This chapter looks at human rights, analysing the structure and politics of human rights in the twenty-first century. In particular, the chapter examines the influence of liberal internationalism on human rights and how this is shaped by the legacies of colonialism, slavery, apartheid, and engagements with sexual, religious, and racial differences. The chapter encourages questions about whether rights are universal instruments of emancipation, or whether the rights are more complex, contradictory, and contingent in their functioning. The chapter also sets out the dominant understandings of human rights as progressive, universal, and based on a common human subject. Human rights advocates sometimes differ on the strategies to be adopted to address violations; these can have material, normative, and structural consequences that are not always empowering. These competing positions are illustrated through two case studies: one on the Islamic veil bans in Europe and the second on LGBT human rights interventions.
31. Human rights

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