

Human Rights in the 21st Century
OLLI Course Syllabus
Thursdays: 1 to 2:30 PM-1/21 to 4/21/16---Registration Required

Faculty: Bob Groves, MA, MPH

Human rights are about who we were, who we are and who we want to be. Using the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), we will examine today's world. A key theme will be "Is the United States a positive force for human rights?" Issues such as immigration, refugees, women's rights, human trafficking, climate change, terrorism, press freedom and others will be addressed. Includes guest speakers, videos, updated material and new class topics.

Overall Course Objectives:

- To expand awareness and understanding of global human rights
- To foster informed discussion about human rights
- To offer opportunities to take action on human rights globally and locally

Session 1: Universal Aspirations: 1/21

Topics: historical overview of human rights evolution and progress throughout the world as well as definitions and concepts; review and discussion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted in 1948; comparison to the US Bill of Rights

Session 2: International Justice: Progress not Perfection: 1/28

Topics: Focus on laws, conventions and agencies created since 1948 to implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, e.g., international criminal tribunals such as those addressing the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Court; transitional justice

Session 3: Refugees: Humans with Rights: 2/4

Topics: global refugee challenges; responsibilities of nations to assist refugees; differences between refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers; guest speaker from the Nationalities Services Center, Philadelphia.

Session 4: Immigrants and Rights in the United States: 2/11

Topics: Current controversies in US immigration policy; scope and challenge of immigration in historical context; programs to assist immigrants; guest speaker from New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia.

Session 5: Terrorism and a Free Press: Can Democracy Be Saved? 2/18

Topics: Challenges journalists face globally and in the US to report fairly and accurately in all forms of media; international rankings of countries with regard to press freedom; terrorism and its impact on freedom of media and democratic institutions;

Session 6: Human Rights and Climate Change: 2/25

Topics: Nature of climate change and its impacts/threats; links to human rights of vulnerable populations; role of a carbon tax; Outcomes of UN Paris Conference on climate change in December 2015.

Session 7: Women and Human Rights: 3/10

Topics: the special vulnerability of women to human rights violations; progress and remaining challenges in achieving rights for women and girls; examples of key initiatives to improve women's rights; Guest speaker from Women's Way.

Session 8: Human Trafficking and Child Labor: 3/17

Topics: Focus on human rights violations with regard to forced labor, unfair/dangerous labor practices, child labor and human trafficking; guest speaker from the Nationalities Services Center, Philadelphia.

Session 9: The Right to Education: 3/24

Topics: An examination of access to education globally and locally for all people; progress and ongoing obstacles to girls access to education through the 12th grade; United Nations efforts to expand educational access to all; Guest speaker: Philadelphia City Councilwoman Helen Gym.

Session 10: Housing as a Human Right: 3/31

Topics: populations lacking adequate shelter throughout the world; homelessness in the developed world; homelessness and inadequate housing in Philadelphia; guest speakers from Project Home.

Session 11: Is the United States a Positive Force for Human Rights? Part 1: 4/7

Topics: The role of the United States in promoting the UDHR will be the focus including activities of the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor; critiques of US positions/actions from private human rights groups will also be presented and discussed. Part 1 will emphasize positive activity.

Session 12: Is the United States a Positive Force for Human Rights? Part 2: 4/14

Topics: The role of the United States in promoting the UDHR will be the focus including activities of the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor; Part 2 will examine critiques of the US such as threats to privacy, use of torture, drone technology and other issues.

Session 13: Taking Action on Human Rights: 4/21

Topics: Activities of global and US based human rights organizations will be presented, e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights First, UN Foundation. Opportunities and resources to aid individuals interested in human rights advocacy will be presented; guest speaker from a local advocacy organization.

NOTE:

- 1. No specific class preparation by students is required for any session of the course.**
- 2. Internet access will enable class viewing of various videos and online material**