**EHR 1104 Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights**

**Course description**

This course will examine the philosophical foundations of human rights in the different epochs of history; ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary periods. , It will look at some originators of these theories dating back to ancient Greece and Rome on the subject Human Rights. The theory originated by thinkers like: Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Thomas, Hugo Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Thomas Jefferson, Edmund Burke, Jean J. Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Paine, J.S. Mill, John Rawls and others will be studied.

**Course Objectives**

The objective of this course is to enable the students to understand the ethical, logical, metaphysical and epistemological foundations of human rights. Students will be helped to understand the human rights related concepts such as; rights and duties, freedom, human dignity, social morality, positive law, natural law, positive rights, natural rights and legal rights.

**Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Be able to define a human right.
2. Be able to justify human rights
3. be able to differentiate between a right and privilege
4. be able to differentiate between a natural right and positive right
5. be able to differentiate between moral and legal rights
6. be able to differentiate between natural law and positive law
7. know the universality and relativity of human rights
8. Know the epochal stances on rights in the classical period, mediaeval period, modern period and postmodern period.
9. Know the various criticisms of human rights

**Course outline**

1. Philosophical tools
2. Philosophical approaches
3. The notion of rights: Origins
4. Human Rights Concepts and Context
5. The ethical foundations of Human rights
6. The metaphysical and epistemological foundations of human rights
7. Naturalism and human rights
8. Positivism and human rights
9. Cultural relativism and Cultural universalism
10. Postmodernism and Human rights
11. Criticism of Human rights

**Methodology**

The facilitator(s) will employ the following methods; Lectures, question and answer, guided discovery, Individual presentations, small group discussions, Inquiry, brain storming.

**Assessment Mode**

Take home exercise 15%

Practical exercise test 15%

End of semester examination 70%

**Reading List**

Cranston M., 1993, *What are Human rights?*, Basic Books.

Dworkin R., 1997, *Taking Rights Seriously*, Harvard University Press.

Diener A., 1987, *Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights*, United Nations Educational

Hayden P., 2001, *The Philosophy of Human Rights*, Paragon House Publishers.

Ishay M., *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient times to the Globalization Era*, California University Press

Gonsalves M., ed., 1990, *Fagothey’s Right and Reason*, Prentice Hall

Orend B, 2002, *Human Rights: Concept and Context*, Broad View Press.

Symonides J., ed., 2001, *Human Rights: Concepts and Standards*, Ashgate Publishing.