

Human Rights: A Philosophical Approach

7.1 Module Overview									
Module Number		Module Title	Human Rights: A Philosophical Approach						
Stage of Principal Programme			2	Semester	2	Duration. <i>(Weeks F/T)</i>	12	ECTS	5
Mandatory / Elective (E)	E	Hours of Learner Effort / Week	2						
Analysis of required hours of learning effort									
Teaching and Learning Modalities						✓if relevant to this module	Approx. proportion of total (hours)		
Contact Hours									
In person face-to-face						✓	24		
Synchronous									
Indirect/Non-Contact Hours									
Asynchronous									
Work Based									
Other:						✓	101		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> independent reading, engagement with VLE, research and preparation of assessments 									
Total							125		

Pre-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A
Co-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A
Maximum number of learners per instance of the module	120
Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module.	
Role e.g., Tutor, Mentor, Lecturer, Research Supervisor, etc.	Qualifications & experience required
Lecturer	A minimum level 9 qualification in Philosophy or closely cognate area
	Staff - Learner Ratio X:Y
	1:120

Assessment Techniques – percentage contribution				
Continuous Assessment	100%	Proctored Exam – in person		Practical Skills Based
Project		Proctored Exam - online		Work Based
Capstone (Y/N)?	N	If Yes, describe		

7.2 Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs)	
MIMLO On completion of this module a learner will be able to:	Related MIPLO #
1. Analyse the basic concepts of human rights in terms of their historical formulations and applications.	2, 3

2. Demonstrate an awareness of the inherently contested nature of such ideas owing to cross-cultural differences of belief and value systems.	1, 3, 6, 7
3. Show how contemporary debates about rights are illuminated by close readings of the canonical writings of influential thinkers.	1, 2, 5

7.3 Indicative Module Content, Organisation and Structure

This module aims to introduce learners to influential theories of Human Rights. It develops skills of analysis, critical reflection and the ability to formulate independent arguments through close readings of primary texts and analyses of 'real-world' dilemmas. Here the focus will be upon the ways in which multiculturalism inevitably gives rise to contentious debates about the ways in which people from diverse backgrounds deal with issues of identity, belonging, and solidarity.

Below is an indicative structure of the module content:

- History of the development of basic concepts of Humans Rights.
- The analysis of foundational formulations of rights by thinkers such as Aquinas and Kant.
- A critique of Bentham's refutation of the existence of Human Rights.
- Analysis and application of Human Rights Theory in relation to historical and contemporary socio-cultural problems.
- Rights and their role in political revolutions.
- Feminist Criticisms of traditional notions about rights.
- Competing assumptions about rights in multicultural societies.

Close reading and analyses of recommended texts will be conducted and applied to socio-cultural scenarios in which contested ideas about rights play a formative role.

Human Rights: A Philosophical Approach engages with the core texts of a multicultural range of eminent male and female thinkers to demonstrate historical and contemporary correlations between philosophical ideas and political activism. This module reveals how the writings and actions of exemplary figures such as Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil, and Susan Sontag serve to illustrate the practical consequences of ethical thinking in our attempts to promote human rights in accordance with criteria of equality, diversity, and inclusivity.

7.4 Work-based learning and practice-placement (if applicable)

N/A

7.5 Specific module resources required (if applicable)

N/A

7.6 Application of programme teaching, learning and assessment strategies to this module

The conceptual and textual material of this module is covered in lectures. The lecturer specifies the skills of exposition, textual analysis and critique in exploring conceptual and thematic content and facilitates the learners' opportunities to practise these skills within individual and group sittings. The lecturer will also demonstrate how the close reading of primary texts deepens our insights into their pertinence to vexed 'real-world' issues in which conflict is perpetuated by competing visions of what constitutes fundamental rights.

In adhering to the principles of UDL, material will be made available via a range of sources through the VLE such as texts, videos, and podcasts. Such material will appear on the lecturer's slides that will be uploaded to Moodle in advance of lectures so that learners access such course content by way of preparation.

Assessment for the module consists of continuous assessment (90%), and attendance (10%).

Continuous Assessment: The essay and analysis piece will involve close readings of core texts and digital media resources and evaluations of their capacity to provide insights into historical and contemporary social justice issues. (MIMLO 1-4).

Attendance: The attendance mark will benefit those learners who will engage with themes through critical dialogues with their lecturers and their peers.

7.7 Summative Assessment Strategy for this module

MIMLOs	Technique(s)	Weighting
1, 2, 3, 4	Essay	60%
2	Critical Analysis of Digital Resources such as Academic Podcasts	30%
N/A	Attendance	10%

7.8 Sample Assessment Materials

Assessment will be composed of three parts:

- (i) Attendance
- (ii) Essay: 2,000 words.
- (iii) Analysis of Digital Media sources about the UN Declaration of Human Rights: 750-1000 words.

Description

- (i) **Reading Comprehension:** The reading comprehension piece will be carried out in the third lecture. It will comprise of two questions based on an online resource recommended to learners the week before. General feedback will be given in the same lecture.

Essay: You must choose an essay topic from below. It should use the MHRA referencing style and it should make reference to at least **four** sources.

1. There are differing views about the existence of Human Rights. Richard Rorty argues that 'human rights foundationalism is outmoded.' Examine the arguments he offers for this position, and what he proposes in place of such foundationalism. Evaluate what this position contributes to the debate around whether Human Rights exist or not in relation to one of the historical or contemporary controversies about social justice that were explored in our lectures.
2. Tom Regan argues that animals have rights in the same way that humans have – because they are 'the experiencing subjects of a life.' Critically analyse his arguments as to why animals have rights and compare them with the traditional arguments as to why humans have rights.

Marking of assessments will be in line with the Marking Assessment Guidelines as outlined in Section 3.3 of the College's [Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards](#) unless otherwise indicated.

7.9 Indicative reading lists and other information resources

Indicative Core Reading:

Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2017)

Bentham, Jeremy, *Utilitarianism and Other Essays* (London: Penguin, 1987)

Dworkin, Ronald, *Taking Rights Seriously* (London: Duckworth, 1997)

Held, Virginia, 'Rights' in *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. by Alison M. Jagger and Iris Marion Young (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000)

Jarvis Thomson, Judith, 'A defence of Abortion' in *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*, ed. by Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006)

Memorandum and Questionnaire Circulated by UNESCO on the Theoretical Bases of the Rights of Man, 1947

Sontag, Susan, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2004)

UN Declaration of the Rights of Man, 1948

Weil, Simone, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Obligations Towards the Human Being* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003)

Indicative Other Reading:

Aiken, Kath and Wainright, Sally (eds.), *Women's Rights, Gender Wrongs: The Global Impact of Gender-Identity Ideology* (New York: Women's Declaration International, 2023)

Cole, Mike, *Education, Equality and Human Rights: Issues of Gender, 'Race', Sexuality, Disability and Social Class* (London: Routledge, 2011)

Davidson, Scott, *Human Rights* (London: Open University Press, 1993)

Donnelly, Jack, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2002)

Kapur, Ratna, *Gender, Alterity and Human Rights: Freedom in a Fishbowl* (London: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018)

Stokes, Curtis, *Race and Human Rights* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2008)

Online Resources:

Stanford University, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

BBC In Our Time Podcast Page: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl>