I. 40 YEARS OF NDLS HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS

The NDLS Human Rights LLM is uniquely distinguishable from its counterparts in American law schools in three significant dimensions:

1. Its well-established origins from Notre Dame President Theodore Hesburgh’s support for the creation of the Center for Civil and Human Rights well over 40 years ago; the well-entrenched record of deepening the NDLS Human Rights LLM community with the admission of human rights defenders hailing from Latin America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and North America; and the evolution of a global ND Human Rights LLM alumni network (spanning government, judiciaries, civil society, and private lawyers);

2. The intentional design of its curriculum targeted towards expanding the capacities, training, theoretical and practical tools of human rights lawyers from many jurisdictions to succeed in establishing human rights accountability either through litigation, arbitration, or other forms of human rights adjudication, as well as to support human rights policy-making; and

3. The linkage of the Human Rights LLM degree to the Catholic mission of Notre Dame, and especially to Notre Dame Law School as the country’s oldest Roman Catholic law schools and one of the leading law schools.

These features of the Human Rights LLM were adaptive to the predominantly civil and political rights challenges and proliferation of authoritarian regimes and dictatorships in the 1980s onwards – the global milieu in which the program was first conceptualized. In 2020, however, the global pandemic, environmental challenges, civil rights and racial injustices, attacks on religious freedom, and the exacerbating economic, social, and cultural rights inequalities in the international system demand a renewal of the NDLS Human Rights LLM. While the NDLS Human Rights LLM program can honor its history of contributions, this degree program must be responsive to the deepening and widening challenges for human rights lawyers throughout the world. Much as NDLS cultivates “a different kind of lawyer”, NDLS must also cultivate “a different kind of human rights lawyer”.
II. 2021 onwards: A Different Kind of Human Rights Lawyer at NDLS

Today’s human rights lawyers work across a range of functions and responsibilities no longer confined to domestic, regional, or international litigation. Human rights lawyers today provide expert advice to governments (e.g. foreign affairs ministries, justice ministries, legislatures and parliaments, judiciaries, among others) or may themselves hold political or judicial positions (e.g. judges or as law clerks or judicial staff lawyers). Human rights lawyers also advise international organizations (e.g. the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the European Union, ASEAN, the African Union, OAS, NATO, among others). Human rights lawyers can also work to advise the private sector on human rights, environmental, and social compliance and business practices and operational policies in conformity with human rights. Human rights lawyers can represent human rights victims directly, or in concert with civil society organizations that either seek redress through either established institutional processes (e.g. human rights litigation), or advocate reform (e.g. policy interventions to ensure human rights protection).

The vast scope of human rights law (e.g. civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights) is also continuously expanding, intersecting, and converging with other specialized legal norms (e.g. sustainability, development, climate change and environmental law, global health law, migrant protection exceeding the bare parameters of international refugee law). More than ever, human rights lawyers need more than just baseline doctrinal mastery of the sources of human rights law, but also deep knowledge of legal norms, systems, and institutions that regularly interact with, inflect, and affect the evolving nature and practice of human rights law itself.

A “different kind of human rights lawyer” for NDLS must be consistent with, and intentionally draw its strengths from, the overall NDLS mission to cultivate “a different kind of lawyer”:

“As teachers, we consider our role fundamentally to be one of professional formation, as we educate our students to practice law with competence and compassion, and to be leaders in the bar, the academy, and their communities. As scholars, we seek to advance knowledge in a search for truth through original inquiry and publication. We serve our University and the other communities to which we belong, and by doing so, we seek to foster an understanding of how law enables and inhibits the achievement of individual and social goals, as well as to facilitate greater commitment to the relationship between law and social justice.

We do all of this within our Catholic tradition. That tradition, which spans the globe and embraces believers from all races, cultures, and levels of economic development, leads us to strive to broaden and deepen our academic and practical understanding by drawing upon the unique resources of our religious tradition and the traditions of other faiths. Committed to the most demanding standards of scholarly inquiry, we seek to illustrate the possibilities of dialogue between, and integration of, reason and faith.”

The NDLS Human Rights LLM degree is one of the very few specialized human rights LLM degrees in the United States that carries the distinction of its 40-year history, global scope and alumni network, while situated within one of the eminent leading law schools in the United
States that has its own London program and access to the ND Global Gateways. As of 2021, the NDLS Human Rights LLM degree is ranked by LLM Guide as No. 8 out of all the human rights LLM degrees in the world (ahead of University of Oxford and Lund University. See full list here: https://llm-guide.com/lists/top-llm-programs-by-speciality/top-10-llm-programs-for-human-rights-law ). The NDLS Human Rights LLM degree is also one of the top 5 human rights law LLMs in the United States, according to the prominent website Human Rights Careers (see rankings here: https://www.humanrightscareers.com/magazine/5-top-masters-in-human-rights-law-in-the-usa ).

Very few, if at all any, Human Rights LLM programs purposely situate their pedagogy and scholarly inquiry within the Catholic tradition and the traditions of other faiths, apart from the NDLS Human Rights LLM degree. Very few LLM programs deliberately link their inquiries to US law courses (especially those on civil rights, racial justice, and the history of human rights practice and advocacy in the United States), much less engage in the widest comparative law discussions that are possible at NDLS. With over 150 years of its history, NDLS has successfully placed ethics, morals, and natural law at the core of its academic queries and training on law and social justice. The NDLS Human Rights LLM degree will draw from these distinctions and transcend the often pluralist, but often ethically or morally detached, approaches to the teaching and practice of human rights. The NDLS Human Rights LLM is adaptable to the broadening functions and roles of human rights lawyers, while at the same time embracing the widest scope for universal human rights by situating ethics and moral deliberation at the core of human rights decision-making.

