

POL 4050: GLOBAL ISSUES OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Fall 2025, Quad I
TTh 10:00-11:45
Dr. Rosco Williamson

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Course Reading – Required Texts

- Jack Donnelly (2013), *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Cornell University Press).
- Paul Farmer (2005), *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (University of California Press).

Course Outcomes

Although the idea that every government must respect “human rights” is relatively new, it is now an established feature of world society. To speak the language of international relations and diplomacy means using the vocabulary of human rights. However, this vocabulary is constantly changing and there is a constant struggle over the meaning and practice of these ideas. This makes this topic an extremely complex one of which we will merely scratch the surface in this course. Each student will:

(1) Gain a familiarity with the idea and practice of global human rights. The idea of “human rights” is often thrown out in public speeches and international diplomacy, but what exactly is meant by the term? This class will attempt to understand where human rights came from, how they are implemented, and the relevant ideas that surround them.

(2) Learn how to do research in the field of human rights. The issue of human rights is not one that can be avoided whether one is a diplomat, businessperson, or even a consumer. Thus, one of the objectives of this course is to give students the tools to be able to do independent research in the field when the course is completed.

(3) Do in-depth research in an aspect of human rights that interests you. This course will allow the student to look more closely at some aspect of human rights that will be relevant to the things he or she would like to be more involved in.

(4) Begin to think critically about the issues surrounding human rights. Each lecture is designed to search for an answer to some perplexing issue with respect to global human rights. One of the goals of each lecture is for each student to think critically about that issue and begin to formulate his or her own answer that is satisfying both intellectually and morally.

(5) Examine her or his place in the world. Questions about justice and morality should be central to a Christian education. In the field of international relations, that usually means beginning with the same questions generated by the human rights discourse. Thus, it is not enough to come up with some intellectual answers – we must also strive to come up with answers that we can then act on and live with. What exactly that means will be an important part of this course.

Course Grading

The following is the breakdown of how the final grade will be determined:

30%	Final Exam
20%	Assignments
30%	Final Assignment
20%	Attendance and Participation

Final Exam

The exam will be a take-home exam (we have no class time to spare). The terms and dates of the final exam will be determined by the class as a whole during the semester.

Make-ups

NO MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE ALLOWED WITHOUT A UNIVERSITY-APPROVED EXCUSED ABSENCE OR DOCTOR'S WRITTEN PERMISSION. Any student receiving a university-approved excused absence should contact the professor BEFORE the absence to arrange a time to make-up the missed exam.

Attendance and Participation

Participation will be 12% of your total grade. There aren't a lot of people in class, so no one can hide in the crowd. Participation is not measured in quantity but in quality. The student who talks all the time, but doesn't add very much to the discussion, will fare no better than the student who says nothing. Good participation means being prepared for class, demonstrating it, *and* joining in on class discussions.

Attendance will be 8% of your total grade. Of the 14 total class sessions:

<i>If you miss</i>	<i>0-1 class(es)</i>	<i>= you get the full 8%</i>
	2	= 6%
	3	= 4%
	4	= 2%
	5 or more	= 0% (and I have the choice to drop you)

In terms of tardiness: the second time you are tardy my passive aggressiveness wears off and every tardy after it will count as an absence.

Finally, setting aside the super-scary punishments and threats associated with attendance and tardiness, the course is for your benefit. Absences not only can hurt your final grade, but they obstruct your education. One of the amazing things about education is you never know when some new idea is going to strike you and change the way you think about the world. So, take advantage of every opportunity that you have and immerse yourself in learning.

Assignments

Every Thursday (except the first Thursday of the course), each student will review a journal article or a book chapter covering some aspect of human rights (the article should be at least 15 pages in length – if it's less, do additional articles that week). The review should include a brief summary of the main argument of the article, new information that you think may help you with the final assignment, and your opinion of the article and its arguments. It should be typed and between 2 and 3 pages, double-spaced.

