

Course number:
6128.24

Course title:
Limits of Human Rights and Liberal Democracy

ECTS credits:
7,5

Prerequisites:
Bachelor's degree or equivalent with adequate competence in law.

Level:
Master

Purpose:
The principal purpose of this course is to introduce the students to a selection of the criticisms that have been directed at the structures and practices of human rights institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and at current conceptions and the implementation of liberal democracy in polities that purport to be based upon its principles. Students will thus be introduced to a selection of the literature that advances these criticisms, including at least one item of advanced readings. There is a large critical literature in both of these areas that has not received the same academic attention as the literature that is more positive in its evaluation of the role of liberal human rights in democratic societies. There is no implication that the seminar should favor the criticisms, only that the selected criticisms, and the reasoning behind them, should be explored rather than ignored.

Content:
This course will explore—through readings, lectures, interactive discussion—a selection of the criticisms that have been directed at the structures and practices of human rights institutions such as the ECHR and at current conceptions and implementations of liberal democracy in polities that purport to be based upon its principles. The reasoning behind these criticisms will be examined and discussed in a seminar that is included in all versions of the course. Required readings for the seminar will consist of a selection of the literature that advances and presents arguments for these criticisms.

Learning and teaching approaches:

This course (6128.24 - 7,5 ECTS credits) is based upon an interactive seminar taught in English involving the co-presence of all teachers and students in all sessions. Teachers and students will be from the University of the Faroe Islands and at least two non-Faroese universities. The seminar will be divided into five teaching days and will explore a selection of the criticisms that have been directed at structure and practices of human rights institutions such as the ECHR and/or at current conceptions of liberal democracy and the institutions and practices in place in those polities that profess themselves to be liberal democracies.

A three-hour long morning session will be devoted to lecture-discussion presented by the lead teacher, and a three-hour long afternoon session will be devoted to interactive debate and discussion that includes the students and teachers, with the lead teacher of the day stimulating discussion and keeping the discussion on track. The lead teacher for each session will specify and describe in advance the focal topic for the session and will specify approximately 60 pages of required readings that will be used as points of reference for the lectures and the subsequent discussion period. These are meant to be read prior to the beginning of the seminar. The seminar thus consists of 30 contact-hours of teaching and discussion.

In addition to the requirements for the seminar, this 7,5-credit version of the course will include the additional reading of a scholarly article related to the course topics but not covered in the seminar.

Successful completion of the course will yield 7,5 ECTS credits.

Learning Outcomes:

On completion of the course, the student shall be able to:

- engage critically with a selection of the criticisms that have been made of some of the present forms of liberal democracy and of human rights institutions, and with the literature pertaining thereto.
- participate interactively in debates and discussions of these critical issues and improved their ability to participate actively in such debate and discussion.
- analyse critically and explain the reasoning behind the various critical points of view examined in the course.
- form critical and independent opinions on a substantive work belonging to the literature critical of the structure and practices of human rights institutions or of current conceptions and instantiations of liberal democracy.

- autonomously organise and present research outcomes pertaining to critiques of the structure and practices of human rights institutions and current conceptions and instantiations of liberal democracy.

Assessment method:

The seminar will conclude with an online oral exam. The exam questions will be distributed to students prior to the exam, and, at the examination, students will draw one of these questions at random. The questions will be related to what has been taught and discussed in the seminar. In addition, in this 7,5-credit version of the course, the examination will include independent questions on an additional reading consisting of an assigned scholarly article. The exam will be conducted in the English language, and the time frame for each student, covering actual examination and evaluation, is 30 minutes.

Examination:

Internal.

Marking scale:

7-point marking scale.

Bibliography:

Reading materials for the seminar will be available prior to teaching on the Moodle network. Students will, in addition to the seminar readings, be held accountable for an additional text, a scholarly article of some length and depth and of importance for the themes of the seminar.

Responsibility and contact:

Mikael M. Karlsson, Affiliated Professor of Law, University of the Faroe Islands (mike@hi.is)