

Syllabus  
**International Human Rights**  
Spring semester 2026

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The course “International Human Rights” will provide an overview of the current international human rights regime, covering the main international and regional human rights instruments and the different monitoring mechanisms. A substantial part of the course is dedicated to the discussion of cases. In the context of recent developments, we will address human rights topics such as freedom of expression, reproductive rights, and the protection of minorities. The course is designed for Master’s students.

### **General information**

To access all information, updates and course materials, students need to enrol in our [Moodle course](#). The enrollment password will be communicated in the first class. Classes will be held weekly on Wednesdays, from 10:15 to 12:00, starting 18 February 2026.

### **Course requirements**

Attendance in class is mandatory for completing the course. Students may miss no more than two classes with prior notification by e-mail. Please read all the mandatory materials. Please note that the programme’s mandatory reading assignments below are subject to change throughout the semester. Additional readings, which will be uploaded to Moodle, are intended to assist you if any topics are of particular interest or difficulty.

Students are awarded 6 ECTS upon successful completion of the course. For a successful completion, students are required to give a group presentation on an assigned topic and engage in a discussion with the whole class. In addition to the exam at the end of the semester, the presentation will be part of the final grade. More information will be provided in the first lecture.

### **Literature**

We recommend purchasing Alison Bisset, Blackstone’s International Human Rights Documents, 13th ed., Oxford, 2023.

The following textbooks are recommended:

- The course’s topics are to a large extent covered by the various contributions in Daniel Moeckli/Sangeeta Shah/Sandesh Sivakumaran (eds.), International Human Rights Law, 4th ed., Oxford 2022;
- Antônio Augusto Cançado Trindade/Damián A. González-Salzberg, International Law of Human Rights, Oxford 2024 offers a unique Global South perspective;
- Olivier de Schutter, International Human Rights Law, 3rd ed., Cambridge 2019
- Philip Alston, International Human Rights, New York, NYU Law, 2025 (available open access <https://humanrightstextbook.org/digital-book>) offers a critical look at international human rights law and the current challenges. It is particularly recommended for students without a strong background in public international law.
- Alternatively, you may find Walter Kaelin/Joerg Kuenzli, The Law of International Human Rights Protection, 2nd ed., Oxford 2019, helpful for your understanding the general concepts of international human rights law. An updated version (2025) is only available in German.
- Additional reading materials are listed in the schedule below.

### **Exam**

There will be an oral exam. Details will be announced in class.

## **Course administration and support**

Further information may be found on Moodle and on the [website of Prof. Christine Kaufmann](#). Please read the documents in advance. For any further queries, please contact Rebecca Gross at the Chair of Prof. Kaufmann (Lst.kaufmann@ius.uzh.ch).

**International Human Rights****Course syllabus – subject to change**

	Date	Topic	Mandatory reading assignments
<b>Part 1: Foundations of international human rights law</b>			
1	18 February	<b>Introduction, History, Notion and Sources</b>	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Bates, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 3–22 (Chapter 1 – History)</li> <li>– Chinkin, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 65-88 (Chapter 4 – Sources)</li> <li>– Dembour, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 43-62 (Chapter 3 – Critiques)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>or</u></b></p> <p>Alston, pp.1-99.</p> <p>De Schutter, pp. 13-144 (Chapter 1 – The rise of international human rights)</p>
2	25 February	<b>Obligations and Actors</b>	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Mégret, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 89-105 (Chapter 5 – Special Character)</li> <li>– Clapham, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 583-604 (Chapter 28 – Non-State Actors)</li> <li>– Young, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 129-148 (Chapter 7 – Rights and Obligations)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>or</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Alston, pp. 419-459 (Chapter 6 – Rights versus Duties), pp. 922-1077 (Chapter 12 States, Chapter 13 – Non State Actors and Others);</li> <li>– De Schutter, pp. 145-288 (Chapter 2 – State responsibility and ‘jurisdiction’)</li> <li>– De Schutter, pp. 291-435 (Chapter 3 – Respecting human rights: avoiding interference)</li> <li>– De Schutter, pp. 436-556 (Chapter 4 – Protecting human rights: regulating private actors)</li> <li>– De Schutter, pp. 557-606 (Chapter 5 – Fulfilling human rights: progressive realization)</li> </ul>

	Date	Topic	Mandatory reading assignments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- De Schutter, pp. 809-868 (Chapter 8 – Ensuring compliance with international human rights law: the role of national authorities)</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ECtHR, Rantsev v. Cyprus and Russia</li> <li>- ECtHR, O’Keeffe v. Ireland (legal summary only)</li> </ul>
3	4 March	<b>ICCPR and ICESCR</b>	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- van Boven, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 136-147 (Chapter 7 – Categories of Rights)</li> <li>- Eide, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 186-206 (Chapter 10 – Adequate Standard of Living)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>or</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alston, pp. 100-124 (Chapter 3 Civil and Political Rights) and pp. 242-344 (Chapter 4 Economic Social and Cultural Rights).</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- South African Constitutional Court, Minister of Health and Others v. Treatment Action Campaign and Others</li> <li>- South African Constitutional Court, Soobramoney v. Minister of Health</li> <li>- ECtHR, Singh v. France</li> <li>- HRC, Singh v. France</li> </ul>
4	11 March	<b>UN Human Rights Protection (I): Charter- and Treaty-Based Mechanisms</b>	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connors/Shah, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 385-428 (Chapter 19 – United Nations)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>or</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alston, pp. 639-647 and 673-783 (Chapter 8 B 3d. – The UN Human Rights System, Universal Periodic Review; Chapter 9 – Treaty Bodies: The ICCPR Human</li> </ul>

