Ollscoil na Gaillimhe University of Galway
Ionad na hÉireann do Chearta an Duine Irish Centre for Human Rights
EUREAST PLATFORM
ELENA BONNER HUMAN RIGHTS SCHOOL
Eastern Academic Alliance
university of groningen
UPPSALA UNIVERSITET
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GHENT UNIVERSITY

Block 1
28 August 2025

The mechanisms of human rights and their interaction with the nature of the political regime

1. Human rights, democracy and freedom: singing in unison?

Speaker: **Dr. Prof. Ekaterina Yahyaoui Krivenko**

Human rights, democracy, and freedom are conventionally presented as foundational values that underpin an equal and law-based society. While these principles indeed interact in any healthy democracy, their relationship remains subject to debate. Can democracy exist without ensuring human rights or can we envisage a non-democratic society where human rights are protected? These questions are not simply theoretical but reflect the foundational tension in the history of international law that produced human rights commitments by an international community that recognises as its members both democratic and non-democratic states. While no simple answers to these questions exist, navigating this tension is important for preventing democratic backsliding and challenges to human rights.

Dr Ekaterina Yahyaoui Krivenko is an Associate Professor at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, School of Law, University of Galway. Her research focuses on the capacity of human rights and international law to contribute to a more just, diverse, and inclusive world, combining interdisciplinary theoretical interrogation with attention to practical implications of various theories. She is the author of five monographs and many articles and book chapters on such topics as gender and human rights, refugee protection, Islam and human rights, history and theory of international law and human rights.

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4 September 2025 | **Methodological class**

Methodological workshop on interdisciplinary research on human rights

Speakers: **Dr. Prof. Roisin Mulgrew, University of Galway**
Iana Ovsiannikova, PhD Researcher, Ghent University

This class will equip students with methods of analysis of primary and secondary documents and literature in conducting human rights research. It will also serve as a platform of exchanging peer to peer experience in accessing human rights-related documents, documentation and monitoring of human rights violations

Dr. Roisin Mulgrew is an Associate Professor in Law at the University of Galway. She is Director of Research at the School of Law, lead for the Crime, Punishment and Rights Research Cluster and member of the Irish Centre for Human Rights. Her publications include Towards the Development of the International Penal System (Cambridge University Press, 2013), Research Handbook on the International Penal System (Elgar, 2016), Research Handbook on the Punishment of Atrocity Crimes (2024) and Early Release in International Criminal Law (Elgar, 2025).

Iana Ovsiannikova is a PhD researcher at Ghent University, Ghent Institute for International and European Studies and United Nations University – Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS). Her research focuses on the role of third parties in sanctions as well as human rights sanctions regimes. She is a coordinator of the Online School on Human Rights.

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Block 1
09 September 2025

The mechanisms of human rights and their interaction with the nature of the political regime

3. Economic, social and cultural rights: retreat in the age of neo-liberal ideology?

Speaker: **To Be Confirmed**

After the COVID-19 pandemic debates about the protection of social and economic rights amidst the raging global pandemic have re-emerged. While some authoritarian governments were praised for their swift and decisive actions, democratic systems often faced challenges in rapid decision-making due to institutional checks and the need for consensus. Since economic and social rights intersect with private property, the degree of economic liberalism and the structure of market economies have had various impacts on human rights. The extent to which a state intervenes in the economy, prioritizes redistribution, and ensures social welfare plays a significant role in determining how effectively these rights are protected. At the same time, while some democratic systems emphasize individual freedoms, participation, and the rule of law, they do not uniformly guarantee the fulfilment of socio-economic rights. Thus, the question remains: Is democracy inherently more effective in protecting social, economic and cultural rights, or does effectiveness depend more on the underlying institutions, governance quality, and socio-economic frameworks within a given system?

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Block 2
11 September 2025

New frontiers of human rights in a contested context

4. Digital rights in the era of post-truth

Speaker: **Dr. Prof. Rashid Gabdulhakov, University of Groningen**

The Internet has become the primary space for interaction and information exchange. As a result, digital rights have emerged as an essential extension of human rights in the digital age. The rapid development of technology has brought growing concerns around discrimination, privacy, disinformation, and cyberbullying. A lack of accountability and effective regulation has long exacerbated these issues, ultimately leading to the adoption of the UN Global Digital Compact in 2024. Even earlier, in 2022, the European Union introduced the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles, positioning the EU as a leader in promoting data protection and privacy.

Digital rights are closely linked to freedom of expression and access to information, which are effectively borderless. This raises complex questions: How can individuals be protected from the harms of digital transformation? And how is the digital space becoming a battleground for competing interests, values, and narratives? These questions will be addressed during the lecture and participants will actively engage in tackling them.

Dr. Rashid Gabdulhakov is an Assistant Professor at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, where he is part of the Research Centre for Media and Journalism Studies. His work focuses on disinformation, digital media, and the societal impacts of emerging technologies. Rashid is a member of the EU Horizon-funded De-Conspirator consortium, which addresses Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) in Europe and beyond. He earned his PhD cum laude from Erasmus University Rotterdam, where he explored digital vigilantism in the context of social change and social harm. Find out more about the lecturer at: plovism.com

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Block 2
16 September 2025

New frontiers of human rights in a contested context

5. Women's and LGBTQI+ rights versus 'traditional values'? Contemporary global struggles around gender and sexuality

Speaker: **Dr. Laura Luciani, Ghent University**

Contemporary struggles around gender and sexuality in global politics are increasingly entangled with geopolitical agendas. This is particularly evident in the South Caucasus, where debates over women's and LGBTQI+ rights are shaped not only by local contexts, but also by East-West dynamics, regional rivalries and global contestations over norms. In this setting, 'LGBT-friendliness' is often associated with modernity, liberal democracy, or 'Europe', while appeals to so-called 'traditional values' are used to assert national sovereignty or resist perceived Western cultural imperialism. This lecture will unpack the geopolitical binaries that underpin gender and sexual politics by examining how women's and LGBTQI+ rights are mobilised both to uphold and challenge global hierarchies, and how these dynamics manifest in the region. It will also consider the implications for grassroots feminist and queer activism and ask whether it is possible to imagine struggles for equality that move beyond dominant geopolitical frames.

Dr. Laura Luciani is a postdoctoral researcher at the Ghent Institute for International and European Studies and an affiliated researcher at the VUB Research Centre for Democratic Futures. Her current research explores everyday experiences of in/security in the South Caucasus. Laura's research interests revolve around post-socialist civil society and activism, the geopolitics of gender and sexuality, EU foreign and security policies, and meaning-making in international relations.

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Block 2
18 September 2025

New frontiers of human rights in a contested context

6. Climate justice: climate accountability for state and private companies

Speaker: **Dr. Prof. Hendrik Schoukens**

As climate change increasingly impacts societies worldwide, its implications for human rights have become a critical area of legal and policy concern. Human rights obligations require the international community to take more ambitious action to mitigate emissions, to support adaptation that benefits persons, groups and peoples in vulnerable situations. In addition to this, nature extractive business activities such as mining infringe on human rights of the whole communities. Given the increased demand in mineral resources, including for the green transition, it raises a question of the costs of this transition, especially in the resource-abundant countries where it can serve as a catalyst of conflicts. The lecture aims to provide an overview of some of the pivotal developments in climate litigation in the European Union on the one hand; on the other hand, it will juxtaposes it with the potential violation of rights in communities in resource rich countries.

Dr. Hendrik Schoukens is a professor at the Faculty of Law and Criminology, Department of European, Public and International Law at Ghent University. Prior to academic career, he was working as an environmental lawyer at LDR Advocaten, where he focuses on biodiversity-related cases. In 2011, he coauthored the first edition of the handbook of Biodiversity Law within the Flemish Region. His areas of expertise include international environmental law, European environmental law, biodiversity law, Flemish environmental and planning law.

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Block 3
23 September 2025

Human rights and conflicts

7. State of emergencies and human rights in conflict

Speaker: **Dr. Prof. Laima Vaige, Uppsala University**

States of emergency—whether declared in response to public health crises or armed conflicts—represent moments when the balance between state authority and individual rights is often recalibrated, frequently to the detriment of civil liberties. During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments imposed restrictions on certain individual rights as part of national responses to the health crisis. Similarly, the war in Ukraine has been exploited by Russia to undermine human rights and weaken international oversight mechanisms intended to safeguard them. How do states use states of emergency to limit human rights, and do these measures have long-term consequences for the enjoyment of individual rights and freedoms?

