

Human Rights & Democratic Transformation: Solutions in times of crisis

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

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 transatology.

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 specializing in International Human Rights Law, Governance, Public Policy, and Transitional Justice/Transitology, focusing on Eurasia. She is the Academic Director of the MA Degree in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS) at Global Campus Central Asia/ OSCE Academy in Bishkek. She has planned, organized, and chaired various interdisciplinary graduate programs in Eurasia. She is the Founder and Program Director of the Center on Governance through Human Rights at the Berlin Governance Platform in Berlin, Germany. Dr. Mihr has held professorships at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, the Willy-Brandt School of Public Policy at Erfurt University in Germany, and the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM) at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. In 2023, she received the International Prize for Human Rights Education from the UCCHR in New York. Web: <https://anjamihir.com>

Visiting Lecturers/Guest Speakers

Daphne Büllesbach has been the Managing Director of the Berlin Governance Platform from 2020 to 2025. She studied at the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, specializing in Romance languages with a degree in language mediation at Karl Marx University in Leipzig, where she earned her PhD in 1993. For several years, she previously led European Alternatives, a civil society organization active across Europe that researches and promotes transnational politics and culture. Among her achievements, she served as the curator of the political and art festival Transeuropa Festival (Palermo 2019, Madrid 2017, Belgrade 2015) and founded the School of Transnational Organizing. Additionally, she studied European Studies and Social and Political Sciences at King's College London, Sciences-Po Paris, and the University of Cambridge.

Prof. Veronica Gomez, President of the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice, holds a degree in International Law from UBA and an LLM from Nottingham. She is a professor at the University of San Martín (UNSAM). From 1998 to 2009, she served as a Principal Specialist at the Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the OAS in Washington, DC. She has litigated numerous cases before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights as a legal advisor to petitioners and the IACHR, and she currently chairs a human rights arbitration panel. She has been a senior advisor at the Human Rights Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Argentina, dealing with UN Human Rights Council matters. She has drafted numerous human rights reports endorsed by international bodies and has served as Global Campus Chairperson since 2015.

Dr. Anna Kaminsky, Director of the Stiftung Aufarbeitung SED (Federal Foundation addressing Communist-Socialist Past), studied at the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics with a focus on Romance languages, earning a degree in language mediation at Karl Marx University in Leipzig. In 1993, she earned her doctorate (Dr. phil.) with a dissertation titled "Language in Politics: Analyzing Political Texts of Catalan Nationalism from 1898 to 1917." From 1993 to 1998, she collaborated on various research and exhibition projects at institutions including the Berlin Institute for Comparative Social Research, the University of Münster, the Sachsenhausen Memorial, and the German Historical Museum. Since 1998, she has been a research assistant, becoming director in 2001 and a board member of the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship in 2021.

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 has previously served in various expert roles, including 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 as an independent expert to lead the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty. He was also 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 Stanford University in Palo Alto (2014). He is the author of over 600 publications on public

international law and human rights, including “The Routledge Companion to Music and Human Rights” (2022).

Michael Schwandt is a political scientist focusing on adult political education and has served as the Head of the Human Rights Education Department at the German Institute for Human Rights (DIMR) since May 2023. During his university education at the Otto Suhr Institute of the Free University of Berlin, he worked as a youth and adult educator in historical-political education and in critically examining group-focused misanthropy. He has served as a trainer, seminar leader, and consultant for various foundations, NGOs, and associations, including the IJBS Jagdschloß Glienicke, the Network for Democracy and Courage (NDC), and the Regional Offices for Democracy and Integration (RAA) Brandenburg. His main topics have included participation and democracy, anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism, flight, immigration and integration, as well as issues related to rural areas and education policy. Other areas of his work have included quality management, organizational development, and providing consulting and process support for public institutions and authorities in change processes.

