

PT6227
CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS
FALL 2025

Instructor's information:

K.A. Ellis ('Dr. K.')

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Office Hours: By Email and Zoom Appointment; please feel free to contact me through your Canvas account.

This *sync course* meets in person for 3 weekends on the Atlanta campus, and will also be available via Zoom.

Dates: August 22-23, September 26-27, October 17-18

Friday class hours are 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Saturday class hours are 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course lays the foundation for a Christian view of human rights rooted in the systematic study of Genesis 1-3 and Romans 1. The historical development of human rights, the contributions of secular worldview approaches to our modern understanding of human rights, and their ethical effects, will also be addressed. The course focuses on three of the 30 articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: human trafficking, the right to education, and religious freedom. We discuss how biblical Christians have responded historically and in the contemporary world to human rights violations and how they work alongside others to preserve human dignity and protect the innocent.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1: Students will examine the theological basis for human dignity alongside other worldviews, as well as the major contributing documents to our current understanding of human rights.
2. Understand the cultural contexts that have driven various movements of human rights violations, with particular attention to the twentieth century.
3. Students will develop biblical frameworks for recognizing the repeatable patterns of dehumanization and human rights abuses. They will be exposed to various historical responses of Christian communities around the world to those violations.
4. Students will develop skills for ongoing interaction with news outlets, human rights agencies, and their own local communities.

III. REQUIRED READING/VIEWING

READING:

Theological Considerations:

The Mighty and the Almighty: An Essay in Political Theology (2012): Nicholas Wolterstorff addresses issues of political authority, justice, and human rights, discussing how theological perspectives can inform our understanding of these concepts in the public sphere. **Read Chapter 7: Calvin on God, Governmental Authority and Obedience; Chapter 8: What Did Paul Really Say, and Chapter 9: God's Governance of Humankind**

Ethical Integration/Considerations:

Ethics, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer **Selected readings Part I: Chapters 1-8.**

Universal Declaration Development:

A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by Mary Ann Glendon **Chapters 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, and 12.**

Ralph Bunche, Selected Speeches and Writings – Charles P Henry, ed. (48 pages) **Selected portions: pp 1-13, 17-20, 207-230, and 165-174**

Human Trafficking:

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano: Or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself by Olaudah Equiano **(129 pages) Whole book is assigned.**

White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America. **Selected portions: pp 1-19, pp 205-212, pp. 247-270, pp 271-281**

Eugenics and Transhumanism:

War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race. **Selected Portions: Chapters 1-9, 18-21**

From Transgender to Transformed: A Manifesto on Freedom of Form by Martine Rothblatt **Selected Portions: Chapters 3, 4 and 8.**

REQUIRED VIEWING:

[Watch Visual Reasoning Series: Perspectives on Justice \(10 Mins\).](#)

[Watch Warrior Women with Lupita N'yongo \(20 Mins\).](#)

[Watch The Social Dilemma, available on Netflix \(1 Hr and 34 Mins\).](#)

[Watch Coded Bias \(1 Hr and 25 Mins\).](#)

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE

Session Date	Topic	Reading And Assignments
Session 1	Module 1 – Article 1: Dignity, Biblical Foundations, The Garden and the Cross	Genesis 1-3 Bonhoeffer's <i>Ethics</i>
	Module 2 – Dignity: Biblical, Greek and Roman Conceptions	Readings: Wolterstorff Selections Chapters 7, 8
	Module 3 – Non-Western Views of Human Rights: China, SE Asia, Islam	Readings: Wolterstorff Selections Chapter 9
	Module 4 – The Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Readings: <i>A World Made New</i> <i>Ralph Bunche Speeches</i> , pp 1-13, 17-20, 207-230, and 165-174. Provided via canvas on .pdf.
Session 2	Module 5 – The US State Department and Human Rights	
	Module 6 – Article 4: Human Dignity and Trafficking – Historical Overview	Readings: <i>Equiano Olaudah</i> , Whole Book Watch <i>Warrior Women with Lupita N'yongo</i>
	Module 7 – Article 4: Human Dignity and Trafficking – Contemporary Issues	Readings: <i>White Cargo</i> pp 1-19, pp 205-212, pp. 247-270, pp 271-281
	Module 8 – Patterns of Oppression: 20 th Century Totalitarianism	<i>Exercises and discussion based on in class and online handouts.</i>
DATE: Exam will be made available from Sunday-Sunday of our Fall Break.	MIDTERM: UDHR MEMORIZATION, TAKEN VIA CANVAS.	Prepare Articles 1, 4, 18 and 26.
Session 3	Module 9 – Article 18: Right to Religious Freedom, Middle East, China, Russia, Iran	
	Module 10 – Article 26: Children's Rights and the Right to Education. Case Studies: British Home Children, Australia Stolen Generation, Lord's Resistance Army	
	Module 11– Human Rights, Big Tech, Psychological Operations, Digital Warfare Case Studies: China, UK, US	Watch <i>Social Dilemma</i> . Readings: <i>War Against the Weak</i> .
	Module 12 – Eugenics: Sanger, Rothblatt, Transgenderism and Transhumanism; The Development of Human Rights Language.	Readings: <i>From Transgender to Transformed</i> .
	Closing Discussion, Time of Prayer	Closing Discussion, Time of Prayer
RESEARCH PAPER DUE Friday, 12/8/24 at 11:59PM.		

