The HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM at the University of Virginia allows students to explore the range of opportunities available in the human rights field, at home and abroad, through hands-on experiences.

The program is the hub for human rights activities at the Law School, and cooperates with student groups, faculty members, the Public Service Center and Career Services, and human rights organizations to coordinate speakers, events, summer and postgraduate employment, and pro bono opportunities.

THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW CLINIC IS THE CORE OF OUR PROGRAM. The clinic offers students practical experience in human rights advocacy in collaboration with human rights lawyers and nongovernmental organizations in the United States and abroad.

CLINIC STUDENTS HAVE WORKED ON PROJECTS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:
- National security in the war on terror
- Freedom of information and expression
- Gender-based violence, women’s and LGBTI rights
- Rights of indigenous people
- Legal literacy and empowerment
- Right to education
- Right to an effective remedy
- Rights respecting legislative reform
- Right to life and prohibition against torture
- Human rights in the Middle East
- International criminal justice and universal jurisdiction
- Corporate liability for human rights violations
- Land law and housing rights
- Transitional justice/responsibility to protect and to fulfill human rights
- Rights related to health and medical treatment
- Rights of refugees

WITH THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS:
- U.N. Special Rapporteur On Violence Against Women
- Human Rights Watch
- Women’s Justice Initiative Guatemala
- Center For Constitutional Rights New York
- Center For Justice In International Law Washington, D.C.
- Centro Para La Acción Legal En Derechos Humanos Guatemala
- The Council For Global Equality

ABOVE: HUMAN RIGHTS STUDY PROJECT members — called COWAN FELLOWS — traveled abroad to study the peace process in Zambia during winter break in 2017. Past teams have conducted field missions to Egypt, Cuba, Sierra Leone, Syria and Lebanon, China, India, Uganda, Cambodia, Malawi, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, Myanmar and Colombia.
COURSES AND SEMINARS
The Law School curriculum has included a number of courses focused on human rights in recent years, including International Human Rights Law, Current Issues in Human Rights, Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Islam, and Human Rights, Public International Law and the Scholarly Process. Other courses touch on human rights topics, including Gender Justice and State Responsibility, Movement Lawyering for Global Justice, International Civil Litigation and Comparative Constitutional Design.

ALUMNI NETWORKS
The program maintains a network of recent graduates involved in the human rights law field. Current and recent alumni employers include the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the Canadian Centre for International Justice, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the Center for National Security Studies, law firm Burke O’Neill, EarthRights International, Freedom House, the Council for Global Equality, the Iran-U.S. Claims Tribunal, the Harvard Law School Human Rights Clinic, Section 27, the U.S. Senate Judiciary and Armed Services committees, and the U.N. Office of Legal Affairs.

JOBS AND FELLOWSHIPS
UVA Law faculty mentor students on fellowship and career opportunities. The faculty, many of whom have worked abroad, also offer a significant networking resource for those interested in human rights work. Students who intend to work in the United States and abroad have access to summer grants of $3,750 (first year) and $6,500 (second year) from the student-run Public Interest Law Association.

EVENTS: Since its inception in 2003, the HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM has brought leading figures in the field to the Law School.

BIG DATA FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE, with Ulrich Mans of the Centre for Innovation at Leiden University

LAW AND WAR: AN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW WORKSHOP, co-sponsored with the American Red Cross and open to law students nationwide

ADVANCING JUSTICE THROUGH STORYTELLING, with best-selling author Corban Addison ’04

THE LIVING LEGACY OF UGANDA’S “KILL THE GAYS” BILL: A CONVERSATION ON TRANSCONSTANT ADVOCACY FOR LGBTI RIGHTS IN UGANDA, with representatives from Sexual Minorities Uganda and the Center for Constitutional Rights

RECOGNIZING THE RIGHTS OF LBTI COMMUNITIES THROUGH U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY, with Mark Bromley ’95, council chair for the Council for Global Equality

WAGING A BATTLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SOUTH, with Azadeh Shahshahani, legal and advocacy director at Project South

AN INSIDER’S LOOK AT THE PARIS AGREEMENTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE, with Susan Biniaz, a lead negotiator for the U.S. State Department during the Paris climate talks

Professor Mila Versteeg was one of 35 scholars nationwide to earn a 2017 ANDREW CARNEGIE FELLOWSHIP, given to fund significant research and writing in the social sciences and humanities. She will use the $200,000 prize to expand her research into understanding how constitutional rights are enforced in different countries.

A team of three UVA Law students won first place in the prestigious JEAN-PIERRE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW COMPETITION in Portugal in 2014. The school has hosted the competition and fielded teams since then as well.

More than 30 prominent scholars from around the world whose work is helping to define the future of human rights research attended a conference on “WHAT’S NEXT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS SCHOLARSHIP” at the Law School in the spring of 2017. The Law Library presented its work on a new online database that compiles the preparatory documents for nine international human rights conventions created by the United Nations.