



Connecticut / Baden-Württemberg Human Rights Research Consortium (HRRC)

Funded by:

[University of Connecticut Office of Global Affairs](#)
[Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research and Art](#)
[University of Connecticut Human Rights Institute](#)
[Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies](#)

About the HRRC

The **Connecticut / Baden-Württemberg Human Rights Research Consortium (HRRC)** provides an **international, interdisciplinary and inter-institutional platform to promote and support academic collaboration** between researchers and research groups at universities and other research institutions in the State of Connecticut (USA) and the Land Baden-Württemberg (Germany).

The Consortium is designed to serve as an incubator for diverse and interdisciplinary human rights research projects, generate critical knowledge on key human rights-related issues, and disseminate its findings. HRRC foci include:

- **artificial intelligence,**
- **biotechnology,**
- **the role of democratic institutions in the face of authoritarianism,**
- **conflict management,**
- **labor migration and forced migration,**
- **media and public discourse analysis,**
- **social justice and solidarity, and**
- **human rights education in the age of social media.**

The outcomes of this innovative Consortium will **have significant implications for 1) research, 2) education, 3) public discourse, and 4) political decision-making.**

In concrete terms, the Connecticut / Baden-Württemberg Human Rights Research Consortium:

- builds **inter-state, interdisciplinary and inter-institutional research networks** through active transatlantic working groups, video conference meetings, and periodic in-person conferences;
- promotes **faculty mobility** and **fellowships** as well as **opportunities for postgraduate and graduate exchange**;
- supports collaborative **grant writing**;
- provides **educational and curriculum assistance on human rights issues for secondary and college/university education**;
- provides **publicly accessible online resources** on critical human rights issues and for human rights education (media libraries, podcasts, etc.);
- disseminates research findings through **publications** and **policy papers**;
- provides **advice to political decision-makers.**

Institutions

The **Human Rights Institute (HRI)** at the University of Connecticut (USA) and the **Freiburg institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS)** at the University of Freiburg in Baden-Württemberg (Germany) serve as administrative and organizational centers of the transatlantic HRRC. Together with the HRRC Steering Committee and assisted by the HRRC Working Groups, they facilitate the conceptual development of the consortium and assist in practical matters, such as the administration of finances, logistical support for workshops and larger conferences, support for grant writing activities, and assistance in public relations work.

Institutions and Centers in Connecticut

- Human Rights Institute (HRI), University of Connecticut, Storrs
- Asylum and Human Rights Clinic, University of Connecticut Law School, Hartford
- Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life, University of Connecticut
- Central Connecticut State University
- Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs

- University of Connecticut (beyond HRI, Dodd Center, and Center for Judaic Studies)
- University of Hartford
- Wesleyan University
- Yale University

Institutions and Centers in Baden-Württemberg

- Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS), University of Freiburg
- Maria Sibylla Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA), University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana (FRIAS is the managing unit of MIASA)
- Elisabeth Käsemann Foundation, Stuttgart
- Forum Scientiarum, University of Tübingen
- Heidelberg Center for American Studies
- Hochschule für Jüdische Studien, Heidelberg
- Mark Twain Center for Transatlantic Relations, Heidelberg
- Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law, Heidelberg
- Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg
- University of Freiburg (beyond FRIAS)
- University of Mannheim
- University of Tübingen (beyond Forum Scientiarium and World Ethos Institute)
- World Ethos Institute, University of Tübingen

Team

Co-Chairs Connecticut:

- Sebastian **Wogenstein** (Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut)
- Katharina **von Hammerstein** (Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut)

Co-Chairs Baden-Württemberg:

- Bernd **Kortmann** (FRIAS, University of Freiburg)
- Silja **Vöneky** (University of Freiburg, FRIAS)

Interstate CT-BW Steering Committee:

- Karin **Amos** (University of Tübingen)
- Katharina **von Hammerstein** (Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut)
- Bernd **Kortmann** (FRIAS, University of Freiburg)
- Frauke **Lachenmann** (Max Planck Foundation for Peace and the Rule of Law, Heidelberg)

- Achilles **Skordas** (Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg)
- Silja **Vöneky** (University of Freiburg, FRIAS)
- Niels **Weidtmann** (Forum Scientiarum, University of Tübingen)
- Dorothee **Weitbrecht** (Elisabeth Käsemann Foundation, Stuttgart)
- Sebastian **Wogenstein** (Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut)

