



Human Rights: An Interdisciplinary Approach (Key Concepts)

By Michael Freeman

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Human Rights is an introductory text that is both innovative and challenging. It invites students to think conceptually about one of the most important and influential political concepts of our time. In this unique interdisciplinary approach, Michael Freeman emphasizes the complex ways in which the experiences of the victims of human rights violations are related to legal, philosophical and social-scientific approaches to human rights.

By tracing the history of the concept, the book shows that there is a fundamental tension between the philosophy of human rights and the way in which it is understood in the social sciences. This analysis throws light on some of the most controversial issues in the field: Is the idea of the universality of human rights consistent with respect for cultural difference? Are there collective human rights? Should feminists embrace, revise or reject the idea of human rights? Does the idea of human rights distract our attention from the structural causes of oppression and exploitation? What are the underlying causes of human rights violations? And why do some countries have much worse human rights records than others?

The book will appeal to students in the social sciences, as well as students of human rights law who want an introduction to the non-legal aspects of their subject. It will also be read by scholars interested in ethics and the social sciences, as well as the general reader.

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Human Rights: An Interdisciplinary Approach (Key Concepts) By Michael Freeman Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2724409 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Polity
- Published on: 2002-12-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.48" h x .60" w x 5.46" l, .61 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 216 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Human rights' is not a thing, but a concept, a way of thinking and making claims about certain events. These claims derive from moral rules and are expressed in legal terms or United Nations dialect. Michael Freeman's excellent book provides a patient unravelling of how these distinctive claims have emerged and how to reconceptualize them in terms of social science and political theory. Current public discourse and the massive new wave of academic interest just assume that human rights is 'a concept whose time has come'. Freeman gives this audience a most valuable, reliable and clear answer to his own question: 'But what is it precisely that has come?' *Stan Cohen, Professor of Sociology, London School of Economics*

"Michael Freeman's *Human Rights, An Interdisciplinary Approach* is a unique five star Baedeker to an expanding landscape of serious research introducing the reader to the diverse ways academic fields of scholarship come to grips with the important topic of human rights....it will attract bright and inquiring minds who will want to dig more deeply into the literature to which they have been so gracefully initiated" *Richard Pierre Claude, Human Rights Quarterly*

"The treatment of the background concepts and theories as well of the different issues is up to date, substantially focussed and presented in a balanced way. In this Freeman succeeds in presenting the complexity of the discussions without demanding prior knowledge" *Mikael Spang, Ethnic and Racial Studies*

"'Human rights,' states Freeman with justifiable certainty in the Introduction to this excellent book, 'is an interdisciplinary concept *par excellence*'. ...Throughout this engaging text, Freeman is sensitive to the debates but wholly committed to the issues. ...What a gift this is for students of various disciplines interested in human rights but intimidated by the complex legal and philosophical jargon contained in much of the literature." *Darren J. O'Byrne, University of Surrey Roehampton*

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From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Michael Freeman is Reader in Government at the University of Essex.

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