



# Civil and Political Rights: Contemporary Challenges

820M3

15 credit option

Spring term (weeks 1-5)

# What are Civil and Political Rights?

Civil and Political Rights are frequently cited as the core, fundamental human rights and are found in domestic constitutions as well as regional and international human rights instruments. Yet, despite universal acceptance these rights continue to be violated by nearly all States.

Key examples include:

- The Right to Life
- The Prohibition on Torture
- The Prohibition on Slavery
- The Right to a Fair Trial
- The Prohibition on Arbitrary Detention
- The Fundamental Freedoms (Freedom of Expression; Freedom of Religion or Belief and Freedom of Association)

# The focus of the module

- This module will explore the continuing relevance of Civil and Political Rights in the light of contemporary challenges and events.
- Students will critically explore the substantive content of rights as interpreted by international and regional human rights bodies (including the UN Human Rights Committee, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights).
- Contemporary challenges will be used to frame discussion and explore the extent to which the existing framework adequately addresses these challenges.

# Key topics

- **The Right to Life and the beginning and end of life**

This topic will explore contentious issues surrounding abortion (including the imprisonment of women in El-Salvador for having a miscarriage) and the right to assisted dying.

- **State authorized interrogation of terror suspects and the prohibition of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment.**

This topic will explore the UK Government's authorisation of interrogations by British intelligence officers abroad despite serious risk of complicity in acts of torture. The use of emergency powers by Erdogan in Turkey and its impact on this right will also be considered.

- **The Right to a Fair Trial and the Prohibition on Arbitrary Detention in counter-terrorism**

This topic will explore counter-terrorism, detention without trial and use of exceptional courts and commissions, e.g. Guantanamo Bay and military commissions in the light of Trump's statements over the past 18 months threatening to expand the use of Guantanamo Bay.

- **The Prohibition on Slavery and Sexual Exploitation**

This topic will explore the vague concept of "slavery", "servitude" and "forced and compulsory labour" in relation to trafficking and sexual exploitation. Issues such as immigration and border control policies will further be explored from the perspective of trafficked sex workers.

- **The Fundamental Freedoms and the Impact of Hate Speech**

This topic will explore the extent to which hate speech is protected under freedom of expression and the impact of hate speech on the enjoyment of the freedom of religion and belief and freedom of association.

- Please note, the identified topics are subject to change based on what is in the news!

# FAQs

- **What type of student will be taking this course?**

This module is open to students from a range of disciplinary backgrounds. The main focus will be on relevant rights frameworks and how they respond to contemporary challenges.

- **What about assessment?**

Assessment for the module will take the form of a 2,500 words essay on a contemporary challenge of your choice related to the civil and political rights covered in the module.

# Teaching team



Dr Stephanie Berry (module convenor): [s.e.berry@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:s.e.berry@sussex.ac.uk) (Feel free to contact with further questions)



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