

# 2023 Summer Program

## Institute for the Study of Human Rights

ISHR's Human Rights Summer Program, offered in conjunction with the School of Professional Studies, emphasizes the interaction between human rights theory and practice. The summer program also provides students with the opportunity to explore human rights both inside and outside the classroom. In addition to the academic coursework, students are invited to attend discussions, trainings, performances, films, and other events that engage with the human rights community of New York City. Students will also have the opportunity to learn from human rights practitioners through in-class guest lectures and optional site visits to human rights organizations.



The summer program is ideal for professionals, graduate students, and advanced undergraduate students wishing to further their knowledge and understanding of human rights. Courses are offered at the graduate level and academic credit is awarded. The summer term is divided into two 6-week sessions. **Previous coursework or knowledge of human rights is not required to enroll in the summer courses.**

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*"I have learned so much about human rights and it has enhanced my strive to pursue it as a career. The teachers are great and very helpful. They care and want you to succeed. The material and readings provided in class are very rich and interesting. The latter allows us students to dig deep in human rights issues which occur on a daily basis."* - **Tamara El Chammah**, student in the Summer Human Rights Program

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### Human Rights Certification Program

In addition to taking individual courses, students may earn a four-course summer certification of professional achievement. Students in the certification program include those seeking to complement their training in other fields or disciplines, such as law, public health, fundraising, development, etc.; individuals with academic or professional experience in human rights wishing to obtain more specialized knowledge through graduate-level study; and students preparing for further graduate study. To complete the certification, students must complete the following requirements:

- ◆ Introduction to Human Rights
- ◆ International Human Rights Law
- ◆ Two elective human rights courses.

**Students who successfully complete the 12 credit points of coursework with a grade of C or higher and obtain a minimum GPA of 3.0 will be awarded a certification of professional achievement. The certification may be completed in a single summer or two consecutive summers.**

Students already enrolled in Columbia degree programs are not eligible to apply for the certification, but may still enroll in summer courses.

## ABOUT ISHR

The Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) was established in 1978 at Columbia University. ISHR is committed to its three core goals of providing excellent human rights education to Columbia students, fostering innovative interdisciplinary academic research, and offering its expertise in capacity building to human rights leaders, organizations, and universities around the world.

ISHR was the first academic center in the world to be founded on an interdisciplinary commitment to the study of human rights.

This remains one of ISHR's most distinctive features. We recognize that on a fundamental level, human rights research must transcend traditional academic boundaries, departments, and disciplines, reaching out to the practitioners' world in the process, to address the ever-increasing complexities of human rights in a globalized world. ISHR's emphases on interdisciplinary, engagement, and globalism draw from and complement the strengths that have long characterized intellectual life at Columbia.

### WHY HUMAN RIGHTS? STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

*I have always been interested in human rights and wanted to have a career in human rights law. I felt that this would be a great program for me to explore human rights further and ensure that it was really the career path I wanted to pursue.*

- **Yolanda Chitohwa**, attorney who joined the program to complement her legal background.

*I've had a long standing interest in the international human rights field, and wanted the education to supplement my work experience in women's rights and social justice philanthropy.*

- **Maryann Jacob**, full time professional and Human Rights Certification recipient.

*I came to the Human Rights Summer Program at Columbia to fill a knowledge gap. I am researching human rights in Sudan. Columbia University was the best place that offered relevant coursework.*

- **Alexander Sieber**, student in the Human Rights Studies M.A. Program and a participant in the Summer Human Rights Program.

## 2023 SUMMER COURSES

### Session A: May 22 - June 30

#### Introduction to Human Rights

This course will provide a wide-ranging survey of conceptual foundations and issues in contemporary human rights. The class will examine the philosophical origins of human rights, contemporary debates, the evolution of human rights, key human rights documents, and the questions of human rights enforcement. This course will examine specific civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and various thematic topics in human rights.

#### Human Rights/ Global Economic Justice

The world economy is a patchwork of competing and complementary interests among and between governments, corporations and civil society. These stakeholders at times cooperate and also conflict over issues of global poverty, inequality, and sustainability. What role do human rights play in coordinating the different interests that drive global economic governance? This seminar will introduce students to different structures of global governance for development, trade, labor, finance, the environment, migration, and intellectual property and investigate their relationship with human rights. Students will learn about public, private, and mixed forms of governance, analyze the ethical and strategic perspectives of the various stakeholders and relate them to existing human rights norms. The course will examine the work of the multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the International Financial Institutions, as well as international corporate and non-governmental initiatives.

