

The Human Rights Council

Sangeeta Shah

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This course provides an in-depth consideration of the operation of the UN Human Rights Council. The course will be assessed by essay.

Seminar 1: Introduction: The Creation of the UN Human Rights Council

We will consider the origins of the UN Human Rights Council. There will be discussion of the work of the Council's predecessor - the UN Commission on Human Rights - and why it needed to be replaced. We will discuss the composition and working methods of the Council and consider whether they are an improvement on the Commission.

Seminar 2: Universal Periodic Review: A Successful Innovation?

In this class we will learn about the innovative Universal Periodic Review mechanism. This is a peer review process which takes place every 4.5 years and considers the performance of states in realising the full enjoyment of human rights. We will consider how UPR works and its place within the wider UN human rights machinery.

Seminar 3: The 'Crown Jewel' of the UN Human Rights System: the Special Procedures

We will consider the work of the special procedure mechanisms in this class. In particular, we will consider why they are considered the 'crown jewel' of the UN human rights system. We will discuss the difficult role that these expert mandates must fill and how states have responded to their work.

Seminar 4: Responding to Specific Situations: Special Sessions and the Complaint Procedure

The Human Rights Council has been given the power to convene special sessions when needed in order to swiftly address grave and escalating human rights situations around the world. In this class we shall consider how this power has been used. We will also consider the utility of the complaint procedure that is operated by the Human Rights Council. We will discuss whether it has any value given the plethora of other international human rights complaints mechanisms.

Seminar 5: Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity at the Human Rights Council

This class will focus on how concerns regarding discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity have been addressed by the Council and its mechanisms.