

International Human Rights Clinic 2021-2022 MA/LLM 15PLAC145

**Room TBC
Wednesdays 13.00 – 16.00 TBC
(check the latest draft of timetable to confirm time and place)
Convenor: Professor Lynn Welchman**

Introduction and administrative matters

The International Human Rights Clinic at SOAS was launched in the academic session 2007-2008; the next year it runs will be the eleventh time it has run (hence, Clinic 11). The Clinic aims to encourage an engaged 'critical consciousness' that reflects on and works within the trans-national intersection of law, rights and social justice on briefs submitted by partners in the UK and internationally. For SOAS students, the Clinic aims to provide a dynamic and critical environment in which to engage with advocacy strategies and the tensions of the theory and practice of human rights, and the opportunity to contribute to the work of the international human rights movement through practical work with cases, policy analysis, and research and advocacy briefs. The Clinic is offered within the following School of Law programmes: LLM Master in Laws and LLM Human Rights, Conflict and Justice; MA Legal Studies and MA Human Rights Law. Students participating are normally expected to have a familiarity with international law / human rights law, or to be acquiring such familiarity through other School of Law courses during their degree (notably, Foundations of International Law, International Protection of Human Rights). The Clinic is structured around weekly seminars and ongoing project work, and cannot accommodate those wishing to audit the module. In the academic year 2018-19, Professor Lynn Welchman was joint winner of the SOAS Director's Award for Inspirational Teaching for her work convening the Clinic.

Student numbers in the Clinic are limited (usually to 18-20 places). Pre-registration on this module is provisional and does not guarantee you a place in the Clinic if there is greater demand than there are places. Students wishing to join Clinic 10 as part of their postgraduate degree programme in 2021-22 should attend the first class of term on Wed 6th October (TBC – check latest draft of timetable and see final para of this Introduction). If the number of students wishing to take the module exceeds the available capacity, students will be asked to provide a written statement in support of their application to take this module. Forms on which to make this statement will be made available electronically on the module's Moodle site directly after the first class of term. The completed forms must be emailed to Professor Welchman from your SOAS email account by 9.00 the following morning (Thursday 7th Oct TBC). The course convenor will notify you by email as to whether or not you are able to register for this module by 4pm that day.

Assessment

Assessment comprises three elements. The **first**, 'Assignment 1', is the **Project Portfolio**. This is a maximum length of 4,000 words and is assessed at 50% of the mark for the module. Due for submission on the Tuesday after Reading Week of term two (22nd Feb 2022, TBC), this essay comprises a 1500 word reflection on the project work and 2,500 words extracted from the student's contribution to the team's Project Document as submitted to the Project Partner at the end of January (further guidance is provided as to how to combine the different elements of this assignment). To Assignment 1 is annexed the team's completed project document with the student's full individual contribution indicated. The preparation of this portfolio gives space for reflection on the engagement with the project partner and the project team, as well as on the methodology and substance of the project to which the team was assigned.

Assignment 2 is the **Project Diary** which is finalised (and so "submitted" as complete) at the same time as the Project Portfolio. The Project Diary is created on-line on Moodle as soon as project work begins and provides a forum for individual reflection on the nature, content and progress of the project and of the Clinic student's learning experience, as well as an opportunity for feedback from and exchange with the Clinic convenor. Clinic students are expected to contribute to their Diary at least once a fortnight over the course of the first 14 or 15 weeks. The Project Diary is marked at 10% of the module and is a minimum of 1,000 words in length.

The third and final stage of assessment, Assignment 3, at 40% of the module mark, is an **Advocacy Analysis** essay. This essay is a maximum of 3,000 words and is due in the week before term 3 starts, on Tuesday 19th April 2022 (TBC). The subject of the advocacy analysis, a human rights "output" (flyer, video, report, advertisement etc) is chosen by the student and the essay explores and critiques the international legal and other human rights arguments put forward in the context of or as a part of a campaign or other effort to secure change or raise awareness. As the culmination of the course, Assignment 3 is an individual effort designed to enhance the research and analysis skills the student has developed during the year, further develop capacity to express complex ideas, make connections, apply theory to practice and draw reflective and theoretical conclusions from empirical experience gained on the course. Students are prepared for the Advocacy Analysis essay through directed classwork and exercises in Term Two.

