History and theory of human rights

The notion of human rights is relatively new in the moral and legal vocabulary of human beings. Yet human rights have become a critically important subject in contemporary political, legal, and moral discourses. In some ways, our understanding of human rights is still evolving, influenced by factors ranging from changes in local social norms, to internationally negotiated treaties, to reinterpretations of religious texts. Not surprisingly, there are many theories about the nature and justification of human rights. Research questions include:

• How did the idea of human rights emerge in history?
• What are the historically documented violations of human rights and why?
• What rights are properly called human rights?
• What are the philosophical, theological, and legal foundations of human rights?
• How should we adjudicate conflicting claims of various human rights?