Inter-State, Inter-Institutional and Interdisciplinary Working Groups

The four thematic working groups, composed ideally of an **equal number of participants from Connecticut and Baden-Württemberg**, are the conceptual core of the Human Rights Research Consortium. The foci of the four groups are key human rights-issues of our time. The working groups meet independently throughout the academic year (2-3 times per semester) and have annual in-person workshops. The scholarly exchange is designed to lead to a variety of common activities and projects (publications, conference panels, policy recommendations; press releases, educational activities, archive etc.).

The working language in these groups is English.

The working groups' objective is scholarly exchange in a supportive, intellectually rich and diverse, and productive atmosphere. Groups will provide an opportunity to engage with colleagues and approaches from different disciplines, scholarly traditions, and cultural backgrounds.

1) Human Rights, Science and Technology

Leaders: Molly Land (HRI, Law, UConn, CT), Silja Vöneky (FRIAS, Law/Ethics of Law, U Freiburg, BW).

This working group will address questions concerning the governance of scientific and technological innovations (esp. Artificial Intelligence, biotechnology) and human rights law. States are obligated under human rights law to respect, protect, and fulfill rights. What does the obligation to fulfill look like with respect to technological innovation? What does it mean when individuals must ensure their own digital security but lack access to appropriate expertise and affordable, easy-to-use tools for doing so? Technology is also challenging human rights law in the area of non-state actors. Should human rights law regulate the companies that create and build technologies and, if so, how? What obligations might human rights law impose on companies that not only affect rights themselves, but also serve as the gatekeepers for

expressive activity that violates the rights of others? The group will meet virtually once or twice a semester to read and discuss a work relevant to these questions and thereby promote opportunities for research, collaboration, and exchange.

2) Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights

Leaders: Niels Weidtmann (Forum Scientiarum, Philosophy, U Tübingen, BW), Christopher Gohl (Welt Ethos Institut, U Tübingen, BW), Katharina von Hammerstein (HRI/German Studies/UConn, CT)

This working group will address claims of universality in relation to human rights, among other topics. Presuppositions of the equality of all humans in terms of a substantive understanding of human dignity are central to the conceptual history of human rights. What precisely constitutes human dignity, however, and how universality should be interpreted in the context of human rights are points of philosophical debate. Additional points of debate in human rights scholarship include notions of equality or equity. The group will also discuss claims that human rights discourse has often been exploited to impose Western structures on non-Western cultures.

3) Human Rights and International Relations

Leaders: Achilles Skordas (Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, BW), Lucas Sanchez (Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg, BW), Lia Boersch (University of Heidelberg, BW).

Themes the group will discuss include: the backlash against human rights and international courts; business and human rights; critical theory of human rights, including Marxist approaches; systems-theoretical analysis of human rights; regional human rights approaches, including in particular in Latin America and Africa; history of human rights and of human rights organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch); geopolitics and human rights; and human rights and European integration. The group plans to host events related to these themes and build on the Human Rights Discussion sub-group at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg.

4) Human Rights Education and Solidarity

Leaders: Kathryn Libal (HRI, Social Work, UConn, CT), Dorothee Weitbrecht (E. Käsemann Foundation, BW), Karin Amos (Education, Vice President for Academic Affairs, U Tübingen, BW).

Additional colleagues from a variety of disciplines at institutions in both BW and CT have been identified.

The Human Rights Education and Solidarity Working Group aims to discuss and share new ways of conveying the meaning of human rights to future generations and increasing democratic awareness in societies. Furthermore, the group will explore the extent to which particular professions or members of social groups, such as those engaged in social care, business, politics, military, education institutions, or the media, require different methods for human rights education. The group aims to explore intercultural differences and commonalities concerning the meaning of human rights and democratic understanding. Concretely, we hope to consider methods of integration of human rights into the teaching programs of participating group members, with an integrated international perspective. We will foster exchange of research and scholarship, and include practitioners where possible. We will start with video conferences and virtual seminars amongst faculty and practitioners within the consortium and expand, if feasible, to include opportunities for our students. We will include them in the further development of concepts to be employed in practice.

