

**Econ 1710: Economics of Human Rights
Syllabus, Spring 2023**

**Tues/Thurs from 1:00 – 2:15pm
G14 Cathedral of Learning**

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Drop-in office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30-3:30pm (no appointment needed)

Meetings by appointment: Please email with two proposed times.

Course Overview: In this course, we explore an emerging field in economic policy: the responsibility of private businesses to respect human rights globally.

- We will use the analytical tools provided by economic theory to consider two key ways in which economic incentives impact business interaction with human rights:
 - business operational decisions (such as modern slavery, discrimination, and indigenous land rights) and
 - economic policy responses (such as economic sanctions, international human rights due diligence laws, and socially responsible investment strategies).
- The course design uses a seminar format rather than a lecture/test format.
 - Students will be responsible for preparing for and actively participating in classroom discussion and activities, which will form a significant part of student assessment.
 - Students will also conduct directed research on the human rights policies and impacts of a case study company.

Course Objectives

- The goal of the course is for students to learn how to develop their own expertise on a complex economic issue through reading, research, analysis, and discussion and to improve their writing and presentation skills.
- In terms of the specific course topic, students will gain a better understanding of the definition of human rights, the impact of market conditions on human rights, and the opportunities and constraints facing business efforts to respect human rights.
- Students will also gain practical experience in how to research a corporation, interview experts and practitioners, apply economic analysis to complex social and business issues, and engage in constructive debate about those issues.

Course Prerequisites

- Introduction to Microeconomics (Econ 100) and Introduction to Macroeconomics (Econ 110).
- Successful completion of International Economics (Econ 500) is recommended, but not required.

Required Reading: The course does not include a textbook or any purchased learning materials.

- Required learning materials will be posted to the course Canvas page and will be drawn from the reports of global governance institutions, civil society organizations, and private business as well as from academic and press articles.
- The content covered in the required class materials will not necessarily be presented as part of a lecture, but students will be expected to be familiar *before* class and to be prepared to discuss it.

Grading Requirements and Policies: The course average will be determined by weighting the course assignments described below. Additional details and deadlines are included in the Course Schedule and will be posted to Canvas. There will be no extra credit assignments.

- **Attendance and Discussion (10%)**
 - Students may miss two classes without penalty. Additional absences must be excused to avoid losing points.
 - Students will also be evaluated on the basis of both the quantity and quality of engagement in general class discussions, including during student presentations at the end of the semester.
 - To encourage active listening and engagement, I encourage everyone to bring pen and paper for note taking and to keep your laptops closed during class.
- **Debates and Presentations (30%)**
 - Debates: Students will read materials from both sides of an issue and will be randomly assigned to argue for one of those sides as part of a class team.
 - Student Presentations: Students must sign up for one of four opportunities to prepare information related to a class topic and present it during class. Details will be provided on Canvas.
- **Written Assignments (30%)**
 - Each week will include one or more short writing assignments related to the current topic.
 - The grading rubric for each assignment will include points for grammar and style. For assistance, visit Pitt's Writing Center (<https://www.writingcenter.pitt.edu/>) and the Purdue Online Writing Lab: (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/index.html)
- **Case Study Report and Presentation (30%)**
 - Each student will research and report on the human rights policies and impacts of a case study company and develop recommendations for how the company can improve both.
 - During the semester, students will build their research by submitting draft information using the topics and schedule listed in the Course Schedule. Draft information will not be graded, but points will be deducted from the final grade for missing or late information.
 - Students will present the results of their research to the class during the last two weeks of the semester.
 - Detailed instructions and a grading rubric will be provided during the beginning of the semester.

Statement on Scholarly Discourse

In this course we will be discussing complex issues that may provoke strong feelings and opinions. It is essential that we approach our class discussions with our minds open to new information and to the opinions of others. Moreover, during class discussion, we must treat each other's comments with courtesy even when they conflict with our own and must develop an atmosphere of civil discourse. This standard applies to all inquiry in the university, but its observance is especially important in a course whose subject matter may be emotionally charged.

