

Human Rights Projects Elective (Spring 2026)
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International community aspires to secure “all human rights for all.” Such a lofty mission requires gigantic efforts to succeed. Protection and promotion of human rights is the basis of peace and security in the world. Therefore, every individual and every organ of society has the responsibility to promote human rights, through teaching and education, and strive to achieve their effective observance. India shares this global responsibility and manifests it by, *inter alia*, ratifying the two most important international human rights treaties: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Above all, the Constitution of India guarantees human rights by way of its provisions on Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy. India also has several forums, including the Supreme Court, the High Courts and the National Human Rights Commission, committed to the cause of human rights. Thus, India has a very strong framework to fulfil the objective of international human rights regime. However, the challenges of meeting these objectives are manifold. The need for human rights education, training, sensitization, legal action and developing an overall culture of human rights explains some of these challenges.

Teaching and learning of human rights in the class room often reminds us of the larger objective of making human rights real for the masses. An important question that follows is how to secure a society and an environment that is human rights compliant. Indeed, the aspirations for the regime of human rights are very large and India requires legally trained, sensitive and qualitative resource persons to respond to various needs and challenges of this regime. Human Rights Projects elective is offered with the above stated thoughts, objectives and concerns. The course adopts the methodology of project based learning to prepare students to respond to situations of human rights as initiatives of legal professionals. The students will work for the practical realization of human rights at the grassroots and, thus, will particularly strengthen human rights movements at that level. Students’ work in the community will sensitize them to the needs of the poor and the marginalized and will enable them to analyze the role of law in fulfilling them. This will also prompt the students to advocate the desired legal reforms. The students’ participation and work through the course will have vibrant and youthful support for the promotion and protection of human rights.

The ecosystem of our times presents several challenges to teach and learn human rights effectively. It is even more challenging when education has to respond to the larger goal of making “all human rights for all” a reality for the masses. While exploring ways to work around this situation, the course uses a unique method of forming sculptures in the class for mindfulness and embodiment. In this method, the students use their own bodies to make sculptures depicting situations of human rights and roles of different stakeholders. The course aims at preparing a cadre of well trained, socially committed and sensitive lawyers to fulfil the objectives of the human rights regime.

Suggested Readings

Cristián Rettig, Towards an action-guiding theory of human rights, *Journal of Global Ethics*, 19, No. 2, 206–220 (2023).

Azadeh Chalabi, *Phases of Human Rights Action Planning in Practice*, in *National Human Rights Action Planning* (Azadeh Chalabi ed.), Oxford University Press, 184-214 (2018).

Vaibhav Goel & Manoj Kr. Tripathi, *The Role of NGOs in the Enforcement of Human Rights: An Overview*, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 71, No. 3, 769-793 (2010).

Ruth Wedgwood, *Democracies, Human Rights, and Collective Action*, *Ethics and International Affairs*, 23 (1), 27-37 (2009).

Ajay Pandey, *Promoting Human Rights in India through Law School Human Rights Clinics*, *Delhi Law Review*, Vol. XXVIII-XXIX, pp. 67-82 (2007).

Rose Cuisin Villazor, *Community Lawyering: An Approach to Addressing Inequalities in Access to Health Care for Poor, of Color and Immigrant Communities*, 8 N.Y.U.J. Legis. & Pub. Pol'y 35, (2005).

Jane Harris Aiken, *Access to Justice: The Social Responsibility of Lawyers*, 16 Wash. U. J.L. & Pol'y, 81, 85, (2004).

Deena R. Hurwitz, *Lawyering for Justice and the Inevitability of International Human Rights Clinics*, 28 Yale J. Int'l L., (2003).

Johanna Bond, *The Global Classroom: International Human Rights Fact-finding as Clinical Method*, 28 Wm. Mitchell L. Rev. 317, (2001).

Kevin R. Johnson, *Lawyering for Social Change: What's a Lawyer to do?*, 5 Mich. J. Race & L. 201, 205, (1999).

William P. Quigley, *Reflections of Community Organizers: Lawyering for Empowerment of Community Organizations*, 21 Ohio N.U.L. Rev. 455, (1994).