	Date	Topic	Mandatory reading assignments
5	18 March	<b>UN Human Rights Protection (II): Charter- and Treaty-Based Mechanisms</b>	<p>Rights Committee and Chapter 10 – International Human Rights Fact Finding)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– De Schutter, pp. 869-942 (Chapter 9 – The United Nations human rights treaties system)</li> <li>– De Schutter, pp. 943-987 (Chapter 10 – The United Nations Charter-based monitoring of human rights)</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– HRC, Whelan v. Ireland</li> <li>– HRC Universal Periodic Review – Switzerland, 4<sup>th</sup> cycle</li> <li>– UN Special Procedures communication to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</li> <li>– UN Special Procedures communication to Myanmar</li> </ul>
6	25 March	<b>Regional Human Rights Protection</b>	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Çali, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 429-444 (Chapter 20 – Regional Protection)</li> <li>– Antkowiak, in Moeckli/Sdhah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 445–462 (Chapter 21 – The Americas)</li> <li>– Greer/Graham, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 463–486 (Chapter 22 – Europe)</li> <li>– Heyns/Killander, in Moeckli/Shah/ Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 487–504 (Chapter 23 – Africa)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>or</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Alston, pp. 784-920 (Chapter 11 – Regional Human Rights Systems)</li> <li>– De Schutter, pp. 988-1060 (Chapter 11 – Regional mechanisms of protection)</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– AfCtHPR, Request for Advisory Opinion by the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU) on the Compatibility of Vagrancy Laws With the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and Other Human Rights Instruments Applicable in Africa</li> <li>– IACtHR, Case of the “Street Children” (Villagrán Morales et al.) v. Guatemala</li> </ul>

	Date	Topic	Mandatory reading assignments
<b>Part 2: Substantive rights and guarantees</b>			
7	1 April	<b>Life and Torture</b>	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ferstman, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 169-186 (Chapter 9 – Integrity of the Person)</li> <li>– Shah, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 257-284 (Chapter 13 – Detention and Trial)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>or</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Alston pp. 225-241 (Chapter 3.E – Torture) , pp. 2-32 (Chapter 1.B. – Human Rights Discourse – Capital Punishment)</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ECtHR, El Masri v. the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</li> <li>– IACtHR, Roche Azaña and others v. Nicaragua</li> <li>– ECtHR, Osman v. United Kingdom (<i>legal summary only</i>)</li> <li>– ECtHR, Lambert v. France (<i>legal summary only</i>)</li> </ul>
	8 April	<b>Spring Break – no class</b>	
8	15 April	<b>Freedom of Thought and Expression</b>	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– McGoldrick, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 209-234 (Chapter 11 – Thought, Expression, Association, and Assembly)</li> <li>– CCPR, General Comment No. 34 on Art. 19</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>or</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Alston pp. 554-583 (Chapter 7 B.4 – Freedom of Speech)</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– AfCtHPR, Ingabire Victoire Umuhoza v. Republic of Rwanda</li> <li>– ECtHR, Sanchez v. France</li> </ul>

	Date	Topic	Mandatory reading assignments
9	22 April	Equality and Non-Discrimination	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Moeckli, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 151-168 (Chapter 8 – Equality and Non- Discrimination)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>or</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Alston pp. 202-224 (Chapter 3 D. Evolution of Human Rights: Sexual Orientation Discrimination), pp. 482-499 (Chapter 7 B.1 – Gender)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>additionally</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Kälin/Künzli, pp. 355-359 (Chapter 11, IV – The Prohibition of Racial Discrimination)</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– HRC, Rosalind Williams Lecraft v. Spain</li> <li>– IACmHR, Jessica Lenahan (Gonzales) et al. v. the United States</li> <li>– ECtHR, Semenya v. Switzerland, 10 July 2025</li> <li>– ECtHR, T.H. v. The Czech Republic, 12 June 2025</li> </ul>
10	29 April	Reproductive Rights	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Otto, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 309-338 (Chapter 16 – Women’s Rights)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>or</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Alston pp. 125-201 (Chapter 3 C. Women’s Rights and CEDAW)</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– US Supreme Court, Dobbs, State Health Officer of the Mississippi Department of Health, et al. v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization et al.</li> <li>– HRC, L.M.R. v. Argentina</li> <li>– IACtHR, I.V. v. Bolivia</li> </ul>

	Date	Topic	Mandatory reading assignments
11	6 May	<b>Minorities and Indigenous Peoples</b>	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– McCorquodale, in Moeckli/Shah/Sivakumaran (eds.), pp. 359-381 (Chapter 18 – Group Rights)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>additionally</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Kälin/Künzli, pp. 367-375 (Chapter 11, VII – Protection of Minorities and of Indigenous Peoples)</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– HRC, Mahuika v. New Zealand</li> <li>– AfCtHPR, Ogiek v. Kenya</li> </ul>
12	13 May	<b>Current Issues I: Human Rights and Climate Change</b>	<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Alston, pp. 1079-1129 (Chapter 15 – Climate Change, the Environment and the Right to Development)</li> <li>– Helen Keller/Corina Heri, Introduction in: Helen Keller/Corina Heri (eds.), Reparation for Climate Change: The Successes and Limits of Litigation, sui generis Zurich 2026 (available open access <a href="#">here</a>), pp.1-12.</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ECtHR, Verein Klimaseniorinnen v. Switzerland and others</li> <li>– IACtHR, Advisory Opinion OC-32/25 on Climate Emergency and Human Rights, 29 May 2025</li> <li>– IACtHR Inhabitants of La Oroya v. Peru, 27 November 2023</li> <li>– ICJ Advisory Opinion, Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change, 23 July 2025</li> </ul> <p>Additional readings and details will be announced later in class.</p>
13	20 May	<b>Current issues II</b>	Readings and details will be announced later in class.
14	27 May	<b>Summing up and repetition</b>	Details will be announced later in class.