Course Description
Human rights have become a prominent feature of global politics. This was not always so. The modern human rights movement took shape in the 1970s and has evolved in surprising ways since then. In the 1970s, the burgeoning human rights movement focused primarily on ending torture, arbitrary detention, and extrajudicial killings, and pressuring repressive governments to respect free speech and civil liberties. Since then the human rights idea has expanded to encompass not only civil and political rights but also social, economic, and cultural rights, broadly construed. Increasingly rights are viewed intertwined and interdependent, even as shifts in the international political landscape raises questions about global commitments to the human rights idea.

This course will explore the trajectory of human rights as discourse and practice in modern Latin America. Latin America was central to the emergence of the modern human rights movement. During the 1970s and early 1980s, military dictatorships and brutal civil wars engulfed the region. In this context, the struggle to defend and protect human rights became
not only an existential necessity but a way to fundamentally challenge repressive governments and press for social and political change. We will explore human rights in Latin America by examining the nature of human rights violations in the region, past and present; exploring the way groups in civil society have sought to deploy the concept of human rights to constrain abusive state power and construct democratic government; and interrogating the current nature of human rights discourse and practice in the region.

In this class, we will explore the roots and contemporary realities of human rights movements in Latin America, which will allow us to pose broader questions about the meaning of human rights in a globalized world, the efficacy of international instruments for rights enforcement, and the complex challenges that linger in the aftermath of authoritarianism and state-sponsored terror. The course will be structured around three temporal phases of the human rights movement in Latin America.

1. Origins. We will examine the rise of the human rights idea in Latin America, with special emphasis on the massive violation of human rights in the context of repressive military regimes and civil wars, and the emergence of a human rights movement animated by victims and civil society groups who began to mobilize around the notion of human rights in contexts of extreme violence and repression.

2. Transitional Justice and Human Rights. As civil wars ended and military dictatorships collapsed, transitions gave way to newly elected democratic governments that promised to reform the institutions of government and guarantee respect for human rights. One of the key elements of this transitional phase was the demand by victims of human rights violations from the past to truth, justice, and reparation for the harm suffered. The mechanisms of transitional justice include truth commissions, criminal trials, reparations programs, memorials and memorialization, vetting programs, and institutional reforms, among others. Does transitional contribute to consolidating democracy, rule of law, and human rights?

3. Topics in Human Rights Today. With the acceleration of globalization, and the expansion of the human rights idea, the discourse and practice of human rights has expanded dramatically, to include the rights of marginalized and excluded groups such as women, indigenous peoples and peoples of African descent, and the LGBTQI community; socio-economic rights such as the right to work, the right to education, the right to housing; environmental rights, including the right to clean air, clean water, etc.; and the rights of migrants and refugees. At the same time, new challenges over crime, gang violence, and organized crime challenged traditional understandings of human rights and even led some groups to challenge human rights as defending “criminals” and other “undesirables.” In recent years, the rise of illiberal regimes, some of which are openly hostile to the very concept of human rights, is generating new concerns about the defense and protection of human rights in the region, particularly of the most vulnerable sectors.

Prior familiarity with Latin America is not a requirement of this course, although it will definitely help. All students are encouraged to enhance their understanding of the region by reading major international newspapers and keeping abreast of current developments.
Course Objectives
Students will acquire the conceptual and analytical tools to think and write theoretically and critically about human rights in international politics. They will acquire a detailed understanding of the trajectory of the human rights idea, the human rights movement in Latin America, the international dimensions of human rights activism and its impact on Latin America, and current human rights issues in the region. Through assigned readings and assignments, students will acquire the capacity to engage in critical analysis and will develop and hone their research skills. By the close of this course, students should:

- Have a firm grasp of the development and evolution of key topics in the field of human rights in international politics
- Understand the evolution of the human rights movement in Latin America and its interactions with transnational social movements as well as international organizations and institutions
- Identify, summarize, and evaluate the fundamental questions and debates in the field
- Employ key concepts and theories in human rights in independent writing

Course Requirements
This is a capstone course for government and international politics majors. It will be run as a seminar-style course. As professor I will help guide class discussions, but this is principally a student-driven class. Students will take the lead in class discussions and are expected to come to class fully prepared to engage in class discussion. This means that students are expected to do the assigned readings prior to class and participate actively in class discussions and in small group sessions. Your participation in class discussions is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your grasp of assigned readings, your integration of readings and concepts as we progress through the semester, and to contribute to an active learning environment. I encourage an open learning environment in the classroom, in which students feel free to question, comment, and explain how they view course content. Such an environment helps to foster student interaction, critical thinking, and improvement of analytical and creative skills.