#### International Human Rights Law

This course introduces the fundamental concepts and problems of international law. What are the origins of modern human rights law? What is the substance of this law, who is obligated by it, and how is it enforced? The course will cover the major international human rights treaties and mechanisms and consider some of today's most significant human rights issues and controversies. While the topics are necessarily law-related, the course will assume no prior exposure to legal studies.

#### Young People, Human Rights, Gun Violence

This 3-credit course aims to give students a foundation in research, policy, and practice relevant to gun violence and the human rights of young people. In the first part of the course, we look at the US. In the US gun violence against children has increased, as part of a broader nationwide rise in crime. School shootings have also risen: The Washington Post counted 42 last year in the U.S., the most on record and up from 27 in 2019. In addition to exploring its underlying causes, the prevalence, and solutions to gun violence in homes, schools, and communities in the United States, young peoples' participation in legislation and other efforts to address physical insecurity. In the second half of the course, students examine the ways in which US foreign policy - including in the areas of small arms waivers, direct gun sales, and migration, have shaped the lives of young people in other nations. The focus of this part of the course will be on Central America where gun armed violence has had a dramatic impact on young people and has resulted in forced displacement and loss of education for young people. Throughout the course, students will explore the gun-related human rights issues affecting young people through the study of cases, reports, documentaries and other visual images including satellites and aerial images. Students will examine the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 and 2419- the Youth Peace and Security Agenda (YPS), the Arms Trade Treaty, and the Optional Protocol on the Child Soldier, as well as the U.S. Youth Peace and Security Act of 2021 (HR 4838), national legislation that prioritizes the inclusion of youth in conflict resolution and recognizes that youth participation is a key component of U.S. peace and security strategy. An ongoing and significant consideration in the course will be the role of international education efforts and youth-led advocacy and legislative efforts around gun control legislation.

*I now consider human rights central to any career trajectory and will strive to use a human rights approach in all my work, whether that be with government, corporate social responsibility or human rights organizations in particular.* - **Jessica Dalton**, student in the Human Rights Studies M.A. Program and a Summer Program participant

## 2023 SUMMER COURSES

### NGOs and the Human Rights Movement:

The human rights movement is one of the most successful social justice movements of our time, establishing universal principles that govern how states should treat citizens and non-citizens. The movement strengthens, and is strengthened by, a complex web of institutions, laws, and norms that constitute a functioning global system that builds on itself progressively, animated by strong NGOs. The course will address the evolution of the international human rights movement and on the NGOs that drive the movement on the international, regional and domestic levels. Sessions will highlight the experiences of major human rights NGOs and will address topics including strategy development, institutional representation, research methodologies, partnerships, networks, venues of engagement, campaigning, fund-raising and, perhaps most importantly, the fraught and complex debates about adaptation to changing global circumstances.

### *Session B: July 3 - August 11*

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### **PROFESSOR PROFILE: DR. TRACEY HOLLAND**



Dr. Tracey Holland's research focuses on international educational development with an emphasis on migration and human rights. She has taught Middle School in Washington Heights, NYC, where she started a newcomer program for immigrant students. As a consultant to UNDP, UNICEF, USAID, and several international NGOs, she has helped design national education programs in Nicaragua, Mexico, and Jamaica, and trained educators in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Angola. In the early 1990s, she founded a workshop-school for street and working children in Managua, Nicaragua.

**Question:** What skills do students gain in your course?

**Answer:** Summer courses motivate faculty to re-imagine their teaching, and to experiment with methods that would be ineffective in a regular course. For example, a 6-week summer course is not long enough to assign a research paper, but it is enough for "solutions research" projects where students evaluate and compare different approaches tried when addressing similar events or issues. This comparative analysis gives them opportunities to hone in their analytical skills and to become acquainted with the context of the problem. Another example is the "guest lecture" project, where I ask students to imagine that they have been asked to give a presentation to a particular audience about a particular topic, usually some human rights issue that has been in the news. Students have to tailor their expertise to communicate effectively their knowledge and deliver it at the right pace and level to a particular audience. Nothing teaches someone an issue better than teaching it to someone else. Students are given credit for their presentation and are encouraged to actually pursue the opportunity to deliver the lecture at a local library, high-school group, community organization, etc.



**PROFESSOR PROFILE:**  
**DR. SANDRA SIROTA**



Dr. Sandra Sirota teaches Introduction to Human Rights and is a lecturer at the School of International and Public Affairs. At SIPA she teaches a Capstone project in which students map human rights education and training programs worldwide for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. She holds a fellowship in the Humanities Institute at the University of Connecticut where she conducts research and teaches courses on human rights, social justice, and education. Sandra served on the founding steering committee of the human rights education network, Human Rights Educators USA, from 2012-2014. Currently she is on the steering committee of the University and College Consortium for Human Rights Education.

