

**Regulatory Harm Reduction Discourses in Contemporary International Drug Control:
*Evaluating the compatibility of decriminalization and legalization within a human rights- and
health-based framework***

An Abstract of Thesis by Courville, E. Sarah

The increasing development of a human rights discourse and analysis in global drug policy arenas has helped identify threats and bolster reforms addressing violations experienced by people who use drugs within the criminal justice system. However, the lack of broader structural consideration dedicated to the full realization of health and human rights, in the face of new drug trends accelerated by globalization, casts doubt on the commitments to human rights affirmed within the UN system since 2016. This thesis conducts a human rights-based analysis of a selection of documents within the UN system after the benchmark of UNGASS 2016, examining health, human rights, and harm reduction for people who use drugs beyond the constraints imposed by the overarching global prohibition of drugs, with specific considerations for the right to the highest attainable standard of health and the right to life. With these findings in mind, this thesis then turns to two foundational documents of self-organized groups of people who use drugs to identify divergence in conceptions of health, human rights, and harm reduction. This thesis demonstrates that self-organizations of people who use drugs on international and local levels have continually accounted for expansive interpretations of rights to health and life in activism and practice. This thesis recommends that a comprehensive human rights-based approach to drug policy must contain regard for the human rights to health and life beyond their violations within the criminal justice system, to include the violations enabled by the failed macro-structures of prohibition.