

Human Rights in Central and Eastern Europe

Lecturer: Vanda Černohorská, PhD
Email: Vanda.Cernohorska@cerge-ei.cz

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, LGBTQ* rights and alike) shape the debate about human rights in the CEE region and beyond. 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. **Discussions with civil society professionals and academics, as well as site visits, excursions, and film screenings, will be vital components of the course.**

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 in the form of brief journal reflections (350 - 600 words per week) submitted in weeks 7 and 13. A mid-term project and a final research paper are required.

Active class participation (incl. reading journal reflections) 40%

Mid-term project: 30%

Final research paper and oral presentation: 30%

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A	93-100	Outstanding work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

UPCES Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The UPCES program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristic, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

UPCES Diversity Policy

UPCES fully embraces diversity and strives to create a safe and welcoming environment for students from all backgrounds. Prague is a wonderfully diverse community and UPCES is no different. All students should feel at home while studying abroad and UPCES will do its utmost to make sure that becomes a reality. Although unique challenges may arise, we believe that students from all walks of life will encounter wonderful opportunities for enrichment as they explore a new culture while studying abroad.

Weekly Schedule

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: the shaping of current human rights system

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 practice?

Readings:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Shelton, D. (2007). An Introduction to the history of the international human rights law.
- Ulrich, G. (2001). Human rights an unfinished project, in: K. Hastrup (Ed.), *Human Rights on Common Grounds*. The Quest for Universality, New York, Kluwer Law International.

Week 3: What are human rights today? Contemporary critiques and discussion of the concept of human rights

Readings:

- Hafner-Burton, E. M. and Tsutsui, K. (2005). Human rights in a globalizing world: The paradox of empty promises. *American Journal of Sociology*, 5:1373–1411.
- Mutua, M. (2001). Human rights As Metaphor, in: *Human Rights, A Political and Cultural Critique*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Week 4: Czech Republic and human rights – historical development and current status

Readings:

- Havel's letter to Husak
- Charter of Human rights
- Blaive, M. (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.

Week 5: Human rights and minorities in Central and Eastern Europe

Case studies materials:

- Case study no. 1: Segregating Roma students into special schools as a form of unlawful discrimination
 - D.H. AND OTHERS V. THE CZECH REPUBLIC. All case materials available via [<http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2945>].
- Case study no. 2: Police intervention against a Romani man.
 - Romea.cz coverage of the case of Stanislav Tomáš. Available via [<https://bit.ly/3T3GIBo>].
 - ERRC video. Available via [<https://bit.ly/3N3osig>].
- Case study no. 3: Unlawful Sterilization of Roma women
 - Amnesty International (2021, July 22). *Czech Republic: Hard won justice for women survivors of unlawful sterilization* [Press release]. Available via [<https://bit.ly/3MZUmwf>].
 - Marks, S. (2017). The Romani Minority, Coercive Sterilization, and Languages of Denial in the Czech Lands, *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 84, p. 128–148. Available via [<https://bit.ly/3RtAAMp>].

Week 6: Migration in Eastern Europe: the “refugee crisis”, right to asylum and human rights violations

Readings:

- Pushed Back At The Door – Denial of Access to Asylum in Eastern EU Member states, Hungarian Helsinki Committee Report, 2017.
- Jungwirth, T. (2018).: Domestic Political Aspects of Migration in the Czech Republic, in: Kucharczyk, J. and Mesežnikov, G: *Phantom Menace – Politics and Policies of Migration in Central Europe*, Heinrich Boell Stiftung Prague, p. 126 – 148.

Recommended Audio:

- Dedej, G. (Host). (2023, March 2). A Black Hole in the Mediterranean? Maritime Migration, Human Rights and State Responsibility, discussion with Aphrodite Papachristodolou. (45 min) [Audio podcast episode] In *The Human Rights Podcast*. Available via [<https://bit.ly/3N3mtKQ>].

Week 7: Midterm project

Week 8: Housing as Human Right? Current issues and challenges in the CEE region

Readings:

- Bratt, R. G., Stone, Michael E. and Hartman, Ch (2006): Why A Right to Housing Is Needed and Makes Sense, in: *Right to Housing: A New Social Agenda*, Temple University Press.
- Kolocek, M. (2013) The Human Right to Housing in the 27 states of European Union, in: *European Journal of Homelessness*, 7:1.
- Farha, L. (2020). When governments sell out to developers, housing is no longer a human right, Feb 29, 2020, *The Guardian*: Available via [<https://bit.ly/3QQViE4>].

Week 9: Climate change and human rights

Video:

- Robinson, M. (2015). Why climate change is a threat to human rights [Video]. TED Conferences. Available via [<https://bit.ly/41bMH3U>].

Readings:

- UN (2021) Frequently Asked Questions on Human Rights and Climate Change [Fact sheet no. 38], pp. 1-36. Available via [<https://bit.ly/4a8zwVa>].
- Hammonds, R. (2020). How Can We Overcome the Great Procrastination to Respond to the Climate Emergency? *Health and Human Rights*, 22(1), 363–366. Available via [<https://bit.ly/41aQkHm>].
- UNDP. (2023). What does gender equality have to do with climate change? [Blog post]. Available via [<https://bit.ly/3RbGAb9>].

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

Readings:

- Karppinen, K. (2017). Human Rights and the Digital. In: Tumber H and Waisbord, S. *Routledge Companion to Media and Human Rights*.
- Hate speech on the Internet and decision-making of Czech courts (2020). Public Defender of Rights – survey report.

Audio:

- Mitchell, D. (Host). (2023, November 7). AI, Freedom of Expression and Civil Liberties, discussion with Barbora Bukovská (Ep. 10, 35 min) [Audio podcast episode] In *AI and the Law*. Available via [<https://bit.ly/3N3dkC0>].

Recommended Readings:

- UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Opinion Report on AI and Freedom of Expression (29.08. 2018), Available via [<https://bit.ly/46xU4Uk>].

Week 11: Gender backlash, gender politics and LGBTQ+ rights in the CEE region

Readings:

- Bunch, C., 2006, “Women’s Rights as Human Rights,” in B. Lockwood (ed.), *Women’s Rights: A Human Rights Quarterly Reader*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Grudzinska, A. (2021). Make Misogyny Great Again. “Anti-gender” politics in Poland, in: Mejstřík M. and Handl, V. (2021). *Current Populism in Europe – Gender Backlash and counter-strategies*, Heinrich Boell Stiftung Prague, p. 23 – 37.
- Sata, R. (2021). In the Name of the Family: The Populist Turn Against Gender in Hungary, in Mejstřík M. and Handl, V. (2021). *Current Populism in Europe – Gender Backlash and counter-strategies*, Heinrich Boell Stiftung Prague, p. 37 – 54.

Week 12: The future of human rights

Readings:

- Steen, D. (2013). The future of human rights in Europe. The Netherlands human rights committee conference reader, p. 19-28.
- Salomon, M. (2012). The future of human rights. Global Policy, 3 (4), p. 455-457.
- Drahoukoupil, Š. Heřmanová, M. (2017). A Bastion of Democracy or Half Way Down the Slippery Slope? Liberal Values and Illiberal Tendencies in the Czech Republic, Cultures of History Forum, Available via [<https://bit.ly/3uQbyhi>].

Week 13: Presentations of final research paper outline, discussion, and overall course reflections.