Course Title: Human Rights

Professor: Manfred Nowak

I. Course Description and Objectives

This class introduces the students to the origin, development and current relevance of the international human rights regime. Its major focus is on the human rights regime of the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Using case studies and practical examples, it deals with the normative content of selected human rights provisions and treaties as well as with the (quasi-) judicial and political-diplomatic mechanisms for the monitoring and enforcement of human rights in the 21st Century.

The seminar will deal, among others, with the following issues and questions:

- What do we actually mean when we talk about “human rights”? Which historical processes and developments have human rights undergone?
- What are the relevant institutions and processes designed to protect human rights? How does the enforcement of human rights law differ, if at all, from classical international law?
- Are there any legally permissible restrictions and limitations to human rights? If so, for which rights, under which conditions?
- Overview of the UN Charter based and UN Treaty based organs and mechanisms, with a focus on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.
- Reform of the UN Human Rights System, including the Human Rights Council
- The Three Pillars of the Council of Europe: Democracy, Rule of Law and Human Rights; European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

The course will be held as discussion classes, with preparatory readings constituting the indispensable basis of discussion. The students are required to read the text book and familiarize themselves with the relevant United Nations and Council of Europe Human Rights Standards.

II. Course Outline

2.1 Introduction and selection of paper topics

2.2 Discussion of paper outlines

Participants shall present a 1 page paper outline on the next meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to give you feedback on your outlines. Each participant should e-mail her/his outline to all participants and the lecturers at least one week before the next meeting. You will receive a list of e-mail addresses beforehand.
2.3 Presentation and discussion of papers

Participants shall prepare a seminar paper of max. 10 pages (format: arial, 11 pts, single line spacing, index and bibliography not included). The main points of the paper will be presented in class; presentations should not last more than 5 minutes and will be followed by questions and discussions.

III. Grading

Your grade will depend on the "3 p’s": paper, presentation, participation; the quality of your paper will, however, be most influential on your grade.

IV. Recommended Documents and Readings

- International Crisis Group. The Responsibility to Protect; (online at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4521&l=1&gclid=CLKuzta475UCFRg1ZwodyWtXfg)
- Nowak, Manfred; Birk, Moritz; Crittin, Tiphanie, KoZMA, Julia, UN Human Rights Council in Crisis – Proposals to Enhance the Effectiveness of the Council, European Yearbook on Human Rights 2011, in press.
- European Court of Human Rights, Annual Report 2011 (available online at: http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/Homepage_EN

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