



yale college council

Policy Proposal

Project Title: Expansion of Human Rights Programming

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Problem: While the reinstatement of the Human Rights Studies certificate is an important step forward, there remain significant gaps in faculty expertise, mentorship, and opportunities for deeper engagement with human rights topics. Currently, Yale lacks an adequate number of professors who are practitioners in the field of human rights. This limits both the academic depth and the practical exposure that students can gain in the human rights field. Moreover, the course offerings in human rights, though growing, are not yet sufficient to meet the demand from students who want to engage with the subject from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

Additionally, the recently re-introduced Human Rights Studies certificate program, while extremely valuable, could be overhauled to better serve students by integrating opportunities for mentorship and a capstone project—similar to those offered in the original Human Rights Scholars Program. Without these elements, the certificate program lacks the structure to fully prepare students for careers in human rights advocacy, law, or policy.

Solution: This proposal recommends the following actions to strengthen the human rights academic offerings and the certificate program:

1. Hire additional faculty with practical human rights experience:
 - a. The university should hire more professors who are practitioners in the human rights field. These professionals - whether they are international advocates, lawyers, or field researchers - will bring a wealth of practical knowledge into the classroom and allow students to engage with real-world human rights challenges.
 - b. Faculty hiring should prioritize individuals with interdisciplinary expertise to offer courses that span various global, legal, and ethical aspects of human rights.
2. Expand course offerings in human rights:

- a. In conjunction with hiring new faculty, Yale should aim to expand the number of human rights-related courses available to undergraduate students. These courses could focus on areas such as:
 - i. Human rights in conflict zones and post-conflict reconciliation.
 - ii. Technology and human rights, exploring surveillance, AI, and digital privacy.
 - iii. Economic justice and labor rights in a globalized world.
 - iv. Migration, refugees, and asylum policies.
 - b. These offerings should cater to students from diverse academic backgrounds—Political Science, ER&M, Global Affairs, and others—who have an interest in human rights issues.
- 3. Appoint a dedicated Human Rights Certificate Director:
 - a. A certificate program director should be appointed to oversee the Human Rights Studies certificate. This director would, among other tasks:
 - i. Coordinate mentorship opportunities for students, connecting them with human rights professionals, alumni, and faculty.
 - ii. Ensure that students have access to networking opportunities and internship placements that align with their human rights interests.
 - iii. Facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together students and faculty from different departments to create a cohesive human rights community.
- 4. Overhaul the Human Rights Certificate Program to include a capstone project:
 - a. To give students a more hands-on and immersive experience, the certificate program should be overhauled to include an optional capstone project. This project would allow students to:
 - i. Engage in research or practical work on a human rights issue of their choice.
 - ii. Collaborate with faculty and practitioners on their projects, applying theoretical knowledge to real-world situations.
 - iii. The capstone could take multiple forms, such as an advocacy campaign, policy analysis, a research paper, or another project with the Director's approval.