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**Tübingen International & European Studies (T-IES) Winter School on
Memory, Diversity and Sustainability**

STUDY TRACK B

4 – 29 January 2027

Course title:	Human Rights in Europe: Common Goals and Current Challenges
Date / Room:	11 January – 28 January
Language of instruction:	English
Lecturer:	Dr. Germana Favognano
Contact hours:	40 (plus excursions)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores human rights as a fundamental pillar of democratic societies and a connecting principle among countries and peoples worldwide, with particular attention to their role in shaping a common European identity. It provides an introduction to the origins and development of human rights, followed by an overview of the main international and European institutions, laws, and mechanisms for their protection.

The course will examine the European politics of human rights, focusing on both its achievements and its shortcomings. Students will analyse real cases of human rights violations occurring in EU countries and engage with authentic challenges concerning the protection and effective enjoyment of fundamental rights in contemporary Europe.

Particular attention will be devoted to migration and the protection of refugees, especially in the context of the rise of populist and extremist movements within the European Union. The course will consider how these developments affect human rights as well as national and European understandings of identity and belonging. In this context, particular emphasis will be placed on freedom of expression and the challenges posed by extremist movements: what are its limits, and how can it be protected while preventing its abuse to promote hatred, intolerance, or violence? Students will examine authentic cases of freedom of expression across Europe and discuss the difficulties of balancing this fundamental right with the protection of other human rights and democratic values.

Through case studies, classroom discussions, and fieldwork activities, students will be encouraged to critically analyse the complexities of defending human rights in contemporary Europe. As part of the fieldwork, they will also meet local human rights activists, gaining first-hand insight into the challenges and experiences of those working to protect fundamental rights in their communities.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of human rights in contemporary European politics. By the end of the course, students will have a deep appreciation of both theoretical and practical approaches to human rights implementation, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of EU policies in this area. They will develop the skills to analyse human rights issues and distinguish cases and topics at local, European, and international levels. Additionally, students will enhance their ability to advocate for fundamental rights through different approaches and forms of engagement.

PREREQUISITES

The course is designed for undergraduate students from all academic disciplines and with a strong general interest in Europe and the EU. A very good command of English and the willingness to actively participate in the course are required.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

The overall grade for the course will be determined by taking into account active participation in class and during fieldwork, as well as a written examination in the form of a short essay. The short essay will be written in class under closed-book, in-person examination conditions, without the use of computers, electronic devices, notes, or other reference materials. Active participation in work includes: attendance, asking questions, taking part in discussions. Occasionally, assigned readings will include a short set of questions requiring brief written responses to support preparation for in-class discussion.

INFORMATION ON THE LECTURER

Dr. Germana Favognano graduated in Political Science and International Relations and specialized in Human Rights Studies at the University of Palermo (Italy) with a dissertation on the International Criminal Court. She was active in the field of human rights education, migration and asylum for NGOs in London, Italy, Brazil and Germany. She is currently a lecturer for Human Rights and European Union Politics at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen with a special focus on migration issues and freedom of expression.