Each student should choose some theme of human rights to devote to these assignments in order to gain a more thorough understanding of some area that most interests her or him. The final assignment will tie together and synthesize the four reviews the student completed (and any other relevant required course readings) in order to make an original argument about the theme itself. The final assignment should be between 5 and 7 pages long, typed and double-spaced.

Assignments are due at the start of Thursday class. Late assignments will be accepted only on the following Tuesday for a reduced grade. After that, no late assignments will be accepted. You may not receive these reviews back by the time of the final assignment, so be sure to hold on to a copy of the reviews you turn in.

9/4	Nothing	10/2	Review #4
9/11	Review #1	10/9	Rough draft due
9/18	Review #2	10/16	Final assignment due
9/25	Review #3		

Program Learning Outcomes – International Studies

PLO 3: You will be able to understand and critically assess the processes, theories, and outcomes of political institutions and political behavior.

- Exam

PLO 4: You will be able to demonstrate social scientific literacy.

- Reflections and Final Paper

OFFICIAL INFORMATION

Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination **on its scheduled day**. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to generate ideas, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. Your work should be your work. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. The EAC makes accommodations available to professors at the student's request.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any special accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced a bias incident regarding language, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation.

Use of Technology

In order to be successful in the online environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the [Technology and System Requirements](#) information. Additionally, students are required to have headphone speakers compatible with their computer available to use. If a student is in need of technological resources please contact student-tech-request@pointloma.edu. Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

Course Credit Hour Information

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 2 unit class delivered over 7.5 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 75 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes (roughly 10 hours per week, including class sessions). The time estimations are provided in the Canvas modules.

State Authorization

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU Mission To Teach – To Shape – To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modelled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS LECTURE SCHEDULE

Assigned readings on Canvas always preempts the readings on the syllabus.

Copies for some readings will be available on Canvas. Readings should be completed *before* the class session for which they are listed.

PART I: A FRAMEWORK FOR GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS

September 2: WHAT ARE “HUMAN” RIGHTS AND WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

- Donnelly, chs. 1 and 2

September 4: ARE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL RIGHTS HUMAN RIGHTS?

- Smita Narula (2021), “The Foundations, Principles, and Mechanisms of International Human Rights Law,” in Karl Coplan, et al, eds., *Climate Change Law: An Introduction*: 135-40
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
- Donnelly, ch. 14
- Paul Farmer (2005), *Pathologies of Power*, ch. 1

September 9: DO HUMAN RIGHTS TRUMP SOVEREIGNTY?

- Donnelly, ch. 11

September 11: ARE HUMAN RIGHTS UNIVERSAL (AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN)?

- Donnelly, chs. 5-7

September 16: DOES THE MOST POWERFUL STATE DEFINE “UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS?”

- Donnelly, ch. 12
- Noam Chomsky (2008), “Humanitarian Imperialism: The New Doctrine of Imperial Right,” *Monthly Review*

PART II: ROOT CAUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

September 18: ARE MOST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS SYSTEMIC OR INTENTIONAL?

- Donnelly, ch. 13
- Thomas Pogge (2005), “World Poverty and Human Rights,” *Ethics and International Affairs* 19(1): 1-7

September 23: WHEN AND WHY DOES ETHNIC VIOLENCE LEAD TO HR VIOLATIONS?

- Donnelly, ch. 3
- Samantha Power (2001), “Bystanders to Genocide,” *Atlantic Monthly*
- Rene Lemarchand (2005), “Bearing Witness to Mass Murder,” *African Studies Review* 48(3)

September 25: DO POWER ASYMMETRIES PLAY A ROLE IN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS?

- Donnelly, ch. 16
- Selmin Caliskan and Karen Griese (2006), "Women Fighting Violence in War-Torn Societies," *Development* 49(1)
- Aryeh Neier (1996-1997), "The New Double Standard," *Foreign Policy*

PART III: GLOBAL RESPONSES TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

September 30: HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE USE OF FORCE IN STOPPING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS?

