

Democratic Resilience and Human Rights Law in Times of Global Crises

Course Period: 25 September – 28 November 2026

COURSE STRUCTURE

42 hours à 45 min

3 two-day block seminars:

- 25-26 September 2026
- 30-31 October 2026
- 27-28 November 2026

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Time

Friday-Saturday, 9:00am – 4:00pm

Place

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, room tbc

COURSE LANGUAGE

English

Language requirements (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

English B2

TARGET GROUP

This course is designed for students and professionals who are interested in exploring the ways in which societies can recover from crises, wars, or dictatorships, and evolve into vibrant and resilient democracies through the power of human rights and international law.

Participants will explore the concept of Transitology, critically examine pathways from and to democracy, and gain skills to analyze and address today's crises.

Participants should have a background in law or social science and humanities, and an interest in theories of democracy, international human rights law, transitology and transitional justice.

CREDITS = 6 ECTS

This course is accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Students and professionals from outside Humboldt-Universität (HU) can take this selected course as a single course and earn a microcredential certificate.

This course is also part of the Humboldt Perspectives Study Abroad (HPSA) program for international visiting students at the Humboldt International Campus (HIC).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Discover the transformative journey of Transitology: Pathways to and from Democracy, at the heart of Europe — where historic struggles for democracy and human rights come alive in Berlin, the very epicenter of change.

This course is addressing students and practitioners who are passionate about global impact to explore how societies recover from crisis, war, and dictatorship, and evolve into vibrant and resilient democracies through the power of human rights and international law.

- Participate in dynamic sessions on transitional justice, oral history, and contemporary challenges like climate change, migration, and the resurgence of authoritarianism.
- Uncover the secrets of how democratic transitions (Transitology) and robust institutions are built and strengthened through transparency, accountability, and civic participation, all measured against global standards
- Investigate how Transitional Justice and Human Rights Law, political, and societal measures commemorate the past, pay tribute to victims, and fuel the transformation from injustice to a rule-of-law society
- Critically examine the influence of social media and artificial intelligence on modern democratic processes, gaining skills to analyze and address the crises of today.

The course is designed in collaboration with lecturers and professional from the Center on Governance through Human Rights at the Berlin Governance Platform (BGP), the German Center for Peace Operations (ZIF) and the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The objective of this interdisciplinary course in law and social sciences is to equip students with an in-depth understanding of transitional justice, democratic institution building and international human rights law and enable them to read, understand and critically reflect on the most recent theoretical and empirical research in the field. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Critically analyze International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Criminal Law
- Knowing the differences between regime change (transition) and regime consolidation and democratic institution building (transformation)
- Understanding the role of the Transitional Justice measures in democratic institution building and resilience
- Understanding Transitology as pathways from and towards democracy
- Acquire theoretical and technical knowledge that is required to identify problems, values, and attitudes of people in times of post-conflict, post-war transition and transformation

READINGS

- Mihr, A.: Introduction to Transitional Justice (open access): <https://anjamihhr.com/transitional-justice/>
- Mihr, A.: Global Governance: How to Govern in the Anthropocene (open access) <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-02108-4>

E-learning & Preparatory MOOCs:

- (1) Transitology <https://elearning.gchumanrights.org/courses/course-v1:gchumanrights+ttd+2024-audit/about>
- (2) Human Rights: A global overview: <https://elearning.gchumanrights.org/courses/course-v1:gchumanrights+pphr+2020/about>

ASSIGNMENT INFO

Workload and assignments

In order to be granted 6 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 80% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)
- prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions
- hand in the following **assignments**:
 - Group work
 - In classroom presentation
 - Written test

Failure to fulfil one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of the above-mentioned assignments.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Anja Mihr, PhD, is a political scientist, consultant, senior lecturer, writer, and researcher specializing in International Human Rights Law, Governance, Public Policy, and Transitional Justice/Transitology, with a focus on Eurasia.

She holds the DAAD Professorship at Mohyla Academy in Kyiv, and is the Founder and Program Director of the Center on Governance through Human Rights at the Berlin Governance Platform in Berlin, Germany, and serves as the Academic Director of the EU Global Campus of Human Rights Central Asia and the MA Programme in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS) at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

3 two-day seminars

Block Seminar 1 (25th-26th Sept 2026):

Introduction to International Human Rights & Regional Regimes

During this intensive seminar, the focus will be on the normative and legal frameworks of democratic institution buildings, its theories and concepts. Different international and regional human rights treaties and fundamental freedoms set the legal and often political frameworks for democracy. The breach of these norms often leads to democratic erosion and re-autocratization of societies and regimes.

Block Seminar 2 (30th-31st Oct 2026):

Transitional Justice/Transitology & Democratic Institution Building

In this seminar the focus is on the methods and impact of Transitional Justice measures, such as trials, commissions of inquiry, reparation or memorial on democratic institution building in post-conflict, post-war and post autocratic settings. During this period, called transitology, different local, domestic and international actors and institutions interplay and can have mutual reinforcing effect on democratic consolidation or – in reverse – on democratic backsliding.

Block Seminar 3 (27th-28th Nov 2026):

Democratic Resilience and Backsliding

Democratic resilience is an ongoing and permanent intertwining effect between society, actors and institutions – local, national and international ones. Real-time case studies illustrate, how fragile and easily corrupted democracy can be. Where and when democracies backslide or turn the other way, and what and which actors it takes to prevent backsliding is the focus of this block.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

in case of online sessions

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Preparation for lively discussions: be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

Commitment: pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions in this international classroom.

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies, especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct. Plagiarism in even a small assignment will result in failing the entire course.

Attendance policy: Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 14 October 2025