

# Human Rights & Democratic Transformation: Solutions in times of crisis

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**17 June – 11 July 2025**

**CATEGORY** International Human Rights Law & Social Sciences

## COURSE STRUCTURE

You will receive **45 hours of academic lessons** (one lesson equals 45 minutes, 15 hours per week). Lessons will comprise lectures, group work, discussion sessions, and excursions.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

HUWISU courses are grouped into different time tracks. Your course will take place in **Track B**

Monday: 9.00 am – 10.30 am & 11.00 am – 12.30 pm

Wednesday: 9.00 am – 10.30 am & 11.00 am – 12.30 pm

Thursday: 1.30 pm – 3.00 pm & 3.30 pm – 5.00 pm

## COURSE LANGUAGE

This course is taught in **English**, including the readings. A language level of B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is required to understand the texts and the discussions in class.

## TARGET GROUP

**Graduate and undergraduate students and practitioners, and early career scholars with a background and strong interest in international law, transitional justice, and democratic institution building during times of transition and transformation**

## CREDITS & CERTIFICATES

Participants will receive **6 ECTS** credit points and a certificate if they attend regularly (at least 80% attendance), participate actively, and fulfill all course assignments. Additionally, six weeks after the end of the course, a Transcript of Records is issued by Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

## CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

You are invited to **join our cultural and social program**. We offer a fine selection of interesting activities to give you an unforgettable stay in Berlin. Through excursions, social gatherings, and sports activities, you can get to know the city and the university and meet students from all parts of the world. **Costs for these offers are included in the program fee.** Below, you find examples of previously offered cultural activities. You will be informed about the respective cultural program via email shortly before the start of the program as well as during the course period.



### POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL GUIDED TOURS

- Federal Chancellery (*Bundeskanzleramt*)
- German Parliament (*Bundestag*)
- House of Representatives (*Abgeordnetenhaus*)
- Topography of Terror exhibition
- Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office

### CULTURAL GUIDED TOURS

- Kreuzberg Tour
- Museum Island (*Museumsinsel*)
- Berlin Cathedral (*Berliner Dom*)
- Daytrip to Potsdam
- Exhibitions

### SOCIAL GATHERINGS

- Welcome Get-Together
- Beach Volleyball
- Farewell Party

## EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

**Preparation for lively discussions in the classroom:** 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 in class:** Pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturers').

**Academic guidelines:** Comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical) especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct.

**Attendance policy:** No unexcused absences are permitted. Students must follow teachers' instructions to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the HUWISU office.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

### ***Human Rights & Democratic Transformation: Solutions in Times of Crisis***

International Human Rights Norms and standards are intertwined with successful Democratic Constitution and Institution-Building after crises, wars, or dictatorships. Transitional Justice, international norms compliance, and a strong civil society facilitate and mutually reinforce democracy, transitional justice, and international law; as a specific mode of transitology.

No other region has undergone transformative struggles of that magnitude to bring these elements together as Europe. No other country has been through phases of transition and transformation from autocracy to democracy and back in the past 100 years, unlike Germany. Berlin has been the epicenter of the Democratic Transformation and (De-)Consolidation over the past decades. Today, Germany is a consolidated and resilient democracy with a vivid human and citizen rights community.

The summer school addresses all intrigued by studying transformation processes to and from democracy through human rights norm compliance. Excursions, oral history, study trips to the 'Places of Events' in history, memorials, and meeting key stakeholders, CSOs, and NGOs in German foreign and domestic politics will be integral to the summer school.

This course closely cooperates with the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice <https://gchumanrights.org> and the Center on Governance through Human Rights at the Berlin Governance Platform in Berlin <https://www.governance-platform.org/en/portfolio/centre-on-governance-through-human-rights/>

### **Background**

Democratic transitions and resilient institutions are intertwined with good governance principles such as transparency, accountability, and participation, for which international law sets the guidelines and benchmarks against which these principles can be measured.

Legal, political, historical, and societal transitional justice (TJ) measures, such as coming to terms with the past, commemorating past atrocities, and paying tribute to victims and survivors, can fuel and strengthen democratic transition and transformation processes. TJ can transform an unjust political culture into a liberal, rule-of-law-binding one. It also shapes security paradigms, i.e., from aggression to defense and regionalism in terms of common markets.

This summer course will tackle these different legal, political, and historical measures based on various academic disciplines, experiences, best practices from the field, and other, sometimes conflicting, narrative processes. Many of these processes are climate change-induced, leading to wars, migration and demographic changes, radicalization, and autocratization of regimes. We will also investigate critically the role of social media and AI in modern transition processes.

## Motivation

Over the past two decades, we have seen a dramatic rise in the polarization of values, principles, and norms. Some call these shifts simply the Anthropocene, others 'the end of the Human Rights era,' and again, others 'the world war between democracies and autocracies', and some call for a New World Order. Many social movements emerged, fearing the extinction of the planet's resources, calling itself the 'last generation' according to the alphabet letter z, fighting climate change-induced extinction and the backsliding of democracy.

