

Human Rights Courses and Experiential Learning Opportunities

Do you have a passion for human rights and want to combine your academic skills with direct impact? If so, you may want to consider pursuing human rights right here at Binghamton in the classroom and the community.

Academic Programs

There are many courses across the university that include the study of human rights in the curriculum. Two minors give you the chance to focus even more. The [Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention](#) (I-GMAP) has a 24-credit [minor](#) (1 core course and 5 electives). Three of the electives must be in the categories of historical and contemporary studies, concepts and theories, and practices and methodologies. The [Human Rights Institute](#) (HRI) has a 25-credit [minor](#) that includes a core course from a list of options, five electives offered in a wide range of departments and subjects across the university, and a final, 1-credit capstone. The minor is designed to fit with almost any major and to allow you to focus in the areas that interest you most.

Like all minors at the University, you may double count two courses with the requirements for your major. Both the Human Rights and GMAP minors encourage study abroad and internships for credit or experiential learning. These options give you the opportunity to shape your learning to fit your particular interests – whether in a specific region of the world or on a specific topic, such as genocide, migration, women’s and children’s rights, climate change and human rights, incarceration and policing – and to discover new ones. The Human Rights Institute also offers varying, focused specialty courses, such as Human Rights and K-Pop, Globalization and Human Rights, Policing, Surveillance and Human Rights, Human Rights Films, and Children’s Rights, during winter and summer sessions.

Independent Study and Collaborative Research

The Human Rights Institute also offers the opportunity to gain credit at the 300- and 400-level for independent research and for collaborative research with a professor on an ongoing project. If you have a subject and a research mentor related to human rights that you’d like to pursue, just email me at amoore@binghamton.edu to discuss the project and credit options. When we have ongoing projects for undergraduates to join, we announce them to human rights minors.

Internships Overview

While many regular courses include an applied or community-engaged component, a human rights internship allows you to work directly with a human rights organization. Although students are responsible for finding their own internships, there are many resources on campus that can help!

For a broad-based search, try platforms such as idealist.org and [Human Rights Careers](#) (they only list paid internships, however postings aren’t always up to date). You’ll be able to search for internships that are remote or in-person and in any locale. These platforms are particularly good for looking for valuable summer experiences. Interning at a human rights organization is much

more than a line on your resume. You'll have a chance to see what human rights workers actually do on a day-to-day basis, to network with professionals in an area in which you are passionate, and to learn valuable professionalization and research, writing, and communication skills, all while advancing human rights. I-GMAP also has a [list of organizations](#) that often host mass atrocity prevention and human rights internships.

Internships Arranged through the Human Rights Institute

The HRI also facilitates or sponsors several [specific internships](#) in refugee and immigrant legal and social services, human rights scholarship and publishing, and indigent legal services. These are offered summer and/or by semester. All are available for optional credit, and they provide extraordinary opportunities to do high-level human rights work such as working directly with clients and preparing legal briefs.

The HRI organizes two specific summer internships. The first is through our partnership with the **Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice** at Sheffield Hallam University in Sheffield, England. We will choose 2-4 Binghamton students to spend 6 weeks in England. One participant will be chosen and funded through the [Harpur Law Council summer public interest law internship program](#). Funding for the other students may be available. Students live together in university housing and work in **The Refugee Hub**, a law clinic on the SHU campus that works to reunite refugee families. Students receive an overview of immigration and refugee law in the UK, will engage directly with refugees and asylees in Sheffield, and interview clients and prepare petitions for family reunification to the British Home Office. One student who participated commented, "I could not have asked for a more hands-on internship," while another wrote:

This was my first time working closely with clients and not just reading a set of facts or pieces of evidence from a computer or case bundle. This element of personal interaction and empathizing with clients as they shared their stories and some of the most intimate details of their lives made me recognize how meaningful and powerful the impact of the work being done at the Hub is. I am truly so honored to say that I had a hand this summer in helping to positively change the course of people's lives...whether that be through work on applications or appeals to hopefully allow them to reunite with the most important thing in their lives, their family.

Another student said, "***This was by far the best experience I have ever had in my life (in terms of both travel and work!)***." To read more about students' experiences, see this story from 2019 about our first cohort: ["Students work to reunite refugees with families."](#)

For students interested in a law career and legal research, the [Human Rights Quarterly](#) (HRQ) summer internship offers a paid opportunity to work at the world's leading human rights journal. The journal is based at the Urban Morgan Institute for Human Rights at the University of Cincinnati College of Law, however remote participation is also available. One Binghamton University undergraduate will be selected to work alongside law students at the journal. HRQ is known for its rigorous fact checking. Each intern is assigned an article for fact-checking and editing. This is a great opportunity for future law school applicants who have excellent writing

and editing skills. Not only will you learn a tremendous amount about the human rights focus of the article you are assigned, but you'll learn the Blue Book style writing and formatting skills you will need to succeed in law school.

If you want a human rights internship in Binghamton for summer, fall, or spring, there are also several to consider. The **Broome County Public Defender's Office** and **Broome County Assigned Counsel Program** provide legal representation to indigent clients in our community. Student intern assignments typically include a wide variety of tasks and experiences, including conducting research such as reviewing case files and body cam footage, doing client visits in the Broome County Jail alongside supervising attorneys, and witnessing firsthand how the various courts in our community operate.

Also in Binghamton, the Human Rights Institute also organizes three different in-person placements related to refugee and immigrant legal and social services and representation for other marginalized at the [American Civic Association](#), [Journey's End Refugee Services](#), and [Legal Services of Central NY](#). Students have a variety of tasks and learning opportunities at these organizations, from receiving training in client intakes and U.S. asylum law and the immigration process to conducting research for specific cases to working directly with clients on their cases or to access specific social services. The American Civic Association also sometimes has placements in events and marketing and in IT.

You can read the full descriptions of these organizations and intern responsibilities on the [HRI website](#). Deadlines for applications are typically November 1 for spring and April 1 for summer and fall, although positions are open until filled. If you're interested in learning more, email me at amoore@binghamton.edu.

Required Skills, Interests, and Considerations

Human rights organizations that host internships want to understand the skills and passions that you'd bring to the position. In terms of the internship focus, your interest may stem from your family background or personal experience, coursework, or an extracurricular experience. Explain in your cover letter what brings you to apply.

Most of these positions require excellent writing, communication, and research skills. You can often demonstrate these through reference to your coursework or other internships you may have had. Foreign language experience is also always a plus. Be sure to note your level of fluency.

Other skills and perspectives may be harder to describe but are important to consider before you apply. Do you see yourself as working alongside marginalized communities or to help them from above? Think about how and why the difference between the two might matter to the client and to your office colleagues. These organizations focus on the expertise they bring as **partners to their clients**.

Finally, many human rights internships are emotionally taxing. As an intern, you might be witness to the messiness of our criminal justice system or to trauma (including gang and sexual violence, loss of family, war, drug-related violence) many clients have experienced. And you might not always have good news for the clients, for example if their petition for asylum has

been denied and they are at risk of removal. Be sure to think honestly about your own emotional capacity as well as the support available through the host organization.

Binghamton University students have had profound and valuable internship experiences at the organizations described above. You'll want to consider which might be the best fit for you in terms of the focus area, kinds of work, and level of mentorship.