Abstract:
NGO Influence in the UN's Universal Peer Review Process to Strengthen Human Rights Norms
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The Universal Peer Review (UPR) is a relatively new mechanism of the United Nations Human Rights Council. This presentation reports on a continuing study examining the influence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as they participate in the UPR. The UPR subjects every state to a review of their human rights record, and as a major feature of the process, facilitates input from other states in the form of short recommendations. This is an important process for developing stronger human rights norms across the international community, as well as compelling tangible policy and practice improvements at the individual country level. While only national governments may officially make recommendations to a country, NGOs may participate in and inform the process by submitting written input that is compiled in summary documents. Examining the extent to which NGOs exert substantive influence in the recommendations being made has implications for the effectiveness and legitimacy of the UPR process as one of the UN's principal tools to promote human rights. The social research methods employed in this study involve identifying and coding recommendations suggested by NGOs; these NGO recommendations are then compared to actual recommendations made from one country to another. The research explores the degree to which NGO inspired recommendations are utilized and trends in how receiving countries respond to them (accept, reject, ignore). The results of this study will include the following points of analysis: the number of NGO recommendations picked up and officially made by states, the level of similarity between the NGO recommendations and the state recommendations, the types of human rights issues addressed, the level of specificity of recommendations, the regional distribution of states most/least likely to make NGO-inspired recommendations, and the propensity of states under review to accept NGO-inspired recommendations.