

LAW 546G: Business and Human Rights: Corporate Responsibility, Sustainability, and Policy

Human rights are not a central concern of corporate law. Corporate actors are not a central concern of international law. This course brings business and human rights together to examine existing and emerging strategies to close a global governance gap that leaves human rights at risk and places commercial actors at risk of contributing to human rights violations. This course explores and explains how social pressure from activists and investors influence corporate conduct with respect to human rights claims and inform recent global policy standards for business enterprises. It will contextualize the limitations of international law for regulating the conduct of non-state actors and the limitations of corporate legal theory for defining the role of a corporation in globalized economy. It will offer an overview of the evolution of international efforts to address abuses and to align commerce with universal principles on human rights principles and introduce recent global policy initiatives on business and human rights. It will present the potential for advancing business respect for human rights through stakeholder engagement initiatives, shareholder advocacy, and corporate sustainability reporting. At the conclusion of this course, participants will be able to identify human rights risks that are connected to business enterprises, to differentiate between the respective responsibilities of states and corporations to ensure that human rights are protected and respected, and to assess various advocacy efforts to advance corporate accountability.