Human rights have become an important motivation and aspiration for both state and non-state actors. States integrate human rights into their foreign policy goals, while non-state actors mobilise enormous resources in order to promote rights-based agendas. The goal of this course is to examine the political and ethical consequences of adopting and pursuing human rights. The readings and assignments will combine historical, theoretical, and practical concerns, with a particular interest on the international dimensions of adopting a human rights and development framework.

The course will begin by examining the history of human rights, and the eventual emergence of an international legal human rights framework. We will examine contemporary controversies and debates related to cultural relativism and universality, as well as non-Western approaches to human rights. After setting these historical and theoretical foundations, the course will consider the application of a human rights framework to various specific issues, including (but not limited to) state security, sexual minority rights, mobility and migration, development, indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, and humanitarian intervention. Throughout the course, attention will be paid to various critiques and alternative perspectives.

As this course is a fourth-year seminar, there will be a strong emphasis on class discussion, student presentations, and writing. The seminars will be largely student-led and student-driven, so the success of the class depends on the commitment and engagement of its members. It is also important to note that the course has a demanding reading list.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- **Content:** Students will become familiar with the history and evolution of contemporary human rights, as well as with different perspectives and debates regarding their application.

- **Reading:** Students will learn to identify different “purposes” for reading, and how to apply appropriate reading strategies and techniques.

- **Research and writing:** Through the written assignments, students will gain experience with different genres of writing. These different genres will require students to adapt their written communication skills to different kinds of audiences.

- **Oral Communication:** By leading and facilitating one seminar, students will develop their oral communication and active listening skills, as well as their ability to work with a team. Students are encouraged to be creative with the methods they use to facilitate their session.