Enrollment
Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Registrar calendar.

Instructor-Student Communication
I will respond to emails sent Monday-Thursday within 48 hours. For emails sent on Friday or over the weekend, I will respond the following Monday. If I will be away from email for more than one day, I will post an announcement on the Blackboard course homepage.

Before sending an email, please check the following (available on your Blackboard course menu) unless the email is of a personal nature:

- Syllabus
- Ask Professor
- Blackboard tutorials
- Blackboard Help & Student Support Services
- Technology Requirements

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Mason Email
- Mason requires that university email be used for all course communication. I will send messages to your Mason email. You are responsible for making sure you have access to these messages.
- Please include GOVT 331 in your email subject heading to alert me that your message relates to our class. Please sign your email with your full name.

Course Logistics
This course will use synchronous and asynchronous formats. All the information about the course is on Blackboard. Students are required to upload assignments and participate Discussion Board on Blackboard. We will use other platforms to communicate such as Zoom and email. In a typical week:
- you will read approximately 100 pages and discuss readings with your classmates
- accomplish on-line activities and respond to weekly requirements
- participate in weekly online class session which will include guest lectures, Q&A, class discussion, and student break-out groups
- work on assignments to be submitted through Blackboard, according to the assignment schedule

It is critical to keep up with weekly requirements. The weekly folder will be available each Thursday morning by 9am. Select ‘Course Content’ on the course menu in Blackboard to see all required activities and assignments for the week.

To Access Blackboard
- Go to https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu
- Login using your NETID and password
- Select on the ‘Courses’ tab
- Select GOVT 490 – Human Rights in Latin America (Spring 2021) under course listings

Technical Help
- If you have difficulty with accessing Blackboard, please contact the ITS Support Center at 703.993.8870 or support@gmu.edu.
- If you have trouble with using the features in Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu.

Technology Requirements
- Hardware. You will need access to a computer running Windows, Macintosh, or Linux and access to a fast and reliable broadband internet connection. You will need a webcam for online class meetings, office hours and possibly for taking exams through Blackboard Respondus Lockdown Monitor. A headset with a microphone is recommended for online class meetings and office hours (smartphone headphones will often work with your computer).
- Software. This course uses Blackboard and Zoom. All GMU students have access to a basic Zoom account; information here. This course may use Respondus Lockdown Browser and Monitor for exams. Instructions for downloading Lockdown Monitor are available here.

Course Requirements
The following requirements are designed to promote an optimal learning environment. This syllabus is a contract. Your continued enrollment in this class constitutes your acceptance of these requirements.

1. Students are required to read the syllabus. The syllabus is a contract between instructor and student.
2. Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to class and be prepared to engage in online discussions about the readings through the discussion board or other written assignment, in breakout discussion groups and in all-class discussions.

3. This course will be conducted online and will have synchronous and asynchronous elements:
   - The asynchronous element of class consists of assignments that you can complete on your own schedule. In addition to assigned course readings, this may include short video lectures, documentary or feature films, podcasts, and other relevant material, and online assignments such as the discussion board posts, writing assignments, group assignments, etc.
   - The synchronous element consists of online class meetings via Zoom at our scheduled meeting time, Thursdays at 1:30 pm EST. Class meetings may include: short lectures and Q&A with the instructor, guest lectures, small break-out groups in which you are asked to discuss specific topics with in small groups and report to the larger class, and all-class discussions. Every student is expected to attend our weekly class online sessions and be prepared to actively participate in class discussions, breakout groups, etc.
   - Students are required to familiarize themselves with the rules of “Netiquette” to facilitate your online interactions with your instructor and fellow students.

4. Students will complete one midterm exam. The date for the midterm is Thursday, March 11, 2021.

5. Students will complete weekly assignments. All assignments must be handed in on time. Late assignments will not be accepted except in cases of documented emergencies. An outline of assignments, due dates, and point value will be posted in Blackboard. Specific assignments will be available each week on Blackboard under “Learn Here: Weekly Lessons.”

6. Students will conduct a micro research project on a pre-assigned topic agreed upon in consultation with the instructor and will deliver a short in-class PowerPoint presentation based on upon their research. Depending on class size, students may work on their own or in a small group. Assignments will be made during the second week of class. As part of this assignment, students will write short research papers and deliver short presentations about their research to the class.
   - Students will select from a list of topics on a human rights situation in a specific context.
   - Students will conduct research on the topic and prepare a short report of 1500-2000 words. Papers must include a minimum of five sources, two of which are academic sources (books or academic journal articles). Papers are due on the Monday before the day of your in-class presentation.
   - Students will also give a brief 5-minute PowerPoint presentation in class about their topic.

