideration may be denied.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** 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 (i.e., you are scheduled to write 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](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their 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.

3. Support Services

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

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College:

<https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

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

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

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's by emailing 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 (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. 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://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

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.

6. 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 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.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 you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.