IN272 — Human Rights and the United Nations Review Process
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Class meets Mondays 3pm- 5:25pm
O'Neill 257

Each year the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reviews the human rights record of a number of countries in a process called Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UPR process reviews the human rights record of states on a rotating basis, ensuring that all 193 UN member states are reviewed every few years. In addition to considering reports issued by the state under review, NGOs, academic institutions, and other members of civil society are invited to submit shadow reports to ensure that a thorough and unbiased human rights review is achieved. This course will harness the talents and expertise of students, instructors and, possibly, NGO partners to produce country reports to be submitted to the UPR process.

Initially, the course will focus on providing a foundational understanding of human rights in theory and practice. Students will gain an appreciation of the how the UN human rights system works, of how rights are monitored, and of the limitations of enforcement mechanisms. With this foundation in place, students will learn how human rights reports are created, and will explore issues regarding the interpretation of facts, claims, and events in documenting human rights. We will then focus on the creation of a report covering one of the countries slated to be reviewed in the next UPR session. Countries of interest in the next cycle include:

- Angola
- Bolivia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Egypt
- El Salvador
- Fiji
- Iran
- Iraq

Students will be divided into thematic teams based on their own interests that will produce draft sections of the report. Next, we will all work together to finalize the report and submit it to the UPR process. Student grades will be based upon the draft section they produce (40%), their collaborative efforts to finalize the report (40%), and their participation in class throughout the semester (20%). No books will be required for the course, as the majority of materials, beyond basic readings posted to Blackboard in the first few weeks, will be discovered by the students themselves.

N.B. In order to be successful in this class students must be willing to self-direct much of the work on their section of the report. I will always be available to provide guidance and advice, but this class is meant to help students develop the skills necessary to independently research and write human rights reports.