This summer school aims to look deeper from legal, political, sociological, and historical disciplines into the way out of this vicious spiral of societal divides and radicalization that can be interrupted. We will investigate cases and countries that have successfully moved from autocrats to democracies, from human rights violations to norm compliances in the past and present. What does it take? Which globally defined norms should be adhered to and why, what measures and actions can be taken, and what role do formal and informal actors play in the process?

Closely linked to the change of normative orders (human rights and good governance) and security paradigms (human security, securitization, and peace) that call into question the universalism of human rights have led to a rapid decline of political systems, security policies, and the rise of anti-liberal regime types.

Geopolitically, the case sample focuses on East and West Germany from 1945 to 1989 and unified Germany after 1990, as well as other countries in Eurasia and the Mediterranean region. Thus, it covers many Eurasia countries, their experience with anti-liberalism, wars and conflicts, new economic corridors, migration movements, and climate change.

Germany is often seen as an example of the best and bad practice of transition and transformation, simultaneously, after two dictatorships with today's consolidated democratic institutions and constitutional consolidated powers based on international and customary law.

Hence, summer school participants in Berlin can visit various places that tell the story of transition and transformation towards and backward from democracy. They meet people who experienced the transformation process from autocracies to democracy after the end of the communist-socialist dictatorship in East Germany that ended in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Humboldt University in Berlin is the ideal place to hold this summer school, allowing us to intertwine local expertise and practice with the global demand to transform institutions.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The summer school provides students with a

- critical understanding of International Human Rights, Humanitarian, and Criminal Law
- knowledge of differences between regime change (transition) and regime consolidation and democratic institution building (transformation)
- thorough understanding of the Transitional Justice process in Germany and other countries after 1945 and after 1990
- imparting theoretical and technical knowledge that is required to identify problems, values, and attitudes of people in times of transition and transformation
- providing practical insights into transition and transformation processes in Germany, meeting the vivid civil society community in Berlin, members of parliament, contemporary witnesses of the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Holocaust and Stasi Memorials, as well as NGOs working against rising populism and authoritarian trends.

## READINGS

Reading materials will be available via Moodle during the course.

## ASSIGNMENT INFO

To be granted 6 ECTS, students must attend classes regularly, complete the compulsory reading assignments before the classes, and actively participate in the debates during the sessions.

To be granted 6 ECTS, students are required to

1. Participate actively in all classes,
2. Do the readings in time and prepare discussion questions on them in advance,
3. Take part in a presentation during class time.
4. Hand in a written research report (5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12 font, Times New Roman), which can be based on the presentation. Details re: due date is two weeks after the end of the course. The content should reflect the interests of the students as well as what will be explored together throughout the course.

## YOUR INSTRUCTOR

**Dr. Anja Mihr** (Ph.D.) is a political scientist, consultant, senior lecturer, writer and researcher for International Human Rights Law, Governance, Public Policy, and Transitional Justice/Transitology focusing on Eurasia. She is the Founder and Program Director of the Center on Governance through Human Rights at the Berlin Governance Platform in Berlin, Germany. She has held professorships at OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, at the Willy-Brandt School of Public Policy, Erfurt University, Germany, and the Netherlands Institute of Human

Rights (SIM), University of Utrecht, Netherlands. In 2023, she was awarded the International Prize for Human Rights Education by UCCHR in New York. Web: <https://anjamihr.com>

## Visiting Lecturers

**Prof. Manfred Nowak is an International Human Rights Lawyer, Secretary General of the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice**, and Director of the Vienna Master of Arts in Applied Human Rights at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. He previously served in various expert functions, such as UN Expert on enforced disappearances (1993-2006), UN Special Rapporteur on Torture (2004-2010), judge at the Human Rights Chamber for Bosnia and Herzegovina (1996-2003), and Vice Chairperson of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (2013-2018). In 2016, he was appointed an independent expert to lead the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty. He was Director of the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights at Utrecht University (SIM, 1987-1989) and of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights at Vienna University (BIM, 1992-2019), as well as a Visiting Professor at the University of Lund (2002-2003), the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva (2008-2009), and at Stanford University in Palo Alto (2014). He is the author of more than 600 public international law and human rights publications, including "The Routledge Companion to Music and Human Rights" (2022).

**Prof. Manja Stephan**, Zentralasien, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin – tbc

**Prof. Silvia von Steindorff**, LSI, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, - tbc

**Prof. Veronica Gomez**, Global Campus of Human Rights - tbc

**Prof. Wolfgang Merkel** – WZB, Berlin – tbc

**Dr. Predrag Tapavicki**, - ZIF, Berlin - tbc

**Dr. Beate Rudolf**, Deutsches Institute für Menschenrechte – tbc

**Dr. Julia Duchow**, - Secretary General Amnesty International Germany – tbc

**Dr. Anna Kaminsky** – Director, Stiftung Aufarbeitung SED Diktatur - tbc