5) Graduate Student Human Rights Research Working Group

Currently in planning stage. Coordinator: Florian Kastner, HRRRC Graduate Assistant at the University of Connecticut

GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Deliverables for Research

- **Long-term research clusters** emerging from interstate, inter-institutional and interdisciplinary working groups that approach human rights scholarship and education from four different angles: **(1) Technology, Ethics and Law, (2) Philosophy and Literature, (3) International Relations** and **(4) Education**. In addition, a fifth **Graduate Student Human Rights Research Group** is currently being built. These working groups represent the backbone of the HRRRC and promote innovative collaborative scholarly projects. HRRRC provides funding for video-conferencing, books, and materials. *All technical details, such as scheduling and book or material orders, will be handled by the group leaders.*

- Knowledge transfer and productive exchange through **workshops** and **conferences** alternating between CT and BW on topics at the intersection of the working groups' foci. The in-person meetings are designed to intensify the productivity of the working groups.
 - **HRRC Launch event on May 11, 2020**, at the **Human Rights Institute at the University of Connecticut** with Baden-Württemberg's Minister for Science, Research and Art, Theresia Bauer, in attendance.
 - **HRRC Inaugural Conference, May 20-22, 2020**, at the **Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS) in Baden-Württemberg** with all working groups participating and some lectures open to the public. HRRC provides funds for travel, accommodation and meals. *Currently in planning stage; input welcome. We will provide more information on travel reimbursement and conference details, soon. Contact at FRIAS for logistical questions regarding this conference is jennifer.foster@frias.uni-freiburg.de.*
 - **HRRC in-person meeting of working groups, Spring 2021**. Two groups will meet in Baden-Württemberg and two groups in Connecticut. Rotation in future years. Group leaders will discuss the details with the Steering Committee and Sebastian Wogenstein.
 - **The next large HRRC conference** with all working groups is planned for **spring 2022 in Connecticut**.
- **Short-term, multi-week visiting research fellowships**, up to one month (weeks in spring/summer/fall 2020), to increase mobility and collaborative research and knowledge transfer. Optional public lectures and presentations at schools to broaden the impact of human rights research. Informal applications to be submitted to Prof. Dr. Bernd Kortmann.
- **Faculty mobility** for human rights research visits between academic institutions in Connecticut and Baden-Württemberg. HRRC provides funds for travel and accommodation. *We will provide more information on application procedures, soon.*
- Collaborative **grant writing**, research projects, etc.
- **Internet Archive** of all human rights-related dissertation and postdoctoral projects in both states (including project abstracts) to facilitate research opportunities for and visibility of junior scholars.
- **Publications** of jointly authored books and articles in academic and non-academic journals.
- **Joint panels** at major national and international conferences.

Deliverables for Education

- Inclusion of **practical/applied components** (Human Rights modules/courses) in all research working groups, especially in working group 4 "Human Rights Education and Solidarity."
- Select conference sessions at Human Rights Research Consortium conferences for secondary level school teachers of both states; **curriculum assistance**.
- Collaboration with local schools for **human rights project weeks** (for example, with United World College Freiburg) or in the context of "**Junge Universität**" (i.e., exploratory events for children and youth at universities). Availability of podcasts of human rights-related lectures with educational focus on HRRC website.

Deliverables for the Public

- **Publication** of jointly authored articles in non-academic media.
- **Press releases** on conferences and specific human rights-related developments (e.g., regarding human rights and technology, human rights education, incidents of human rights violations, international treaties, etc.) and availability of researchers to comment on current events to the **press**.
- **Public lecture series** on human rights topics, e.g. *Studium generale*, *Colloquium politicum* (Freiburg).
- Human Rights **Policy Fellows**: Human rights activists/scholars/practitioners will be hosted for short term visits (e.g., one week) at an associated institute for engagement with consortium members and the public.

Deliverables for Political Decision-Makers

- **Policy proposals/papers** and **Think Tank function** to advise political decision-makers on key debates involving human rights.
- Ad hoc availability of researchers to **comment on current events** involving human rights.

Funding for much of these activities will be available through the Ministry of Science, Research and Arts of Baden-Württemberg, the State of Connecticut, the University of Connecticut Human Rights Institute and the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies.

Funding support by the additional participating institutions will be most welcome.

Contacts

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