

Course Code: PCS 802

Course Title: Contemporary Peace and Conflict Studies (**Core**)

Credit Hours: 3

Course Objectives

This course explores the evolution of PCS from a normative, interdisciplinary pursuit into a pluralistic academic field shaped by global power shifts, complex conflict environments, and epistemological debates. Focusing on Human Security as a reorienting framework, the course analyzes how contemporary challenges—such as intra-state violence, radicalization, and non-traditional security—have reshaped the field’s boundaries, methodologies, and ontologies. It explores PCS (as a discipline) across key thematic and disciplinary intersections, including the shift from ‘old’ to ‘new’ wars, globalization and human rights, traditional and critical approaches to terrorism, and the rise of multipolarity in global politics. It also emphasizes post-conflict studies, critical peace studies, and post-liberal alternatives through an interdisciplinary lens. Special attention is given to alternative perspectives and the politics of knowledge production, equipping students to apply comparative, critical, and context-sensitive approaches to evolving peace and conflict landscapes.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- Critically evaluate the evolution of PCS within broader social science traditions, analyzing its development, disciplinary tensions, and transformation in response to changing conflict dynamics and epistemological debates.
- Analyze the transformation of warfare, violence, and peace processes, including the transition from ‘old’ to ‘new’ conflicts.
- Examine Human Security as a conceptual reorientation and assess its implications for PCS theory and practice.
- Assess the impact of globalization, identity politics, and human rights on contemporary conflict dynamics.
- Compare traditional and critical approaches to terrorism, radicalization, and political violence using interdisciplinary tools.
- Engage with critical peace studies and post-liberal alternatives

- Identify research-policy gaps and assess PCS’s potential to inform effective practice.
- Employ critical, comparative, and context-sensitive frameworks to analyze contemporary conflict and post-conflict transitions.

Course Contents

- Contemporary Peace and Conflict Studies: Understanding Interdisciplinary Challenges
 - The Discipline of Peace and Conflict Studies: Genealogy and Trajectories
 - Understanding the Trends in Peace and Conflict
 - Rethinking Peace and Conflict in the 21st Century: From Cold War to Multipolarity
- Human Security: Concept, Critique, and Disciplinary Implications
 - Human Security and the Reorientation of PCS
- From ‘Old’ to ‘New’ Conflicts and Terrorism
- Globalization, Conflicts, and Human Rights
- Traditional/Orthodox and Critical Terrorism Studies
 - Immunizing the Mind – Education and (Violent) Extremism
 - Understanding Radicalization and Terrorism: An Interdisciplinary Approach
- Post-conflict Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach
- Critical Peace Studies and Post-Liberal Alternatives
 - Decolonizing Peace (as a construct)
- Student presentations and reflections on:
 - Where is PCS headed?
 - What is ‘Sustainable Peace’ in Today’s World?
- Research-Policy Gaps in PCS: Knowledge, Practice, and Power

Core Focus & Conceptual Lens	In contrast, the revised course adopts a more reflexive, critical, and interdisciplinary lens. It recognizes PCS not simply as a normative project but as a contested academic field shaped by global power shifts, complex conflict environments, and knowledge politics. The revised objectives emphasize how
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	global transformations have reshaped the boundaries, methodologies, and ontologies of the discipline. This shift enables students to critically engage with both the content and underlying frameworks of PCS. The course centers on Human Security as a reorienting concept and introduces critical peace studies, post-liberal peacebuilding, and decolonial approaches (not covered in the earlier course outline).
Thematic structure	The revised outline follows a logically progressive structure that moves from foundational genealogies of PCS to advanced topics such as radicalization, terrorism, knowledge production, and post-conflict transitions. This makes the course more coherent and aligned with graduate-level expectations.
Outcome	The revised outline presents multiple, specific learning outcomes that reflect higher-order cognitive skills such as critical evaluation, comparative analysis, interdisciplinary synthesis, and practical policy assessment. Moreover, the revised course gives special attention to research-policy gaps, highlighting the disconnection between academic knowledge and practice.

Nature of Assessment

Nature of Examination	Duration	Frequency	Weighting (%age)
End semester Exam	3 hours	1	30 – 50
Mid Term	2 hours	1	15 – 25
Quizzes	-	Minimum: 3	05 – 15

Class Participation	-	-	0 – 5*
Assignments / Project(s) / Case Studies	Own time	-	10 – 40

*Shall be allocated only if there are no case studies.

Reading Material

- Alger, C. F. (2007). Peace studies as a transdisciplinary project. In C. Weibel & J. Galtung (Eds.), *Handbook of peace and conflict studies* (pp. 299–318). Routledge.
- Ali, A. C., Yimam, S. M., Semmann, M., Ayele, A. A., & Biemann, C. (2024). *Silenced voices: Exploring social media polarization and women’s participation in peacebuilding in Ethiopia*. Preprint.
- Ari, B. (2023). Peace negotiations in civil conflicts: A new dataset. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 67(1).
- Arvis, L. (2009). The spaces and faces of critical terrorism studies. *Security Dialogue*, 40(1), 5–27.
- Belloni, R. (2007). The rise and fall of liberal peacebuilding. In M. Pugh, N. Cooper, & M. Turner (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on the liberal peace* (pp. 31–45). Routledge.
- Brown, K., & Gagnon, K. (2004). Conclusion: Towards a field of post-conflict studies. In K. Gagnon et al. (Eds.), *Post-conflict studies: An interdisciplinary approach* (Chap. 12). Routledge.
- Daar, S. (2017). *Disciplinary evolution in peace and conflict studies: An overview*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Gagnon, K., Brown, K., & Hozic, A. (2004). Introduction. In K. Gagnon et al. (Eds.), *Post-conflict studies: An interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 1–16). Routledge.
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191.

