

Major Proposal in Human Rights

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Class of 2016

The United Nations has described human rights as interrelated, independent, indivisible, and inherent rights to all human beings, whatever our nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status, often expressed and guaranteed by law. Using their definition as a starting point, my goal is to create a major that will allow me to better understand the sociopolitical aspects of human rights, asking questions about the process through which human rights are constructed in international law and about how human rights violations are institutionalized and normalized through concepts such as state violence. I will do so by taking courses from philosophy, history, politics, and sociology.

Each discipline provides an essential lens through which human rights can be viewed from a sociopolitical view. Philosophy and human rights compose a fascinating and complex relationship because human rights hold the status of being both justifiable moral claims and contested political realities. This close correlation is why when human rights is thought about, it is not just policy that comes to mind but also philosophical questions about how genocide and ethnic cleansing is dealt with or how we as people justify human rights. Ethics play a large role in human rights in that while a law may be logical or even effective, it may not be ethical in how people are treated. In the context of this major, philosophy provides a framework for theoretical debate on ethics. History presents a baseline and background to countries where human rights law and violations are constant topics of debate. To better understand why a people's human rights are violated in a certain country, I must first know what conditions in the country's history have contributed to such an atmosphere. While it is important to know human rights in a historical context, I must also look at politics in order to recognize and consider what could have, was, or should have been done in certain situations. Politics, within this major, provides the interaction of the aforementioned disciplines on an international, legal foreground. It serves as a foundation or baseline for Political Theory as well as explaining the passing of human rights laws nationally and in the international spectrum. To understand the violation of human rights, I must first have a solid knowledge of what the

laws are and how they act in a legal forum. Lastly, sociology helps me to understand the range of social relationships in complex societies. By studying Social Change/Movements and Social Inequality, I will better understand how community affects individual actions.

I also plan to study abroad as part of my Hendrix experience in spring 2015 through the SIT Comparative program focusing on human rights advocacy, challenges, and foundations. Lasting 15 weeks, the program takes place in New York, NY; Kathmandu, Nepal; Amman, Jordan; and Santiago, Chile focusing on questions such as “What rights are common to all human beings?” and “How are these rights exercised and safeguarded?” The purpose of spending time in four different countries is to form a comparative approach that highlights cultural variations in individual rights. In addition, by moving from country to country, I will be granted the unique opportunity to engage in comparative studies first hand, learning of and seeing the differences myself. This experience will aid me in my human rights major, as it will allow me to increase my view of the world and broaden my intellectual understanding of different countries and cultures. I have listed the courses that I would take in the SIT program below.

Through an exploration of History, Philosophy, Sociology, and Politics, I will gain a broader baseline for understanding the differing levels and aspects of human rights. Finally, the Senior Capstone is fulfilled with the completion of POLI 497 Senior Research Seminar where the grade in that course will serve as my capstone grade.

History

1. HIST 334 Comparative Genocides

2. HIST 280 Contemporary Africa

OR

HIST 243 The Modern Middle East

OR

HIST 130 Colonial Africa

3.HIST 281 Aid and Humanitarianism in Africa

Philosophy (Ethical/Differing Perspective)

4. PHIL 215 Ethics and Society

OR

PHIL 360 Social and Political

Sociology

5. SOCI 270 Race and Ethnicity

6. SOCI 390 Social Inequality and Identity

OR

PSYC 255 Stereotyping and Prejudice

7. SOCI 360 Social Change/Movements

Politics

8. POLI 376 Democracy, Development and Violence

OR

POLI 341 The World of Elections

9. POLI 326 International Human Rights

OR

POLI 325 International Law and Organizations

10. POLI 273 Contemporary Global Issues

11. POLI 240 Western Political Thought

12. POLI 400 Research Methods

13. POLI 497 Senior Research Seminar

SIT Human Rights Courses

HMRT 3000 Foundational Framework of Human Rights

HMRT 3500 Comparative Issues in Human Rights

ANTH 3500 Fieldwork Ethics and Comparative Research Methods

SDIS 3320 The Role of Civil Society: Grassroots Movements and Nongovernmental Organizations