

HUMR 5131 – Final assignments – autumn 2018

Answer one-1-of these questions:

1. Human Rights and Philosophy

Different theorists writing within the philosophy of human rights propose different conceptions of human rights, that is, different theories of what human rights are – for example naturalistic conceptions or practical conceptions of human rights, as discussed by Charles Beitz. Building on the course readings, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different conceptions of human rights, especially when it comes to the possibility of using these theories of human rights for critically assessing the modern human rights system.

2. Human Rights, Culture and History

In response to standard criticism that human rights are 'Western' or 'Eurocentric', i.e., only fully comprehensible in certain cultures, one may argue that human rights can be understood and realised everywhere; it is a matter of careful and sensitive translation and context-sensitive promotion. Or one may argue that this kind of criticism is misplaced because human rights is an answer to modernity, and hence possible to realise in any modern society. Using material from the reading list, discuss the weak and strong points of these two arguments and conclude with your own opinion. Ground your discussion in at least two selected empirical cases.

3. Challenges to human rights protection

Judging from trends in current world politics many will argue that the “realist school” in International Relations has gained the upper hand against the “liberal” or “institutionalist” school. Do you agree to this contention? Describe the two approaches with a particular view to how this debate relates to the international system for the protection and promotion of human rights. Illustrate your discussion with references to human rights instruments of your own choice and/or experiences from particular countries.