III. PROPOSED CURRICULUM FOR THE NDLS HUMAN RIGHTS LLM DEGREE

The proposed curriculum builds on the core strengths of the entire NDLS faculty and key programs. The NDLS Human Rights LLM will operate to complement and deepen the entirety of the NDLS curricular and scholarly offerings. For 24 credits over two semesters (with a possible extension to 26 credits), the following courses will comprise the NDLS Human Rights LLM curriculum:

A. Required Courses (*No distinction as to which semester they should be taken, so long as students complete these courses within the LLM year.): Total of 11 credits

1. Introduction to International Human Rights Law (3 credits)
   Faculty coverage: Paolo Carozza

2. Public International Law (3 credits)
   Faculty coverage: Mary Ellen O’Connell (fall), Diane Desierto (spring)

3. A choice between either of the four elective courses below:
   a) Comparative Law, Comparative Constitutional Law, or Comparative Legal Traditions (3 credits)
      Faculty coverage: Michael Addo, Paolo Carozza, others within the London program. This course is listed in the NDLS Course Catalog as offered by the London Program. Paul Miller is also expert in private law theory and engages comparative approaches.
   b) Human Rights LLM Thesis (3 credits)
      Faculty Coverage: Could be team taught from the Graduate and International Programs, and supervised by the relevant NDLS faculty member closest to the preferred topic for the LLM Thesis.
c) **Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights** (3 credits)
   Faculty Coverage: Diane Desierto

d) **Civil Rights** (3 credits)
   Faculty Coverage: Dean Marcus Cole, Jennifer Mason McAward

e) **Jurisprudence: Foundations of Human Rights** (3 credits)
   Faculty Coverage: Sherif Girgis

4. **NDLS Graduate Seminar** (1 credit, not graded, credit or no credit course): draws all members of the graduate community together with featured lectures/talks by NDLS faculty or visiting faculty, as well as NDLS alumni, to discuss various strategies, proposals, experiences, developments, and recommendations on human rights practices, human rights fact-finding, human rights implementation and advocacy. It also gives some opportunity for Human Rights LLMs to present their papers or other human rights projects.
   Faculty Coverage: Could rotate among Graduate and International Programs faculty

*Students can also choose to additionally take other courses in Item No. 3 as elective courses, and not as part of the required courses total credits.*

B. **Elective Courses** (*will also include credits for participation in clinical offerings related to human rights. Elective courses will be offered depending on the availability of faculty coverage): 12 to 17 credits

From existing offerings in the NDLS Course Catalog:

1. Civil Rights
2. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
3. Regional Human Rights Protection Seminar
4. Comparative Law or Comparative Legal Traditions
5. Human Rights LLM Thesis
6. International Human Rights Research
7. Human Rights, Sustainability, and the Global Commons
8. Human Rights and the Global Economy
9. International and Comparative Labor Law
10. Alternative Dispute Resolution
11. International Dispute Resolution
12. Advanced Topics in Workplace Law
13. Bioethics and the Law
14. Biodiversity and the Law
15. Business and Human Rights
16. Catholic Social Thought and the Law
17. Community Development Clinic
18. Comparative Constitutional Law
19. Comparative Legal Traditions
20. Cybercrime Law/Cyber Crime Seminar
21. Economic Justice Clinic
22. Ethics and Law at End of Life
23. Environmental Law  
24. European Union Law  
25. Freedom of Religion/Freedom of Religion Seminar  
26. Freedom of Speech  
27. Gender Issues and International Law Seminar  
28. Health Care Issues in Canon Law  
29. Health Law  
30. Human Trafficking  
31. Immigration Law  
32. Inequality, Efficiency, and the Corporation  
33. Information Privacy Law  
34. International Arbitration (London program)  
35. International Criminal Law  
36. International Environmental Law  
37. International Human Rights Advocacy  
38. International Law and Children’s Rights  
39. International Law and the Use of Force  
40. Judicial Politics  
41. Judicial Process  
42. Introduction to the American Legal System  
43. Introduction to Canon Law  
44. Language and the Law  
45. Law and Cultural Heritage  
46. Law and Disabilities  
47. Law and Human Development in Practice  
48. Law and Morality in Contemporary Jurisprudence  
49. Law of Education  
50. Legal Remedies for Human Trafficking  
51. Morality and the Law  
52. Natural Resources Law  
53. Race and Policing  
54. Transnational Corporations and Human Rights  
55. Water Law  

C. **Other human rights courses that could be considered for addition in the future** (*also a possible consideration for future hiring decisions*)  
1. International Refugee and Migration Law  
2. International Environmental and Climate Change Law  
3. International Human Rights Adjudication (specific to judges or those on the judicial track)  
4. Human Rights Internship or Externship (*for discussion*)  
5. Natural Law and Human Rights (*for discussion, in keeping with the distinctiveness of the NDLS Human Rights LLM degree and mission).  
6. Technology and Human Rights  
7. International Disabilities and Health Law