

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Lecturer: Mgr. Marie Heřmanová, PhD

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Outline of the course: The course aims to provide an interdisciplinary understanding of the international human rights framework in Central and Eastern Europe where human rights system mirrors historical developments of the countries within the globalizing world. The course invites students from all disciplines to explore and make sense of current human rights issues, cases and problems in the region, contextualized in the broader challenges of human rights at the beginning of 21st century. We will discuss how current political crises (refugees and migration, housing issues, digital rights) shape the debate about human rights in the CEE region and beyond. By the end of the course you will be familiar with the core principles of human rights and have a sound understanding of the issues and recurrent themes of human rights violations. Rather than offering simple answers, the aim of the course is to allow for critical thinking and discussions. This course offers an immersion into the human rights system not only through the academic prism but also through active engagement with human rights practitioners and activists.

Grading policy: Throughout the course students will have weekly readings and assignments. Each student will present a summary of requested readings and prepare questions for discussions. A mid-term sit-in exam and a final research paper are required.

Active class participation: 30%

Mid-term exam: 30%

Final research paper and oral presentation: 40%

A = 100 – 90 points

B = 89 – 80 points

C = 79 – 70 points

D = 69 – 60 points

F = 50 points and below

Required readings: Course reader

Throughout the course the lecturer will be happy to recommend additional readings, as well as other resources – articles, books, movies, debates to attend, etc.

Week 1: UPCES Orientation Lecture Series

Lectures and site visits on subjects of history, culture, politics, and the economies of the Czech Republic and Central Europe in order to establish a common interdisciplinary background and vocabulary for all courses.

Week 2: Introduction

Overview of the course, requirements and motivations.

Introductory lecture and discussion: What are human rights? Are human rights truly universal and do they exist in reality?

Readings:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Week 3: The shaping of current human rights system in a bi-polar world

Readings:

Shelton, D. An Introduction to the history of the international human rights law. 2007

Ulrich, G. Human rights an unfinished project in: K. Hastrup (Ed.), Human Rights on Common Grounds. The Quest for Universality, New York, Kluwer Law International, 2001

Week 4: What are human rights today? Current critiques and discussion of the concept of human rights

Readings:

Hafner-Burton, E. M. and Tsutsui, K. Human rights in a globalizing world: The paradox of empty promises. American journal of sociology, (5), 2005:1373–1411.

Mutua, M. Human rights As Metaphor, in: Human Rights A Political and Cultural Critique. University of Pennsylvania Press: 2001 (ch.1)

Kennedy, D. International Human Rights Movement: Part of the Problem?, 15 Harv. Hum. Rts. J. 101 (2002)

Week 5: Czech Republic and human rights – historical development and current status

Readings:

Havel's letter to Husak

Charter of Human rights

Blaive, Muriel . 2005. The Czechs and their Communism, Past and Present. In Inquiries into Past and Present, ed. D. Gard, I. Main, M. Oliver and J. Wood, Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, Vol. 17

David, R. Lustration Laws in Action: The Motives and Evaluation of Lustration Policy in the Czech Republic and Poland (1989-2001) in Law & Social Inquiry, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Spring, 2003), pp. 387-43

Week 6: Midterm exam

Week 7:

Human rights and minorities in Central and Eastern Europe

Readings:

Case study: D.H. AND OTHERS V. THE CZECH REPUBLIC, all case materials available at: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2945>

Week 8:

Week 10: Migration in Eastern Europe, case study: Czech Republic. Who comes, who stays?

Readings:

Castles, S. International migration at the beginning of twenty first century: global trends and issues. UNESCO: 2000.

Townsend, J. and Christel, O. Before the Boat. Understanding the Migrant Journeys. Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2015

Week 9: Housing as Human Right? Current issues and challenges in the CEE region

Readings:

Bratt, Rachel G., Stone, Michael E. and Hartman, Chester: Why A Right to Housing Is Needed and Makes Sense (in: Right to Housing: A New Social Agenda, Temple University Press, 2006)

Kolocek, M. The Human Right to Housing in the 27 states of European Union, in: European Journal of Homelessness, vol 7, no 1, 2013

Week 10: Human rights in cyberspace – are digital rights human rights?

Readings:

Barlow, Perry John. A Declaration of the Independence of the Cyberspace,
<https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence>

Warschauer, Mark. Reconceptualizing the Digital Divide,
<https://uncommonculture.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/967/888>

Week 11: Beyond Schengen – democracy, totality or both? Human rights in contemporary Eastern Europe

Case study to be determined, guest speaker from the Prague Civil Society Centre

Week 12: Field visit – to be determined

Week 13: The future of human rights

Readings:

Steen, D. The future of human rights in Europe. The Netherlands human rights committee conference reader, 2013:19-28.

Salomon, M. The future of human rights. Global Policy, 3 (4), 2012: 455-457