Dr. Laima Vaige is Associate professor and Senior lecturer at Uppsala University, Sweden. Her research focuses on private international law, with a particular emphasis on international family law. She defended her doctoral dissertation Cross border recognition of formalized same-sex relationships in 2021 at the Faculty of Law, Uppsala University. This was her second doctorate—she had previously defended a doctoral thesis at Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania) on the prohibition of violence against women under international law. She is involved in several projects at the European Law Institute, including Enhancing Child Protection: Private International Law on Filiation and the EC's Proposal COM/2022/695 and Extra-Judicial Administration of Justice in Cross-Border Family and Succession Matters. Her current research interests also include the protection of weaker parties in private international law, as well as succession law in cross-border contexts.

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Block 3
23 September 2025

Human rights and conflicts

8. Justice and accountability for human rights violations

Speaker: **Dr. Gleb Bogush, University of Cologne**

This lecture examines the international legal framework that establish individual criminal responsibility for serious human rights abuses, and the interplay between international criminal law and human rights law.

Dr. Gleb Bogush is a research fellow at the Institute for International Peace and Security Law, University of Cologne, Germany.

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Block 4
30 September 2025

From theory to practice: citizens' engagement with human rights

9. Critical approaches to human rights: appropriation and abuse of human rights by authoritarian regimes (discursive approach)

Speaker: **Dr. Prof. Elizaveta Gaufman, University of Groningen**

This class will get students acquainted with discursive analysis methods to engage with political discourses and campaigns in critically assessing appropriation of human rights language to legitimise their actions.

Dr. Elizaveta Gaufman is an Assistant Professor in the Research Centre for the Study of Democratic Cultures and Politics at the University of Groningen. Her research is situated at the intersection of political theory, international relations, media, and cultural studies. She is the author of "Everyday Foreign Policy" (Manchester University Press, 2023). Her latest book co-authored with Bharath Ganesh is called "The Trump Carnival: Populism, Transgression and the Far-Right" (DeGruyter 2024).

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Block 4
02 October 2025

From theory to practice: citizens' engagement with human rights

10. Human rights advocacy: citizens participation in human rights promotion and accountability

Speaker: **Dan Storev, OVD-Info**

In both authoritarian and to less extent in democratic systems citizen's participation is the driving vehicle of human rights observance. Replicating Eleonore Roosevelt's words "where do universal rights begin" this session analyses the promotion of human rights starting at the grassroot level to transnational human rights campaign, the session will explore different types of advocacy. It will especially zoom in on citizens' participation in the European and NGO context with the goal of combatting authoritarianism.

Dan is a journalist and researcher who works as the English Managing Editor at OVD-Info, one of Russia's major rights watchdogs. In his time as a journalist he covered crises around the world, including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Myanmar and Israel. His writing has been featured in the New York Times, Foreign Policy, and the Financial Times among others. He holds an MA from the University of Oxford.

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Organisers of Online School on Human Rights 2025

Ghent University's Eureast Platform engages in academic collaboration with and study of the countries of Eastern Europe and Eurasia. By fostering research and educational exchanges, the Eureast Platform contributes to the knowledge of its target countries, facilitating a deeper comprehension of their cultures, histories, and contemporary issues.

The Irish Centre for Human Rights is one of the world's premier academic human rights institutions, dedicated to the study of human rights, peace and conflict, international criminal law and humanitarian law, international refugee and migration law, gender and human rights and climate justice. The Centre has developed a global reputation for excellence in the field of human rights teaching, research and advocacy.

The Elena Bonner Human Rights School is an independent, informal educational project originally launched by the Sakharov Center. The School is named after Elena Bonner, a prominent soviet time human rights activist and the wife of Andrei Sakharov. The School offers a free online program focused on both the theory and practice of human rights. The school primarily targets young Russians inside the country, but also from abroad.

The School is also supported by:

Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies (IRES), Uppsala University is an international comprehensive research platform with a multidisciplinary profile. IRES studies the developments in Russia and the post-Soviet area from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. IRES is also home to the editorial teams of the Journal of Baltic Studies and Uppsala Yearbook of Eurasian Studies.

The University of Groningen is a top research university in the Netherlands with a strong international focus. It offers high-quality education and innovative research across disciplines, attracting students from over 120 countries.

The School is co-funded by the European Union project **The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility.** This is the EU-funded Project working with the six EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) to strengthen the role and increase the capacity of civil society organisations and activists from all six countries. The Project is funded by the European Union and implemented by a consortium led by GDSI Limited (Ireland).

The School is also funded by the **Eastern Academic Alliance** project "Science at Risk Emergency Office" which provides support to academics and students that have been affected by the war in Ukraine or by political repression in Belarus and Russia.

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Academic collaboration with Eastern Europe and Eurasia

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