



Nordic Summer University



European Humanities
University

Study Circle 5:
International Relations and Human Rights.
A Joint Venture Between NSU and EHU.

CALL FOR PAPERS SUMMER SESSION 2016

UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS REGIME

The summer session will take place from **24th to 31st July in Orivesi, Finland**

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The deadline to submit proposals is 1st of May 2016. Please send title and abstract to both coordinators

Preliminary program to be announced: 1st of June, 2016 on www.nordic.university where you can also find more information about NSU. (See <http://www.nordic.university>)

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For the winter session 2016 we would propose a special opening focus on:

UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS REGIME

An opening focus will head the program of the session sincerely welcoming other subjects related to our six themes in the program to follow.

We invite participants to the 4th session of NSU Study Circle "International relations and Human rights". Among the previous topics of our Study Circle we had: Human rights and Dirty war, Human rights and Citizenship, Human rights and Migration. This session will be focused around the discussions on: "Understanding the Global Human Rights Regime".

The global human rights regime is there. One can discuss how well it works and to which purposes. There are surely problems about compliance. However, one should consider these problems in a wider context. Should we consider it in the light of shared universal understandings or practices (Mervyn Frost, *Global Ethics*, 2009)? Should we insert it into a vision about global constitutionalism (http://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/Peters_Global_Constitutionalism2.pdf) defining principles and institutions for a global legal order? Should we approach it more pragmatically and focus on best practices enhancing progressive learning? We could also consider it historically as an evolution of different generations of human rights or consider it in the light of questions about justice.

We might have to put on the Foucauldian glasses and interpret it in terms of governmentality, biopolitics and pastoral power as these notions appear in his lecture series "Society Must Be Defended" given at the Collège de France from 1975–1976. Other approaches would link the global human rights regime to the world economic system or power politics between the great powers.

It is difficult to discuss the global human rights regime without entering the question about cultural diversity. Even though the cultural relativism debate is somewhat muted by now, the question enters inevitably. What role should we assign to cultural diversity; is there any room for it or is it the designated enemy?

The significance of media and technologies seems to be of the highest importance for this regime. The new social media has changed the way people interact, but how does the use of these media relate to the global human rights regime? Do UN institutions use these media efficiently or do popular movements emerge independently of this regime? Technology also has interesting uses. Smartphones can register violations and focus global attention on these. The recent case in France where a student was arbitrarily hit in the face by a police officer is an example.

Considering the growing importance of environmental matters, one should consider how the global human rights regime relates to the climate regime. The two regimes are bound to interfere with each other. Climate refugees are one point of intersection, but global distributive justice and personal liberties will probably be affected by growing regulation.

Other themes are:

A)

The UDHR and the core UN human rights instruments: Philosophical foundations of the regime. The question has come to forefront by Johannes Morsink's book: *Inherent Human Rights, Philosophical Roots of the Universal Declaration* (2009). It seems important to identify the philosophical import of the international human rights regime, if this is possible, and investigate its relation to legal reasons and foundations. Does philosophical and legal conceptions of human rights cohere? Do they need each other? This leads to another question concerning the understanding of this regime by the actor's of international relations: How important is ideology, religion, philosophy and the moral judgment of history for foreign policy when it comes to human rights? Does different outlooks shape foreign policies? Is this influence marginal or negligible? How does human rights enter international relations theory: Realism would not accommodate these matters in the same way as internationalism, critical theory or the Copenhagen school.

B)

The role of public opinion. According to Kathleen Pritchard there has been little research into the role of public opinion for human rights (Pritchard, 1991), and this still seems to be the case (Hertel et al., 2009: 443444). These questions have, however, some urgency. To what extent does public opinion shape foreign policy? How strong is public opinion in different countries and does it take any interest in human rights at all? Is there a world public opinion? The role of media and NGO's? Does anyone listen to the UN? How does public opinion makes an impact? Consumer boycotts? Why is a good reputation important for certain countries? What is the role of social movements in relation to human rights and more specifically in Eastern Europe? Does social movements make a difference? The notion of public opinion seems related to the concept of civil society. To what extent does public opinion depend on civil society and what does this means for human rights? What is the role of citizenship and labour rights? How does social groups use human rights globally and more particularly in the Nordic countries and Eastern Europe. Does these groups impact international relations and how (for example through EU, OSCE or other entities)?

C)

Two dimensions of Human rights: In the last centuries there has been an increasing tendency to give policy matters a legal form. This leave us with two contradictory approaches: 1) A normative approach considering law like a list of rules and a 2) procedural approach taking law as a system conciliating human claims (needs). The choice of model will have important consequences. In this context we can ask how we should understand human rights: Do they constitute a (legal or a moral) code with universal and more or less general rules, or should we rather as Jack Donnelly consider human rights as a system devoted to the most complete possible realization of the human potential 'creating' the envisioned person by their protection and implementation? (Donnelly, 1985: 31-32) Are we confusing politics with law or is this the only realistic way to approach the matter? What impact does this disagreement have on international relations and especially on the regional dimension in the Nordic Countries and Eastern Europe? How should human rights accordingly relate to the welfare state, labour issues, citizenship, participation etc.? Another interesting topic is the development of supranational Justice, for example, the ECHR. Judgements of this court influence the states, their domestic and international policy, but the main importance of the Court is to make the individual person a subject of international relations. What would then be the status of a person in international relations and international law? What could we say about "international citizenship"? How are Human Rights implemented through the national citizenship? How will the 'policy of belonging' provided by the National State connect with Human Rights? How does "migrants" and human rights work together? Speaking about the ECHR, we should also consider the role of the Council of Europe. During the Cold War it was rather slumbering, but afterwards it has had a more active role as protector of HR in national legislations.

