

Approved by the Academic Council  
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## Syllabus

### 1. Course Description

a. Title of a Course: **Human Rights for Open Societies**

b. Pre-requisites: English (Upper Intermediate)

c. Abstract:

In this course, we will introduce you to one of the world's most intricate human rights systems: the European Convention on Human Rights. You will see when and how people can turn to the European Court of Human Rights to complain about human rights violations. You will learn how the Court tries to solve many of the difficult human rights dilemmas of today. We will look, amongst other things, at the freedom of expression and demonstration, the right to vote, and the prohibition of discrimination. And we will address the rights of migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable groups. And, of course, we will see whether it is possible to restrict rights and if so under what conditions. You will even encounter watchdogs and ice cream in this course.

2. Online platform: Coursera

3. Course link: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/humanrights>

4. Language of instruction: English

5. Course Plan:

### **Module 1. Introduction to the ECHR**

The protection of human rights is closely linked to the idea of open societies. In an open society, people enjoy freedom and they are to a large extent free to live their lives as they wish. This week, we explore the idea of open societies and see how it relates to the protection of human rights. We also introduce you to the European Convention on Human Rights. This document forms the foundation for one of the world's most intricate international human rights systems. Finally, you learn about the background and history of the Convention, the rights that are protected therein and the procedure which individuals can use to lodge a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights.

### **Module 2. General principles**

When someone complains that his or her right to privacy or right to freedom of expression has been violated, the European Court of Human Rights has to assess whether that is truly the case. But how does it do this? In this part of the course, we will focus on the general principles and methods the Court uses in order to assess whether a State has

violated the Convention. We will see how the Court approaches human rights cases and learn about the dilemmas it faces in this regard in the context of open societies.

### **Module 3. Human rights and democracy**

Open societies require a democratic form of government. But how are human rights and democracy linked? In this part of the course, we focus on what democracy entails from a human rights perspective. We also address what voting rights are and how political parties are protected under the European Convention on Human Rights. Finally, we take a look at the protection of political rights in countries in transitions from war to peace and from dictatorship to democracy.

### **Module 4. Insiders and outsiders: non-discrimination, vulnerable groups, migrants and asylum seekers**

Open societies are all about inclusion. In an open society, everyone should be allowed to participate on an equal footing. No one should be excluded. Equally, human rights should be enjoyed by all people and discrimination is prohibited. Yet, even in an open society, universality of human rights and the prohibition of discrimination may raise many questions. For example, what about the rights of people who are not (yet) citizens of that society, such as asylum seekers? On the one hand, asylum seekers find themselves in the extremely difficult and vulnerable position of being in transit. For that reason, their needs deserve extra consideration. For example, they may need special protection against hostile responses by the local population, they may need food, education and housing, and they must be protected against discrimination. On the other hand, not being citizens, the question is often raised to what extent they should be included and benefit from the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the European Convention on Human Rights. Finding the right balance and solving such dilemmas is crucial in open societies. In this week, we focus on (1) the rights and freedoms of insiders and outsiders under the European Convention, (2) non-discrimination and (3) the protection of vulnerable groups. To illustrate, we pay special attention to the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, as well as of other minority groups.

### **Module 5. Freedom of expression and public protest**

The right to freely express yourself, the freedom of the press to report news and the right to protest are essential in an open society. The freedom of expression enables you to gather information about public issues and to let others know what you think. The media plays an important role in conveying information about matters of general interest. And public protest enables you to publicly support a cause you believe in. Together, these rights provide the essential conditions for the free and peaceful sharing of thoughts and ideas. Nevertheless, the unlimited freedom to say whatever you want and the freedom to protest might also undermine the openness of society. Hate speech and discriminatory speech, for example, might contribute to the exclusion of minority groups. In this learning unit, we take a closer look at the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of assembly. Thereby, we also address the limits of these rights in an open society.

### **Module 6. Closure**

This is the final assignment of the course on Human Rights for Open Societies. In this assignment, the various topics of the course are brought together. The first aim is to help you test the knowledge and insights you have acquired during the course. The second aim is to help you understand the interrelatedness of the main topics discussed.

## 6. Reading List

Required: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/humanrights>

## 7. Forms of Control:

- a. Current control: 6 graded multiple answer quizzes and a peer graded assignment (test) (80% Final grade)
- b. Intermediate control: interview with the instructor (20% Final Grade)

Students are also expected in an oral examination to deliver answers in which the following qualities will be assessed:

- audibility and clarity, pitch, proper articulation;
- fluency, appropriate forms of language including addressing the examiner, clarity of expression;
- appropriate content (proper coverage of legal issues, relevance of law in their responses, emphasis, anticipating or responding to other side; at least certain justification of the argument which has been supported).

8. Grading System:  $Fin. = Curr.*0,8 + Accum.*0,2$

## 9. Methods of Instruction:

- use of online educational technologies
- use of accumulative system of control.

## 10. Special Equipment and Software Support (if required):

- a. Microsoft Windows 7 Professional RUS
- b. Microsoft Windows 10