- Donnelly, ch. 15
- Deborah M Weissman (2004), "The Human Rights Dilemma: The Humanitarian Project," *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* 35
- International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001), *The Responsibility to Protect: XI-XIII*, 11-18

October 2: HOW EFFECTIVE IS LAW IN STOPPING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS?

- Anne-Marie Slaughter (2004), *A New World Order*, ch. 2
- "Notes on *Hamdi v Rumsfeld* and *Rasul v Bush*," *American Journal of International Law* 98
- Richard J Wilson (2006), "The Pinochet Effect: Transnational Justice in the Age of Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 28(2)
- "Prosecutor v Erdemovic," *American Journal of International Law* 92(2)
- "Prosecutor v Akayesu," *American Journal of International Law* 93(1)

October 7: WHAT OTHER RESPONSES CAN HELP PREVENT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS?

- Mary Kaldor (1999), "Bringing Peace and Human Rights Together"
- Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink (1999), "The Socialization of International Human Rights Norms into Domestic Practices," in *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*: 1-3.

PART IV: A FEW CURRENT HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

October 9: CAN CAPITALISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS CO-EXIST?

- See Canvas

October 14: DISCUSSION OF OUR QUAD-LONG PROJECTS

- Readings TBA

October 16: IS THERE A UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHT TO HEALTH?

- Paul Farmer (2005), *Pathologies of Power*, chs. 5 and 9

Schedule of Topics – POL4050 Human Rights

Part I: A Framework of Global Human Rights

- What Are “Human” Rights and Where Do They Come From?
- Are Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights *Human Rights*?
- Do Human Rights Trump Sovereignty?
- Are Human Rights Universal?
- Does the Most Powerful State Define “Universal Human Rights?”

Part II: Root Causes of Human Rights Violations

- Are Most Human Rights Violations Systemic or Intentional?
- When Does Ethnic Violence Lead to Human Rights Violations?
- What Role Do Power Asymmetries Play in Human Rights Violations?

Part III: Global Responses to Human Rights Violations

- How Effective Is the Use of Force in Stopping Human Rights Violations?
- How Effective Is Law in Stopping Human Rights Violations?
- How Effective Are Other Responses in Stopping Human Rights Violations?

Part IV: Some Current Human Rights Issues

- What Can/Should Be Done Institutionally in Post-Conflict Contexts?
- Our Quad-Long Projects
- Is There a Universal Human Right to Health?

BROAD CATEGORIES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH **(not exhaustive)**

1. CULTURAL AND SOCIAL HUMAN RIGHTS
2. ECONOMIC HUMAN RIGHTS
3. POLITICAL AND CIVIL HUMAN RIGHTS
4. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS AND WAR CRIMES TRIBUNALS
5. DOMESTIC PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
6. EXTRATERRITORIALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS
7. THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
8. THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS NGOs
9. HUMANITARIAN LAW (WAR) AND HUMAN RIGHTS
10. POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION
11. HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION
12. HUMAN RIGHTS AND TERRORISM OR INTERNATIONAL CRIME
13. SELF-DETERMINATION AND ETHNIC MINORITY RIGHTS
14. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS
15. WOMEN'S RIGHTS
16. LGBT RIGHTS
17. MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND LABOR RIGHTS
18. RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS
19. THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN
20. IMMIGRATION AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

These categories are still way too broad for a short research paper, so here are some possible ways to narrow down each of them:

- a. Focusing on a particular right (check the UDHR online for a list)
- b. Critiquing and/or proposing methods to best provide the right
- c. Exploring applications to a particular group (ethnic group, social group, etc.)
- d. Addressing violations of the right in a particular region or country
- e. Analyzing actions of a particular country, IO, or NGO around the right/issue
- f. Describing historical development (how the right changed over time and why)
- g. Comparing different States' actions with respect to the right within a region