**Question:** Why do you teach at the Human Rights Summer Program and what is your favorite part ?

**Answer:** As a human rights scholar, I value all opportunities to teach human rights courses. Through the Human Rights Summer Program, I am fortunate to engage with and support students who are dedicated to working to ensure rights, peace, and justice for people around the world. In addition, I gain important and varied perspectives from the students.

My favorite part of the program is interacting with the students. The students in my Introduction to Human Rights course came from a range of backgrounds - geography, age, ethnicity, academic experiences, life paths, and career interests - to name a few. They brought curiosity and passion into learning about human rights. Their experiences and perspectives enriched the course content and classroom discussion.

## GUEST SPEAKERS

*Guest speakers helped bring new perspectives and specific expertise to our class discussion. For example, for the class on memorialization, we were fortunate to have Piper Anderson come speak to our class about an emerging memorialization initiative she is working on linked to the closing of Rikers Island. Her presentation about the goals of the Rikers Island Public Memory Project and the process by which they are consulting affected groups to help develop a dynamic and meaningful memorial, was a fascinating complement to our exploration of existing memorials.—Professor Virginie Ladisch*



*Guest speaker Carroll Bogert [R], President of The Marshall Project and former Deputy Executive Director for External Relations at Human Rights Watch, with students in the NGOs and Human Rights Movement course.*

## EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

### ***“The Politics of Otherness” a talk with Saadia Khan***



***Saadia Khan engaging with participants at her talk: “The Politics of Otherness”***

Students in the Summer Human Rights Program and the wider Columbia Community were invited to a talk with Saadia Khan. Saadia is a graduate of the Human Rights Masters Program and came back to Columbia discuss her latest project, “The Alien Chronicles: Immigrant Stories,” a podcast featuring immigrants from all walks of life. In this talk, Saadia discussed her podcast in the context of the current political climate and the growing marginalization or “othering” of certain communities in the US. The talk focused on the question of how we can bring communities together to “de-other” these groups.

*"Having the chance to go to the US mission to the UN was a great opportunity to learn about how human rights work at the UN and to understand the role that the government, more specifically the Department of State play in advocating for human rights in the international arena." - **Julia Schoonover**, student in the Summer Human Rights Program*

## HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH FILM FESTIVAL

Students in the Summer Human Rights Program attended documentaries, focusing on various human rights topics, as part of the Human Rights Watch (HRW) annual film festival. The HRW Film Festival combines powerful storytelling with social and political activism, acting as an effective tool for public awareness and change. The film festival selects 40 documentaries per year to screen in 20 different cities. This June's New York Festival screened films featuring broad themes such as women's rights and feminism as an advocacy tool, the US healthcare system, racial injustice and climate gentrification, political activism, journalistic freedoms, rights of indigenous communities, identity conflicts and LGBTQ+ rights, and the war's ongoing repercussions on small Ukrainian communities, among others.



*The Human Rights program is different from other studies because it focuses not only on the theory and the scholarly aspect, but also on real-world application. Our class was a mix of students from different professional and academic backgrounds, and we learned as much from each other during class discussions as we did from the readings. We also had frequent guest speakers-- our professor's colleagues and other experts who were able to answer questions about the practical manifestation of human rights in field work. The coursework, while weighty, never felt inapplicably abstract. - **Erin Tolman**, student in the Summer Human Rights Program.*

## PROFESSOR PROFILE: FELISA TIBBITTS



Felisa Tibbitts is a Lecturer in the International Education Development Program at Teachers College, Columbia University and Chair in Human Rights Education in the Department of Law, Economics and Governance at Utrecht University. Her research interests include peace, human rights and democratic citizenship education; curriculum policy and reform; critical pedagogy; and education and social movements. She has published practical resources on curriculum, program development and evaluation on behalf of the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF, UNESCO, OSCE/ODIHR, the Council of Europe and non-governmental organizations, such as Amnesty International and the Open Society Foundations.

**Question:** What strikes you the most about students in the Human Rights Summer Program?

**Answer:** I find that the students in this program are highly values driven and committed to making a positive difference in the world. This is not a matter of chance. The students have often either witnessed or experienced human rights challenges, which have created in them a sense of vocation. This is a shared culture and understanding among the students. Even if they end up doing quite different things in their professional lives, they are rooted in the same soil. I expect that students will stay in touch with each other – and hopefully their professors – for many years to come.

**Institute for the Study of Human Rights**  
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