



Human Rights Field Experience

HRTS 4500

Institute for Human Rights & Humanitarian Studies,
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Background Information

What is the Human Rights Field Experience?

HRTS 4500 is a 3-credit requirement for all undergraduate majors in International Human Rights, as well as for students earning certificates in human rights. Most students choose to fulfill this requirement through an internship or volunteer experience at a human rights-related organization. In special cases, this requirement may be fulfilled through directed research. Students should log at least 100 hours of unpaid work, as well as complete related academic assignments.

Webster University's academic catalog provides the following description of HRTS 4500:

For students undertaking either travel or research into a specific human rights topic or area through direct contact with the material or people studied, outside academic confines, or experience working in an organization whose mission includes work in the area of international human rights. Requires prior and follow-up consultation with an appropriate faculty member approved by the director of the Human Rights program or a site academic director. The student must prepare a portfolio, to include an advance description of the intended field and/ or work experience and, whichever is appropriate, either a projected itinerary; documentation of the travel and experiences; and a summary of and formal reflection on those experiences, or a description of the projected work experience and a summary of and formal reflection on the work experience. Prerequisites: HRTS 1100, HRTS 2800, and approval of the director of the Human Rights program and the site academic director.

Why is the Field Experience important to my career?

This Field Experience requirement helps students gain valuable experience that will help them in their future academic and/or professional careers. For example:

- Many non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and government offices require previous experience for entry-level positions. In some cases, this means international experiences paired with language skills. (Hint: Search for jobs at the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, and NGOs via www.idealists.org to get a sense of the job market.)
- Field Experience will help you to better understand what types of human rights you like (or don't like) to do. Some are well-suited to working at field sites in the developing world, for instance, while others fit better at advocacy organizations in Washington, D.C. These both represent important positions, but translate into very different experiences.
- Not only will Field Experience make you a more competitive candidate for Master's and Ph.D. programs, but it may also give you ideas for graduate-level research. Remember that most programs will require a research-driven "Statement of Purpose" in the application, as well as in-depth research projects for graduation.

Preparing for Fieldwork

When should I fulfill my Field Experience requirement?

Most students choose to complete their Field Experience the summer after their sophomore year, during their junior year, or during the summer after their junior year. By this time, they have established a knowledge background so that they can make the most of their experience and contribute to their field site. Remember, too, that both HRTS 1100 and HRTS 2800 are prerequisites for this class; these courses must be completed before you undertake fieldwork. Since this is not a formal class – the Field Experience works as an independent study course – you may register for the three-credits during the fall, spring, or summer semesters.

How do I register for the Field Experience?

In order to register for the Field Experience, please take the following steps:

1. Prepare for the Field Experience by building your knowledge background in human rights, which includes taking the prerequisites HRTS 1100 (Introduction to Human Rights) and HRTS 2800 (Methods of Inquiry).
2. Secure an internship or volunteer assignment. Note that this may require quite a bit of advanced planning (see next section, below).
3. Submit a Field Experience Application Form, which is located in the Appendix at the end of this handbook. This form identifies your field site and manager, as well as how this project relates to human rights. The form must be approved by the HRTS instructor overseeing your Field Experience – in most cases, this will be Professor Lindsey Kingston
4. After you have received authorization from your instructor, visit the administrator in the Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies office (102 House). They will assist you in registering for the three-credit course.

How do I find a Field Experience site?

Locating a Field Experience is your responsibility, although Webster faculty members may have useful contacts and advice to help you. Try to find an opportunity that you find genuinely interesting – rather than just checking a requirement off of your list – so that you can make the most out of this requirement. A few tips:

- Check out the Institute’s internship handbook, which is posted on their website at www.webster.edu/humanrights under “student resources”.
- The Internet is a useful tool for locating Field Experience opportunities. If there is a specific organization or office you’d like to work with, check their Web site; many of these groups will have well-established internship programs with specific application processes. *Note that many*

internship programs have strict application deadlines, so search and apply early! If there's an organization you'd like to work with that doesn't have an internship program advertised online, feel free to send a (professional, polite, and formal) e-mail introducing yourself and asking whether an internship may be available in the future.

- Talk to Webster faculty and fellow students for ideas and contacts. Examples of past Webster internships include: International Institute of Saint Louis, Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates (MIRA), Center for Immigrant Healthcare Justice (CIHR), Center for the Survivors of War and Trauma, the Holocaust Museum & Learning Center, and Plowsharing Crafts.
- In many cases, you will be competing for your internship with a number of qualified applicants. Increase your chances by presenting yourself in a professional way. For instance, prepare a well-organized résumé that outlines your academic and professional experiences. Whether you're applying via e-mail or regular mail, include a cover letter (or cover e-mail, as the case may be) to introduce yourself and express interest in the position. (Not sure how to write a résumé or cover letter? Contact Career Services at <http://www.webster.edu/careers> for help!)

What if I want to intern/volunteer in another city or country?

