

HUMR 5150 Essay topics

Please select and answer ONE of the three questions below. In answering the question, you should refer to readings in the course syllabus.

Question 1

In his article «Human Rights», John Skorupski writes:

“Human rights should be seen as a sub-class of rights. We should avoid inventing a category of ‘human-rights’ whose relation to rights proper is unclear. Whereas a toy gun is not a gun, a human right is a right. Therefore the philosophy of human rights should anchor them within a general conception of right [...]”

(In *The Philosophy of International Law* (Besson & Tasioulas, eds, OUP 2010), p. 358)

Write a paper discussing Skorupski’s claim, what its implications are for the theory of human rights, and which arguments can be given for and against Skorupski’s position.

Question 2

The distinction between on the one hand “orthodox” (also called “naturalistic”) conceptions of human rights and on the other hand “political” (also called “practical”) conceptions of human rights has been central to debates in the philosophy of human rights over the last decade. Discuss the arguments which can be given for and against these competing conceptions, and discuss the relevance of this distinction for at least two of the following topics treated in the course:

- How to justify human rights
- Conflicts between rights
- The feasibility of human rights
- Relativism and human rights
- Gender and human rights.

Question 3

A primary task of a philosophical theory of human rights is to provide a justified account of which human rights we have. In your view, what does it take to successfully justify the claim that we have a given human right? In other words, what are the success criteria for a philosophical theory telling us which human rights we have? Provide arguments for your position and illustrate your view with at least two different human rights.

Word limit for the draft: 2000 words.

Word limit for the final version of the paper: 5000 words.