

**PS 231: Humanitarian Military Intervention**  
**Michelle Murray**

When should states use military force to alleviate human suffering? Does the need to intervene to stop human rights violations outweigh the right of states to maintain control over territory? The international states system is built upon the principles of sovereignty and nonintervention. Yet over the past two decades human rights have emerged as an increasingly accepted justification legitimizing the use of force. This apparent tension between the respect for state sovereignty and the inevitable violations that result from the use of military force for humanitarian purposes is at the center of the debate over human rights in the field of international relations. This course explores the dilemmas and controversies surrounding the use of force for humanitarian purposes. The first part examines the major ethical, political and strategic arguments for and against humanitarian military intervention. The second part focuses on specific instances where states undertook, or failed to undertake, a humanitarian military intervention (for example, Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Kosovo, Sudan, Libya and Syria, among others). Through an examination of particular case studies, we will better understand why the international community has such an inconsistent record of stopping humanitarian crises and what the limitations and possibilities of human rights are in international politics. *Class size: 20*