Some students prefer to gain experience in other city, state, or even country. (This is often possible during summer break and/or while studying abroad.) Working in far-away places provides the opportunity to gain experience with prestigious organizations or working "on the ground". If this is interesting to you, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Whether you undertake the Field Experience at home or far away, you will still need to follow the same registration process outlined on page 2 of this handbook.
- You'll need to consider additional expenses associated with this work, including transportation, housing, international health insurance, etc. These costs are not covered by Webster University. In major cities – and especially cities that are hubs of human rights activity, such as Washington, D.C. – short-term housing is expensive and difficult to acquire. With careful budgeting and advanced planning, however, you may decide that the experience is worth the expense. (Check Craigslist to get an idea of housing costs in your city of interest, and consider roommate situations to save money.) Remember that most internships are unpaid.
- You may be able to pair a study abroad trip with your Field Experience. For instance, study at one of Webster's overseas campuses during the spring semester and then stay abroad for an internship during the summer. This may help save money on transportation costs, although keep in mind that international internships require advanced planning and attention to visa requirements in your destination country.
- A few ideas for field sites include: Amnesty International (multiple locations in U.S. and Europe), Human Rights Watch (multiple locations in U.S. and Europe), Human Rights First (New York and DC), Rights Action (Guatemala), Network in Solidarity with Guatemala (Guatemala), National Disability Rights Network (DC, opportunities in Overland, MO), United Nations offices (multiple locations in U.S. and Europe) such as UNICEF and UNHCR, Fair Trade USA (California), and more.

Assignments and Grading

What kind of work is expected of me?

The Field Experience should meet the following requirements:

- It should provide an experience outside of the classroom which has a clear connection to human rights. You should explain in your proposal how the experience is connected to human rights, and keep these connections in mind throughout your Field Experience.
- You should perform a **minimum of 100 hours of work** in the field.
- You will check in with your faculty supervisor at least twice during your Field Experience to update them on your progress and ensure that the requirement is going smoothly. Faculty will also be in contact with your site supervisor.
- You should keep a record of hours worked and tasks performed, which must be signed by your supervisor (ex: internship manager) and submitted to your instructor. See the appendix for a timesheet.
- A final project must be submitted at the end of the Field Experience. This assignment is typically a 5-7 page paper, but could also come in another form such as a photo essay, video essay, or presentation. The aim of this assignment is to summarize your activities and reflect on your experiences. This project should be planned in consultation with your instructor.

How will the Field Experience be graded?

Unlike regular courses at Webster University, this Field Experience is graded as “Pass” or “Fail”. Students will not be assigned a letter grade for this three-credit requirement. In order to receive a passing mark, you will be expected to complete the requirements outlined above in coordination with your instructor. Students who do not meet these expectations will receive a failing mark. Note that the Field Experience is necessary for earning a B.A. in International Human Rights, as well as for earning a certificate in this academic program; it may not be substituted with another class.

Resources for Field Coordinators

Information for your internship/volunteer manager

Thank you very much for providing this learning opportunity to our student! In order for this internship/volunteer experience to qualify as a Field Experience for Webster University's undergraduate program in International Human Rights, please keep these points in mind:

- Students must work at least 100 hours.
- Students must submit regular timesheets, which we ask that you confirm with your signature.
- You may be contacted by the student's instructor for feedback on the student's progress, and the instructor's contact information should be made available to you in case you have any questions or concerns. You may also contact the academic program director, Dr. Lindsey Kingston, at lkingston54@webster.edu or (314) 246-8794.
- Although we understand that human rights work sometimes requires everyday tasks (like photo copying, filing, getting coffee, etc.), students are required to undertake **substantive work** in order to fulfill this requirement and gain valuable experience for their future careers. For instance, Webster students may assist your organization on specific projects, provide research and writing assistance for reports/publications, and/or help plan advocacy events. Ideally, this substantive work would combine the needs of the organization with the interests and skills of our students.
- Furthermore, this Field Experience should have a **human rights focus**. Often, organizations are doing "human rights work" without identifying it as such. For example, fair trade may be linked to universal human rights to fair working conditions. Gay marriage is often linked to universal rights to marriage and family. If you have any questions about this link to human rights that your student intern/volunteer cannot answer, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Kingston. You may also learn more about international human rights by visiting these Web sites:
 - UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' definition of human rights: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>
 - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>
 - United Nations' page on human rights: <http://www.un.org/en/rights/>
 - Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org
 - U.S. Department of State's page on human rights: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/hr/index.htm>
 - Amnesty International USA: www.amnestyusa.org
 - Webster University's Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies: www.webster.edu/humanrights

HRTS Field Experience Application Form

This application must be approved by your instructor before you begin the Field Experience. Submit signed forms to Dr. Lindsey Kingston at kingston54@webster.edu (210 Sam Priest).

Session (circle one):	FA1	FA2	FALL	SP1	SP2	SPRING	SS
Year: _____							

STUDENT INFORMATION

Name _____

Student ID number _____

Instructor _____

PROPOSED PLAN OF WORK

Please prepare a 1-2 page typed proposal that outlines the following points:

- Field experience location with brief identifying description (including mailing address and telephone number)
- Identification of field supervisor (name and position)
- Student job description/assignment, with details of your specific responsibilities
- Starting and finishing dates of the Field Experience
- Work hours per week and weekly schedule

SIGNATURES

Student Date

Instructor Date

HRTS Field Experience Timesheet

Name of Student: _____

Organization: _____

DATE	LOCATION	HOURS WORKED	TASKS

Signature of Field Experience coordinator

Date