Letter grades will be assigned to the course average (rounded to one decimal place) using the following scale:

A+: 100% - 97.0%	A: 96.9% - 92.5%	A-: 92.4% - 90%
B+: 89.9% - 87.0%	B: 86.9% - 82.5%	B-: 82.4% - 80%
C+: 79.9% - 77.0%	C: 76.9% - 72.5%	C-: 72.4% - 70%
D+: 69.9% - 67.0%	D: 66.9% - 62.5%	D-: 62.4%- 60.0%
F: 59.9% and below.		

Tentative Course Schedule

Note: Topics are expected to be covered in one week, but adjustments to the schedule may be necessary.

Topic Categories	Selected Class Activities**	Selected Writing Assignments	Case Study Research Steps
1. Course Organization and Defining BHR: <i>How are human rights defined? What are business responsibilities with respect to human rights?</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a
2. Rethinking the Business Model and Market Structures: <i>What is the purpose of a corporation and who does it serve?</i>	D: Shareholder v Stakeholder Capitalism	The Purpose of a Corporation	Begin thinking about selection of a case study company
3. HRDD, Regulation, and Corporate Liability: <i>Should human rights reporting be regulated? What liability do corporations have for HR violations?</i>	SP: International BHR Regulations	The Alien Tort Statute and US Human Rights Policy	n/a
4. Investment Policies: <i>What are the market risks associated with HR issues and how do investors account for those risks?</i>	D: SEC Proposed ESG Rules SP: ESG Investments	Salient v Material	Identify case study company and its HR policy (if any)
5. Trade Policies: <i>What are the trade-offs in using trade policies to protect human rights? How effective are they?</i>	D: WTO and IP for Vaccines	Sanctions on Russia	Outline of supply chain
6. Discrimination and Inequality: <i>What responsibility does business have to address discrimination and inequality within its workforce, its customer base, and society?</i>	SP: Four Press Conferences	Letter-writing Campaign	Discrimination issues
7. Labor Issues: <i>What economic incentives confront business treatment of vulnerable workers? How can policy reduce forced labor?</i>	D: Living Wage	US Ban on Xinjiang Products	Potential for forced labor in the supply chain
8. Marginalized Communities: <i>How does business support for marginalized communities impact HR? Is the impact substantial or superficial?</i>	D: Fair Trade Coffee	Reflection on Outreach	Community economic impacts
9. Sustainability and HR Defenders: <i>How are environmental issues connected to human rights issues?</i>	SP: Environmental-HR Linkages	SDGs and Human Rights	Environmental impacts
10. Security and Conflict: <i>What role does business play in the security of human beings? Can business operate responsibly in conflict settings?</i>	D: Myanmar Telecom	Private Prisons and Detention Centers	Operations in conflict zones
11. Advanced Technology and Internet Freedom: <i>How has new technology changed the scope of HR issues—providing new ways to both protect and violate rights? What are digital rights?</i>	D: Internet Access D: Artificial Intelligence	Social media and public spaces	HR impact from product use

**Debates (D) include the entire class. Student Presentations (SP) are led by individual students.

Your Well-being Matters

It can be helpful to remember that we all benefit from assistance and guidance at times, and there are many resources available to support your well-being while you are at Pitt. If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support. In addition to reaching out to friends and loved ones, consider connecting with a faculty member you trust for assistance connecting to helpful resources. The University Counseling Center is also here for you. You can call 412-648-7930 at any time to connect with a clinician.

University Resources and Policies:Academic Integrity Policy

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity (<http://www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai1.html>). Any student suspected of violating this policy for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. Sanctions for violations of the University policy or course pledge may include a zero for the assignment or test or an F in the course, depending on the severity and frequency of the violation.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit <http://pitt.libguides.com/academicintegrity/> for an overview of the topic. For hands-on practice, complete the tutorial (<http://pitt.libguides.com/academicintegrity/plagiarism>).

Student Opinion of Teaching Surveys

Students in this class will be asked to complete a *Student Opinion of Teaching Survey*. Surveys will be sent via Pitt email and appear on your Canvas page during the last three weeks of class meeting days. Your responses are anonymous. Please take time to thoughtfully respond, your feedback is important to me and to the Department of Economics. Read more about *Student Opinion of Teaching Surveys* at <https://www.cidde.pitt.edu/omet/student-information>.

Class cancellations

Any class cancellations due to bad weather or other emergencies are determined by the university administration and are announced on the university web site.

Disability Services

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Copyright Notice

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Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.