V. ASSIGNMENTS:

INTERACTIONS: Christian View of Human Rights for Fall 2024 is a two-credit course presented as a sync-course online, and an in-person class on the Atlanta campus. All participants will complete one professor-to-student interaction (confirming paper topic), and topical discussion questions online via Canvas.

MID-TERM: A proctored mid-term, to be taken at home before the assigned due date on the schedule above, will prove approximate memorization of articles 1, 4, 18 and 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). A .pdf copy of the complete 30 articles is loaded in the file section of Canvas. The mid-term will account for 20% of the student's final grade.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER: There is no final exam for this course; your research paper will serve as your final exam. In your paper, you will apply the course's biblical lens of human rights/dignity, as well as the formative concepts and documents of human rights, to analyze a particular international human rights issue from the last fifty years.

- You should communicate your proposed topic to the professor for approval via Canvas, by the assigned date.
- The paper may be approached from any of the 30 articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

PAPER TOPIC: DEVELOPMENT and EXECUTION

- The more focused your topic, the easier it will be to tackle your paper. Here are examples of how to focus your paper:
 - Example 1: A research paper on "Human Trafficking" is too broad; but "Pablo Escobar's Trafficking of Professional Athletes in the Mexican Soccer Industry to Fund his Cartel's International Drug Trade" is much more focused and specific; within that, a specific story of someone who was exploited by the system is even *more* focused.
 - Example 2: "Women in Islam" is too broad; "Forced Marriage in Somalia" is more focused; a research paper on Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born Muslim-turned-atheist and women's rights advocate fighting against the culture of Female Genital Mutilation, is even *more* focused.
 - Pro-tip: Make your topic as narrow as possible and anchor it in a story, and your paper will fly.
- A successful paper will include the following:
 - Your *introduction* should state your topic *up front* (ie what you will cover), and why it relevant to this course. (25%)
 - The *body* of your paper should interact with *at least three discernable primary sources*. These sources may include personal testimonies from those involved in your topic, court documents, and the foundational human rights documents discussed in class. (25%)
 - The *body of your paper should also include* your thoughts on *biblical principles of dignity, and mankind's depravity and dehumanization as discussed in class*. You may also include relevant books, news articles, scholarly articles (Google Scholar), course readings, and other items found through your own research.

- (25%)
- Finally, a clear conclusion (at least one page if not more), that ties together the ideas presented in the body of your paper. Your conclusion should be a thoughtful summation of the ideas you've presented, in light of God's original design for humanity (Genesis 1-2). (25%)
 - Papers should be uploaded in Microsoft Word format to Canvas, no later than two weeks after the final class date listed.
 - Formatting:
 - Paper length should be at least 15 pages, not to exceed 20 pages. This page count does *not* include your bibliography, which should be included at the end).
 - References should be formatted according to Turabian/U of Chicago. For Bible references, consult 17.8.2 in Turabian for formatting.
 - Your research paper should be double spaced, in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, with standard 1" margins all around. Do not include a cover page.
 - Place your name in the saved file, as well as on the paper itself under your title.

See also Dr. Keene's helpful article, [How To Write a Seminary Paper](#).

VI. STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

ASSIGNMENT	PERCENT OF GRADE	DUE DATE
Proctored Midterm (Memorization)	20%	via Canvas
Documented Discussion/Engagement	30%	As per Schedule
Research Paper	50%	As per Schedule
Note: All assignments must be submitted by the due date listed in the syllabus and no later than the final due date for the course listed in this syllabus by permission of the instructor. After the final due date, faculty cannot grant students permission to submit late work. See "Completion of Course Work" below.		