D)

The war on terrorism and human rights. The recent revelations of US surveillance (Prism) and a long row of special legislation make one worry about the fate of human rights. Postal secrecy, one time a sacrosanct right, has no avail in the Internet era. Surveillance of any kind is now part of our daily lives. Will human rights concerns stand against worries about security? The subject has been the object of numerous reports on the part of OAS and the Council of Europe among others. The Security Council has devoted a special

committee to the subject and the Human Rights Council has nominated a special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism. Despite these efforts public awareness seems to erode. The fact that nearly one third of the respondents from a well established democratic country believes that torture can be necessary in special cases (Berlingske Tidende – 14/03/2012, Fokus p. 10) is telling. Is the population in well-established democracies slowly getting used to methods that human rights groups are fighting in Belarus and other places?

E)

The UN System in the turmoil of international relations: The UN politics of human rights is complicated. What are the strategic goals of the different parties? A historical survey would certainly be illuminating. The Cold War impacted significantly impacted the whole process. The fight against Apartheid and the Palestinian conflict has been important factors. The Human Rights Commission was highly politicised and its successor, the Human Rights Council, suffer from some of the same problems. A Global Force for Human Rights? (2008), a report from The European Council on Foreign Relations, lists some of the problems with promoting human rights through the UN. The expert committees of the Treaty Bodies seem to function better. Is it possible to reform this system? Will the UN System be able to incite the state parties to respect their obligations, or will the system collapse from overload in general indifference? New norms and instruments are added along the way. Will these make the system more opaque and less visible to the public? Rights of development and peace are relatively new rights. Do they serve a real purpose? Will nature, environment and animals be the future subject of treaties?

F)

Promotion of human rights. Humanitarian intervention (Responsibility to protect); a new UN policy? Is it legitimate? What is the role of foreign policy? Does human rights promotion by foreign policy work? Education in human rights; where and how? Should the educational system approach this subject more systematically? How to disseminate knowledge of human rights in a population largely uninterested or more focussed on other matters such as unemployment, security or stability? How can social groups and civil society contribute? In which cases can external entities help, and when does they make things worse? How should one counter argument of cultural relativism, which has become a main ideological issue for Russia and other former Soviet countries looking for loopholes allowing them to hide from criticism of their human rights record? Is promotion of human rights about extending the human rights movement to all countries? What is the human rights movement? Has it any unity, vested interests or a political agenda? What are the responsibilities of entrepreneurs and business corporations concerning promotion of human rights? The role of professional groups in key positions such as administrators and lawyers working with human rights. How to promote awareness, knowledge and dedication within these groups?

European Humanities University (<http://www.ehu.lt/en>) is private non-profit liberal arts Lithuanian University with unique origin and history. Founded in 1992, the university has been headquartered in Vilnius, Lithuania since authorities expelled it from Belarus in 2004. EHU is the only Belarusian University that has succeeded in maintaining its independence and commitment to academic freedom. EHU offers both high residence and low residence (distance learning) degree programs in the humanities and social sciences that fully accord with European standards and norms.

Approximately 1800 students are enrolled in European Humanities University (1/3 high residence students and 2/3 low residence), 249 (99 full-time and 150 part-time) faculty members conduct teaching and research activities in EHU within Historical, Socio-political, Law and Media academic departments and 10 research centers (see: <http://www.ehu.lt/en/research/centers-laboratories-and-institutes>).

The EHU provides students from Belarus and the region with an education in the European liberal arts tradition in a free and democratic environment - an opportunity, unfortunately, not available in Belarus today. At EHU, students can learn media and communications skills in a state-of-the-art [media lab](#), become election observers through a hands on program conducted together with [Belarusian Human Rights House](#) and [Belarus Watch](#) called [Election Observation: Theory and Practice](#) (EOTP), study European politics and policy as part of the political science and European studies program, and many other opportunities. Law students learn about human rights law from Western experts and practice their courtroom skills and meet students from around the world at the Philip C. Jessup International Moot Court Competition. New center for Constitutionalism and Human rights was established in 2012 <http://www.ehu.lt/en/research/research-centers/center-for-constitutionalism-and-human-rights/activities> along with announcement of new academic journal with the same title <http://chr-centre.org/>

These and other opportunities make EHU a unique place for young people from Belarus and the region. The commitment of EHU's faculty, students, staff, and donors is an important signal to Belarusian authorities and society that there is an alternative to state ideological control. For Belarusians who seek the freedom to think creatively and critically—to study, learn, teach, and conduct research without ideological restrictions—EHU provides a home away from home.

The [Nordic Summer University](#) (NSU) is an independent and open academic institution, which organises seminars crossing academic and national borders. NSU is a democratic institution organized and run by its participants through different study circles.

Through two yearly seminars the cross-disciplinary study circles fertilise collaboration between academics, build up networks and contribute to create research agendas throughout the Nordic/Baltic countries as well as establishing contacts "abroad". The research in the study circles is documented in publications link: [NSU-Press](#)

The two yearly seminars take place in the Nordic/Baltic countries. In the winter each study circle organize their own seminar; in the summer all circles are brought together for also enhancing further cross-disciplinary collaboration. Furthermore, the summer meeting is also the political organ of NSU inviting all participants to exercise their influence on the activities of NSU.

It is the policy of NSU to maintain an environment that encourages and fosters appropriate conduct among all persons and respect for individual values. NSU opposes any policy or practice, which discriminates against any individual or group on grounds of race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, class, age, disability, creed, and ethnic/national origins. NSU aims at being an open and inclusive organization.

NSU receives financial support from the [Nordic Council of Ministers](#) and operates in cooperation with [Foreningerne Nordens Forbund](#) (FNF).