Project work

Students at the Clinic work in teams on research and advocacy briefs through Term One and until the end of January in Term Two. Team-work is integral to the concept of the Clinic; as well as their substantive work, students are expected to develop effective team-working modalities and to reflect on the challenges of cooperative endeavour in human rights related work. The precise nature of the work depends on the briefs and requests coming from UK-based and overseas-based institutional partners engaged in international

human rights work or domestic human rights work with an international and/or comparative dimension. These may include not only human rights organisations but also law firms with human rights specialisation and other institutional partners with particular *pro bono* research needs to which Clinic teams are able to respond.

Clinic teams have worked on briefs from, *inter alia*, Amnesty International, the Redress Trust (London), al-Haq (Ramallah), the Welfare Association (Jerusalem), the ICJ (Geneva), Just Fair (London), DC-Cam (Cambodia), ASK (Dhaka), CIHRS (Cairo), Institute for Human Rights and Business (London), Child Soldiers International (London), Rights For Peace (London), the Norwegian Refugee Council, Terre Des Hommes, Legal Action Worldwide, and Lawyers for Justice in Libya. Areas addressed in particular project work have included domestic violence legislation, the protection of cultural property, the right to water, violence against women, corporal punishment, human rights and public health emergencies, the treatment of refugees, universal jurisdiction and its implementation in national legislation, corporate social responsibility, emergency legislation, disability rights, access to redress for human rights violations related to mega-sporting events, litigation remedies for the protection of housing rights in occupied territory, and the compliance of domestic legislation with applicable international obligations. In their project work, Clinic teams are briefed by partners but conduct their work at SOAS, unless exceptionally they are required to work *in situ* by partner institutions. Supervision at SOAS is provided by the Clinic convenor, Professor Lynn Welchman, in cooperation with Dr Lutz Oette and with other Law School colleagues available to give expert input into particular areas of research. Project partners provide input into completed drafts at intervals identified in the initial Project Brief.

Weekly seminar

The weekly seminar addresses a range of issues in human rights advocacy, strategies and challenges. The seminar is led by Professor Welchman, but also involves a number of guest speakers, including practitioners engaged in different aspects and strategies of human rights work (mostly London-based project partners) and academic colleagues engaged in relevant research. The seminar provides a forum for learning, exchange and reflection on the particular themes addressed, and on international human rights work more generally, as well as providing an unusual opportunity to engage intensively with practitioners and to discuss their experiences in the field. Readings include both academic and practitioner materials and will mostly be made available through links or postings on the Clinic's Moodle site.

Moodle site

The Clinic Moodle site is used extensively to provide course materials and other documents and facilities; it hosts the Project Diaries and team discussion forums. The Moodle site also provides access (restricted circulation) to most of the projects on which Clinic teams have worked in

previous years. Some of these have been separately published, while the input of some other projects has been acknowledged in documents subsequently published by the partner organisations.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course students should have an understanding of the rigours and challenges involved in international human rights practice and be equipped to research and write on this area; understand the dynamics of team work; be able to conduct research, individually and in teams, on case-specific themes and country situations, through a variety of media and sources, including web-based resources; understand, and be able to analyse, the application of international human rights instruments in and to specific situations; and be able to reflect constructively on the dynamics involved in building and sustaining relationships with partners in a variety of countries and situations.

Students who work with the International Human Rights Clinic are critical to the development of the Clinic at SOAS, its approaches to project work and the strengthening of the Clinic's contribution to the human rights efforts of its partners. The SOAS Alumni LinkedIn site hosts a private sub-group open only to International Human Rights Clinic graduates to facilitate continued exchange and networking among Clinicians from Clinic 1 onwards.

Clinic delivery from Term 1 2021

Class time comprises one three hour session per week, comprising a two hour seminar and an hour for plenary project work discussions, for the first term and a half, with the final five weeks of Term 2 dropping the project hours. It is intended — government instruction and SOAS regulation and constraints permitting — that Clinic plenary sessions (the three hours per week) will be held face to face, while separate project team meetings may be held face to face or by remote or blended delivery. Partners may also invite their student teams to meetings in their London offices if useful and manageable under the covid advice pertaining at SOAS at the time. All those selecting the Clinic as a module will need to confirm that they will be able to attend face to face plenary sessions from no later than the second week of Term 1.