Landmark Cases in Human Rights Law

Often, we study human rights law through scattered summaries and/or excerpts of cases and articles. Rarely do we examine in-depth cases vital to the human rights regime today. In this experimental seminar, students will be given an introduction to human rights law by deeply examining 12 of the most landmark cases in human rights law from different international courts and tribunals such as the European Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and United Nations Human Rights Committee. These cases will deal with the entire body of human rights law ranging from civil and political rights to economic and social rights. These cases will also cover a range of individuals/groups, such as indigenous communities, refugees, sexual minorities, political prisoners etc.

The substantive part of the seminar will take place over two block seminar days on Saturdays in June (tentatively on 3rd of June and 10th of June). Each block day will go on from 9 am to 5 pm. The day will be divided into three sessions of 2 hours with a one-hour break between each session. Additionally, we will have a one-hour introductory class of one hour on 20th May.

The class will be offered in lieu of a “Seminar Certificate” or as a “Foreign Language Certificate.” Those taking in the seminar in lieu of a “Seminar Certificate” will, in addition to a seminar paper (70% of grade), be expected to take part in class discussions (30% of grade). On the other hand, those taking the class as a “Foreign Language Certificate” are generally expected to participate in class discussions and specifically prepare for certain sub-topics (which will be clarified during our introductory class).

You can register for the seminar at the following link https://forms.office.com/r/adQSSe0V9R. The registrations will be offered on a first cum first basis and will be capped at 24 students. If they are technical difficulties, you could send me an email at amal.sethi@uni-hamburg.de.

In order to pass the class, you must attend both block sessions. The seminar will be conducted in person or virtually (or a combination of both), which will be announced closer to the date of the respective sessions.

Requirements

The way this seminar will take place is as follows. The class will be divided into 12 groups (of 2 students each) based on the 12 landmark cases. Six groups will present on each block day. Each group will present the respective cases for 20 minutes, which can be guided by the reading on the cases that will be provided. Their presentations will be followed by discussions wherein I will explain some core concepts from the cases. The rest of the class is expected to take part in the discussions on that case, including asking questions from the presenters in the group.

Those taking the class in lieu of a “Foreign Language Certificate” are expected to give presentations on their respective cases and contribute moderately to other groups’ discussions. Those taking in the seminar in lieu of a “Seminar Certificate” will, (1) have to participate in the same way as those taking the class in lieu of “Foreign Language Certificate”. Participation will comprise (30% of the grade) (2) have to write a term paper. I am flexible with the topics you can write on. You can come up with a topic of your own, take my assistance in framing a topic, or
alternatively ask me for suggestions on topics you can write your paper on. While my preference is that you write in English (as the medium of discussion in the class will be English), I am open to your term paper being in German.

**Sessions and Cases Covered**

The list of cases to be covered and the reading material for each of them will be provided in due course.

If you have any doubts, email me anytime at amal.sethi@uni-hamburg.de. If I fail to reply in a sufficiently timely fashion, email me again.