



How Does Exploring Humanitarian Law Fit? Community Colleges: Addressing Key Education Outcomes Through Civics Education

The Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) program provides flexible teaching resources to help community college students develop the skills and knowledge needed to excel in the workforce and learn about international humanitarian law (IHL). IHL is the body of rules that seeks to protect those who do not, or no longer take part in armed conflict, and restricts the means and methods of warfare. The EHL curriculum includes a wide range of engaging materials that connect real world events to the classroom and are flexible enough to fit into educators' current curricula. These free resources provide students with opportunities to sharpen their critical thinking and communication skills, as well as improve their global awareness, cultural sensitivity, and civic responsibility. Below are courses that are relevant to EHL and examples of ways that educators are integrating EHL lessons into their teaching.

U.S. and World History, Global Studies, Religious Studies:

- The key concepts of human dignity, bystander dilemmas and humanitarian actions that are central to EHL are themes that run throughout U.S. and World History. Historical examples include Las Casas, who spoke up for indigenous peoples during the Spanish explorations; citizens that advocated against removing Indians in the 1830s, and again at the turn of the last century (Helen Hunt Jackson, specifically) during the Indian Wars; proponents of the Women's and Civil Rights movements from the early 1900s through the 1960s; and the Holocaust and modern genocides.
- Discussions of prisoners of war draw upon diverse examples, including British prison ships in the Revolutionary War, Andersonville and Elmira in the Civil War, and all of our modern-era wars.
- The EHL curriculum ties in case studies and current events to help students think critically about the world around them.

Comparative Government, Political Science:

- EHL explores political systems and encourages students to consider the relationship between political events and political behaviors.
- EHL compares the various ways that governments have sought to address and overcome serious war crimes and shows that there is no universal method of dealing with IHL violations.

Human Rights, Social Justice Studies, International Studies:

- Students learn about the relationship between IHL and human rights law, and how human rights law complements IHL in armed conflict.
- Case studies inform students about major international humanitarian crises and how they have influenced the formation of international humanitarian law.
- Learning about refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) broadens the definition of citizen to include a global and humanitarian perspective.

Peace and Conflict Studies:

- IHL is fundamental to Peace and Conflict studies because it seeks to prevent and mitigate conflict through humane behavior. IHL supports the basic principles of Peace Studies, including improved human conditions and shorter, less destructive wars.



Security Studies, Military Science:

- Students learn how certain weapons such as land mines and small arms have “ripple effects” that continue to cause harm, even after a conflict has ended. The EHL curriculum explores why certain weapons are banned and illustrates their consequences on both individuals and society at large.
- IHL is fundamental for military science because upholding IHL often results in shorter, more successful military campaigns. Additionally, the Geneva Conventions state that all states party to the conventions are obliged to teach military personnel about the principles of IHL.

Psychology, Sociology, or social work:

- Through discussions on human dignity and the role of a bystander, students consider how humanitarian acts create dilemmas and consequences for everyone involved. Students are asked to think critically about the ways in which social pressure and personal risk influence one’s decision to protect life or human dignity.
- Lessons on responding to the consequences of armed conflict explore not only the physical needs, but the social, psychological, and spiritual needs as well.
- An examination of various options for dealing with IHL violations illustrates the ways in which dealing—or not dealing—with IHL violations can affect the emotional well-being of a population.
- Students are encouraged to think critically about why people choose to become involved in armed conflict and why IHL is sometimes violated.

Pre-Law and International Criminal Justice

- The EHL curriculum helps students understand why rules are needed to regulate armed conflict and how to identify violations of IHL.
- Through modern-day case studies and interactive activities, students explore various methods of dealing with IHL violations. Students learn about national, international, and hybrid courts and the ways in which they complement one another and contribute to the international effort to bring war criminals to justice.
- The Geneva Conventions’ history and discussion are relevant as are the lessons on justice, dealing with violations of the law, judiciary systems, the United Nations and internationalism in the 21st century.

Using EHL “helps students become empathetic and helps them see the complexity of issues. The EHL curriculum also promotes critical thought and good-decision making.”

Educator quote from “Evaluation Brief: Findings from educator survey
Prepared by Spitfire Strategies for the American Red Cross: Exploring Humanitarian Law

“As an educator, I have been filled with hope for a better future for today’s youth when the teachers in our Red Cross EHL trainings realize immediately that EHL deserves a place in their social studies curricula. I believe that there is power in knowledge. Therefore, I also believe that if the youth of the world become informed about international humanitarian law via Exploring Humanitarian Law, the misery and suffering of war can and will be lessened.”

DeAn Krey, Professor Emeritus of Teacher Education, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

“The EHL training provided an environment of creativity combined with knowledge and resources that have been incorporated into my Introduction to Sociology, Universal Human Rights and Criminology and Deviance Courses. The EHL curriculum is flexible, yet rich with resources allowing me to utilize it in many courses.”

Cindy Epperson, PhD, Professor of Sociology, St Louis Community College, MO
American Red Cross 2010 EHL Summer Institute Participant

For more information, please visit www.redcross.org/ehl