



The Academy

Course: "Understanding Human Dignity and Applying Human Rights"

8-session course for political, civic and church leaders

Course description:

The promotion and protection of human rights is one of the leading issues in international politics and diplomacy today. The philosophical and legal concept of human dignity has been at the basis of the international human rights system since the end of World War II. Human dignity thereby constitutes the key component of the public debate and legislative action on life issues and biomedicine, marriage and the family and religious freedom, but also where it regards issues surrounding social justice and work.

This course provides participants with an insight into the genesis, practical application and consequences of the concept of human dignity and fundamental rights, through analyzing the main post-War schools of thought and related historical developments that have shaped our notion of human rights today. The key international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various other United Nations' and regional treaties (European, African and American) will also be discussed. The course will in conclusion address the modern fallacies in the human rights debate. The 8 sessions aim to give especially those working in and for public office a better grasp of the human rights landscape and help them navigate its oftentimes treacherous waters.

Course structure:

Eight sessions of 50 minutes each, taught in English and through the seminar method, allowing for active participation of the attendees (each session can also be viewed later).

Course outline:

Session 1: What is human dignity and what are its origins?

Session 2: World War II: a catalyst for the treaty-based codification of human rights

Session 3: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related UN treaties

Session 4: Regional human rights instruments in Africa, Europe and the Americas

Session 5: The role of international tribunals and courts in shaping human rights

Session 6: A view on human dignity & rights from the Soviet Gulag camp system

Session 7: International human rights enforcement and modern-day genocides

Session 8: Future perspectives for human rights

Course outcomes:

1. Having identified the principle of human dignity and the workings of human rights
2. Applying these principles to one's own work in public office
3. Understanding the distinction between real and perceived human rights and their effect on society and on those called to serve in political, civil or church office.

Course work:

- Preparatory readings as assigned by the instructor (selections from the texts below)
- In-class seminar-style discussion
- A concluding 3-page essay (only if the participant wishes to count the course towards the ICLN Academy official "*Certificate in Public Leadership Studies*".)

Course texts:

- The Global Human Rights Landscape – A Short Guide to Understanding the International Organizations and the Opportunities for Engagement by Coleman, Fischer and Koren
- Human Dignity and the Law in Post-War Europe: Roots and Reality of an Ambiguous Concept, by Christiaan W.J.M. Alting von Geusau

Instructor:

Dr. Christiaan Alting von Geusau, J.D., LL.M holds law degrees from the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and the University of Heidelberg (Germany) whilst also having studied law, philosophy and theology courses at Franciscan University of Steubenville, the University of Notre Dame (USA) and at the Ecole Saint-Jean in Saint Jodard (France). He obtained with distinction his doctorate in philosophy of law from the University of Vienna (Austria), writing a dissertation on "*Human Dignity and the Law in post-War Europe*", which was published internationally in 2013. Dr. von Geusau practiced law at international law firms Houthoff and AKD in Amsterdam and Brussels from 1997 until 2004 and currently serves as President and Rector of *ITI Catholic University* near Vienna, Austria where he is also a Professor for Philosophy of Law and Christian Education. Von Geusau leads the *International Catholic Legislators Network (ICLN)*, which he founded in 2010 to provide political and church leaders with (faith) formation, fellowship and networking opportunities. He works extensively with political, civic and church leaders throughout the world. You may access some of his lectures, interviews and presentations [here](#).

Practical details:

Please register [here](#). The course fee is €250, - per person (advance payment, non-refundable – *ICLN is a non-profit organization and fees go directly towards covering operational costs.*)

At the end of the course and having completed all 8 sessions and the concluding essay, an ICLN Academy course participation certificate with full course details will be provided. The completed course counts towards the official ICLN Academy "*Certificate in Public Leadership Studies*", which requires the completion of 12 core-curriculum courses.

Contact: office@icln.at

www.icln.at

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