7. Students will write a final research paper on a topic of their choosing, subject to approval by the instructor. Drawing upon the literature in the field, student research papers will explore an important question on human rights in Latin America. Students are encouraged to undertake original analysis in their projects. Final paper is due May 7, 2020 (TBC) by 11:59 pm.
   - Papers should be a minimum of 15 pages, excluding titles, bibliography, tables, graphs, notes, or a maximum of 18 pages, inclusive.
   - Papers must include a minimum of ten sources, five of which must be scholarly sources (books or academic journal articles).
   - Assignments as follows (dates TBC):
     - State your research question and explain why it is an interesting and important question (Due: February 21 by 11:59 pm) 15 points
     - Theory and Literature Review (3-5 pages) and Annotated Bibliography (Minimum 10 entries five of which must be scholarly sources) (Due: March 21 by 11:59 pm) 30 points
8. Accommodation for missed assignments or exams may be requested by sending the instructor a detailed email with proper, verifiable documentation. The instructor may require further information from the student requesting accommodation. If you anticipate you will have a conflict due to medical issues, religious holidays or for other reasons, please inform me the first week of class.

Student Responsibilities and Resources

Honor Code: Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code. The George Mason University Honor Code states: “Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty members must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee.” Students are encouraged to read the full Honor Code and to remain vigilant against any violation of the Code in their own work.

Any student engaged in any academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. These violations include cheating on an exam, presenting someone else’s work as your own, and plagiarizing the written word. Plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without providing credit or citation) is a serious offense. If you have any questions at all about what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, or academic misconduct, please ask the instructor.

Time Conflict: George Mason University is committed to creating a welcoming, respectful and inclusive educational environment that values diversity. Students should review the syllabus at the beginning of the term to determine if there are any conflicts between class time and religious observance. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of these conflicts within the first week of the semester. For additional information please consult the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME).

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See: https://ds.gmu.edu/.

Student Services:

- **Counseling and Psychological Services** (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a range of services (individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students’ personal experience and academic performance.

- **University Libraries** provides the following resources for students:
  - Off Campus Access
  - Online Learning
  - “Ask a Librarian”

- The **Writing Center** provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing.
Grading, Assignment Description, and Deadlines

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Covers content from January 25-March 8.</td>
<td>March 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Students conduct independent research on topic agreed upon in consultation with instructor and prepare a 15-18 page paper</td>
<td>May 14 (with scaffolded due dates prior)</td>
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<td>Weekly Assignments (Blackboard Discussion and other; 10 points each)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Respond to discussion prompts and post responses to two of your peers. Your initial response should be 150-200 words; your peer responses should be about 100 words each. Specific assignments on Syllabus and Blackboard.</td>
<td>Discussion posts due Tuesdays 11:59 pm. Peer responses due Wednesdays 11:59 pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Micro research paper and in-class presentation</td>
<td>75 (the paper)</td>
<td>Students conduct a micro research project on a pre-assigned topic; prepare a 1500-2000 word essay, and deliver a 5-10 minute PowerPoint presentation based on your research.</td>
<td>Varies. Dates will be agreed upon during the second week of class.</td>
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Grading scale:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>490-500</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>470-489</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>450-469</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>440-449</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>415-439</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>400-414</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>390-399</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>360-389</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>350-359</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>340-349</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>300-309</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>299 and below</td>
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Required texts: ***THIS SECTION MAY BE REVISED AT A LATER DATE***


In addition to these books, required reading assignments include articles which are available either on Blackboard; by accessing a database via the GMU Library Website; or online through...
**COURSE OUTLINE**

I. INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

January 28  Course Overview; Review Syllabus, Course Requirements and Expectations
February 4  What are Human Rights? What is Transitional Justice?

II. ORIGINS

February 11  The Cold War and Human Rights in Latin America
February 18  Southern Cone Military Dictatorships — Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay
February 25  Civil Conflicts Conflict & Human Rights I — Guatemala, El Salvador
March 4  Civil Conflicts Conflict & Human Rights II — Peru, Colombia
March 11  Midterm

III. TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

March 18  Transitions and Transitional Justice: Foundational Debates
March 25  Truth Commissions in Latin America
April 1  Prosecuting War Crimes
April 8  Reparations and Historical Memory

IV. TOPICS IN HUMAN RIGHTS TODAY

April 15  Indigenous Rights and the Rights of African descended peoples
April 22  Women’s & LGBTQI Rights
April 29  Citizen Security and Policing as a Human Rights Issue