Prof. Manja Stephan, Chair of Central Asian Studies, Center for Central Asian and African Studies at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and has been a Professor of Transregional Central Asian Studies, focusing on Islam and Migration, at the Institute of Asian and African Studies since May 2020. Previously, from 2010 to 2020, she served as a Junior Professor for Cross-Cutting Issues of Islam in Asian and African Societies at the same institute. Since 2011, she has been Project Director for the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies (BGS MCS).

Predrag Tapavicki, Head of Training at the Center for Peace Operations, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ZIF, Berlin, has led the ZIF training team since 2022. He spent over ten years at Jacobs University in Bremen, most recently serving as Head of Alumni and Career Services. Additionally, he worked as a freelance management trainer and coach for a decade, managed various EU vocational and adult education projects, and was a fundraising manager. He holds an MA in Political Science with a focus on Peace and Conflict Studies.

Carmen Traute, Amnesty International Germany, is head of the Europe and Central Asia desk at Amnesty International Germany office in Berlin.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Time	Mon 16Jun	Tue 17Jun	Wed 18Jun	Thu 19Jun	Fri 20Jun
09:00-10:30	Welcome Day (no classes)		(A.Mihr/ M.Nowak) Introduction to International Human Rights		
11:00-12:30			(M.Nowak) Introduction to International Human Rights Law		
Lunch					
13:30-15:00				(V. Gomez) International Human Rights Law	
15:30-17:00				(V.Gomez) International Human Rights Regime	
17:00-20:00 Excursions Talks			(P.Tapavicki) ZIF Center for Peace Operations /MFA	Public Event: Human Rights and 'European Contestation' Humboldt University	

Week 2

Time	Mon 23Jun	Tue 24Jun	Wed 25Jun	Thu 26Jun	Fri 27Jun
09:00-10:30	(A.Mihr) Introduction to Transitology		(A.Mihr) International Human Rights Regime and Transformation		
11:00-12:30	(A.Mihr) Introduction to Transitology		(A.Mihr) International Human Rights Regime and Transformation		
Lunch					
13:30-15:00				(A.Mihr) Transitology in times of crisis	
15:30-17:00				(A.Mihr) Transitology in times of crisis	
17:00-20:00 Excursions Talks	(C.Traute) Amnesty International, German Section				

Week 3

Time	Mon 30Jun	Tue 1Jul	Wed 2Jul	Thu 3Jul	Fri 4Jul
09:00-10:30	(A.Mihr) Transitional Justice and Democratic Institution Building in post WWII Germany		(A.Mihr) Transitional Justice and Democratic Institution Building in post GDR and Europe		Optional Excursion Stasi- Prison Hohensch önhausen
11:00-11:45	(A.Mihr) Transitional Justice and Democratic Institution Building in post WWII Germany		(A.Mihr) Transitional Justice and Democratic Institutions in post GDR and Europe		
Lunch					
13:30-15:00				(A.Mihr) Transitional Justice and Democratic Institution Building in Europe	
15:30-17:00				(A.Mihr) Transitional Justice and Democratic Institution Building in Europe	
17:00-20:00 Excursions Talks			(A.Kaminsky) Stiftung Aufarbeitung SED Diktatur		

Week 4

Time	Mon 7Jul	Tue 8Jul	Wed 9Jul	Thu 10Jul	Fri 11Jul
09:00-10:30	(A.Mihr) Democratic Transformation & Resilience & Backsliding		(D.Büllesbach) Multistakeholder Democracy in Europe		
11:00-11:45	(A.Mihr) Democratic Transformation & Resilience & Backsliding		(Daphne Büllesbach, BGP) Citizens Participation, Multi-Stakeholder and Local Governance in Germany		
Lunch					
13:30-15:00				(A.Mihr) Human Rights Democratic Solutions in Times of Crisis	
15:30-17:00				(A.Mihr) Human Rights Democratic Solutions in Times of Crisis	
17:30-20:00	(M. Stephan) "The colonial Past of Humboldt University")		(M.Schwandt) German Institute for Human Rights (DIMR)		Farewell

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update 5 May 2025