VII. GRADE SCALE

97-100 A	86-87 B-	75-77 D+
94-96 A-	83-85 C+	72-74 D
91-93 B+	80-82 C	70-71 D-
88-90 B	78-79 C	00-70 F

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Christian View of Human Rights

Professor: K.A. Ellis

Campus: Atlanta/Sync

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	➤ Strong	Applying framework of creation, fall, redemption, glorification to international injustices; assessing global human rights through that framework in a long-form research paper.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	➤ Moderate	Students are encouraged to incorporate Scripture and a biblical worldview in their research paper.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	➤ Strong	The student will consider human dignity through the lens of creation, abuses through the lens of original sin/depravity, and the impact of the fall on man's inhumanity to man.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	➤ Moderate	Patience in engaging other members of the class in discussion groups; yielding, disagreeing, agreeing.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	➤ Moderate	Assessing strengths and deficiencies in the historical application of the truths that were assumed to be "self-evident" In light of the Word of God.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	➤ Strong	Patience in engaging other members of the class in discussion groups; yielding, disagreeing, agreeing.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.	➤ Strong	All have received human rights from God; student will test to what extent those rights should be granted, and how they should be expressed to all global citizens.

Date: 15 June 2023

Zoom Policy

Students should contact their professor regarding absences well in advance of the class meeting. For a third absence the Registrar should be consulted. Your professor may require additional interactive assignments to offset the absence of classroom interaction. Courses will be available to attend via Zoom, but not recorded due to security risks and sensitive content. Sync or Remote Live courses have priority for the limited Zoom equipment.

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Registrar's Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 46 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 18)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 49)

Artificial Intelligence Policies for Use in Coursework

RTS has instituted the following policy pertaining to the use of AI-enabled tools (including, but not limited to, generative chatbots like ChatGPT and Claude, writing assistants like Grammarly, and other AI-enabled assistants like Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and Apple Intelligence).

It is noted that the policy below does allow for a limited use of AI. This will be the default RTS policy. *A professor, however, has the right to modify this policy, including denying the use of AI altogether. Any modifications to these policies by a professor for a specific RTS course will be explicitly noted by the professor.*

Gathering research leads: AI-enabled tools *may* be employed in a manner similar to using Wikipedia, blogs, social media, or other online sources in generating basic raw material (e.g., "What verses in the Old Testament use the word 'covenant'?") or leads for further reading (e.g., "What recent books deal with the topic of divine simplicity?"). Such uses *do not generally have to be disclosed*, but the student is encouraged to consult with the professor of record if there are any questions or doubts.

Note: even the best AI tool is not infallible and often generates junk data; the student is, therefore, fully responsible for vetting the accuracy or validity of any such information generated.

Generating or analyzing content: AI-enabled tools *may* be used to generate small portions of content that would be used in a manner equivalent to quoting a commentary or other written or digital sources. Any use of such information in an assignment, either through direct quotation or indirect summarization, *must be fully disclosed* in keeping with the guidance provided by the Chicago Manual of Style and APA. The following examples illustrate appropriate methods of citation.

Footnoting direct usage (e.g., quotation) of the result generated by an AI tool:

1. Text generated by ChatGPT, Open AI, March 7, 2024 (<https://chat.openai.com>).
2. Text generated by Claude, Anthropic, March 20, 2024 (<https://claude.ai>).

Footnoting indirect use of AI results that are further modified/summarized by student:

3. ChatGPT, response to “What are the differences between Calvinists and Arminians concerning regeneration?” OpenAI, March 12, 2024.
4. When given a prompt of “What is the traditional Reformed view of church discipline,” the Claude-generated text outlined three reasons: “Obedience to God’s word,” “protection of the church,” and “restoration of the sinner” (<https://claude.ai>, April 2, 2024; see Appendix A for the full transcript).

Bibliographic entry

CMS/SBL: OpenAI, *ChatGPT* [large language model]. March 7, 2024.

<https://chat.openai.com>.

APA: OpenAI (2024). *ChatGPT* (March 7 version). [Large language model].

<https://chat.openai.com>.

Proofreading: AI writing assistants (e.g., Grammarly) *may* be used for standard help with basic spellchecking and grammatical proofreading; such uses *do not have to be disclosed*. However, AI *may not* be used to *fully rewrite* sentences or paragraphs.

Creative process and textual composition: All writing in every course assignment must be, for all intents and purposes, the original work of the student. Thus, AI *may not* be used to generate key components of a writing project that are aimed at cultivating certain competencies in the student, such as thesis/topic sentences, outlines, critical engagement with other views, and so forth. In addition, AI *may not* be used to write full sentences or paragraphs.

Other: AI-enabled tools *may not* be used in any way for online-discussion forum posts (e.g., TDQs), response papers, quizzes, and examinations.