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PHD PROGRAMME HUMAN RIGHTS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

THEORIES AND POLITICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

RECOMMENDED PREREQUISITES

The same prerequisites for being accepted in the doctoral program, including English proficiency.

TEACHING METHODS

Methodologies: lectures that introduce HR regimes and practices and raise core issues; discussion based on recommended bibliographic studies; participation in workshops/debates and role-play.

Evaluation: Each student will produce a paper (up to 35 000 characters) based on theoretical and/or empirical research in a topic of his/her choice, agreed with the seminar leader, and relevant in the context of this particular seminar. Based on the submitted paper, the student will make an oral presentation, which will enable discussion and feedback amongst peers and tutor.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The two main objectives of this unit are:

1. An in-depth analysis of the debates between traditional and critical theoretical approaches to HR. This supposes the contextualization of HR as a western modern cultural product and its use as tool for the globalization of western modernity.

2. The study of the most relevant contemporary strategies of weakening human rights. Two cases will be analyzed: a) the economic crisis as an expression of the clash between neoliberal agendas and HR accomplishment; b) the minimalist and exceptionalist nature of the contemporary humanitarian discourse and its replacement of entitlement by assistance

Students are expected to:

- identify the fundamental theoretical foundations of HR

- be able to critically examine intellectual stances about HR and their development

- acquire essay writing competency particularly the capability to discuss different points of view as well as to critically present new arguments.

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SYLLABUS

Human rights as a modern western cultural and political product

Modernity, imperialism and human rights: Sepúlveda, Vitória and Las Casas then and now

A roadmap of the traditional theoretical debate on the foundation of HR

HR and International Relations theories: realism, liberalism and constructivism

The European approach to a policy of HR

The European welfare model in crisis: a case study of HR strengths and weaknesses

Beyond the liberal-legalist tradition: the critique of abstract humanism and its impact in the discourse on HR

Critical perspectives on HR (1): the feminist perspective

Critical perspectives on HR (2): the socialist and the post-colonial perspective

From philosophy to power politics (1): narratives and strategies on HR during the cold war

From philosophy to power politics (2): HR and global liberalism hegemony after the end of the cold war

From human rights to humanitarianism.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Assessment
Frequency: 20.0%
Research work: 40.0%
Oral presentation : 40.0%

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Campbell, Tom (2006), Rights. A Critical Introduction. London: Routledge, pp. 62-79.

Chandler, David (2004), "The Responsibility to Protect? Imposing the 'Liberal Peace'", International Peacekeeping, vol. 11(1), pp.59-81.

Conlon, D. et al (2014), Going public: reflections on predicaments and possibilities in public research and scholarship, in Yvette Taylor (ed), The Entrepreneurial University. Engaging Publics, Intersecting Impacts, pp. 185-201.

Douzinas, Costas (2007), Human Rights and Empire. The political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism. London, Routledge, pp. 51-110; 133-150.

Kennedy, David (2002), "The International Human Rights Movement: Part of the Problem?", Harvard Human Rights Journal, vol.15, pp.101-125.