HUMAN RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA

Course Description:

Latin America is arguably the world’s leading region of human rights culture. Since the 1990s, more perpetrators including former high-level officials have been exposed to truth-and-justice reckonings and convicted in court in Latin America than elsewhere. At the same time, however, the region continues to witness notorious human rights failures, and continues to breed fierce internal criticism. Some critics and activists argue that the human rights agenda has become a discursive smokescreen, rather than a pathway to social justice, accountability, and progress. If everybody ostensibly favors human rights, does this mean it no longer carries much bite, and that it has become marginal to the public agenda of the future? How did this contradictory and perhaps paradoxical situation come about? In this course we will address such issues together. We will study how the human rights question turned into a great moral and political struggle, both conflictive and urgent, in Latin America during the last half-century.