- Galtung, J., & Webel, C. (2007). Peace and conflict studies: Looking back, looking forward. In C. Webel & J. Galtung (Eds.), *Handbook of peace and conflict studies* (pp. 397–400). Routledge.
- Gambetta, D., & Hertog, S. (2009). Why are there so many engineers among Islamic radicals? *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 50(2), 201–230.
- Gasper, D. (2005). Securing humanity: Situating ‘human security’ as concept and discourse. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(2), 221–245.
- Ginty, R. M., & Richmond, O. (Eds.). (2016). *The Palgrave handbook of disciplinary and regional approaches to peace*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gleditsch, K. S., Metternich, N. W., & Ruggeri, A. (2014). Data and progress in peace and conflict research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(2), 301–314.
- Hemmingby, C., & Bjørge, T. (2018). Terrorist target selection: The case of Anders Behring Breivik. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 12(6), 164–176.
- Hoffman, P. (n.d.). Human rights and war on terrorism.
- Horgan, J., & Boyle, M. J. (2008). A case against ‘critical terrorism studies’. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 1(1), 51–64.
- Hozic, A. (2003). The origins of ‘post-conflict’. In K. Gagnon et al. (Eds.), *Post-conflict studies: An interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 19–38). Routledge.
- Jarvis, L. (2023). Critical terrorism studies and numbers: engagements, openings, and future research. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 16(4), 720–743.
- Jarvis, L., & Lister, M. (2024). Critical security research and the war on terror: from the margins to the mainstream? *European Journal of International Security*, 10(S1), 150–169.
- Krause, K., Jasutis, G., Vezon, K., & Mikova, R. (2025). Human security provisions in ceasefire and peace agreements: Case studies from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

- Kumar, R. (2014). From 'old' to 'new' terrorism: History, current trends and future prospects. In D. Collins (Ed.), *The handbook of security* (2nd ed., pp. 159–181). Routledge.
- Matyók, T. (2011). Peace and conflict studies: Reclaiming our roots and designing our way forward. In T. Matyók (Ed.), *Critical issues in peace and conflict studies* (Chap. 15, pp. 293–306). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Pantucci, R. (2011). What have we learned about lone wolves from Anders Behring Breivik? *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 5(5/6), 27–42.
- Paris, R. (2001). Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air? *International Security*, 26(2), 87–102.
- Pettersson, T., Högladh, S., & Öberg, M. (2019). Organized violence, 1989–2018 and peace agreements. *Journal of Peace Research*, 56(4), 589–603.
- Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., & Miall, H. (2016). *Contemporary conflict resolution: The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts* (4th ed.). Polity Press.
- Richmond, O. P. (2011). *A post-liberal peace*. Routledge.
- Rose, M. (n.d.). How can education reform contribute to neutralising violent extremism? British Council.
- van Dorp, M., Martin, M., & Bojicic-Dzelilovic, V. (2025). Assessing peace and social impacts through local human security business partnerships. *Business Horizons*.
- START. (n.d.). Momin Khawaja: Mechanisms of radicalization. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START).
- Webel, C., & Galtung, J. (2007). Peace and conflict studies: Looking back, looking forward. In C. Webel & J. Galtung (Eds.), *Handbook of peace and conflict studies* (pp. 397–400). Routledge.
- Wilner, A. S., & Dubouloz, C. J. (2010). Homegrown terrorism and transformative learning: An interdisciplinary approach to understanding radicalization. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 22(1), 33–51.

Additional Readings

- Acharya, A. (2014). *The end of the American world order*. Polity Press.
- Snarr, N. M. (2008). The challenges of human rights. In M. T. Snarr & D. M. Snarr (Eds.), *Introducing global issues* (4th ed., pp. 57–76). Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- SIPRI. (2007). Organizational forms of terrorism at the local and regional levels. In *Terrorism in asymmetrical conflict: Ideological and structural aspects* (SIPRI Research Report No. 23, pp. 100–126). Oxford University Press.
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- Paris, R. (2004). *At war's end: Building peace after civil conflict*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mac Ginty, R. (2014). *Everyday peace: How so-called ordinary people can disrupt violent conflict*. Oxford University Press.
- Johns, L. (2014). A critical evaluation of the concept of human security. *E-International Relations*.
- Orsini, A. (2023). What everybody should know about radicalization and the DRIA model. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*.
- Gunning, J. (2007). A case for critical terrorism studies? *Government and Opposition*, 42(3), 363–393.
- Tadjbakhsh, S. (2011). *Rethinking the liberal peace: External models and local alternatives*. Routledge.
- Finden, A. E., Yebra-López, C., Ike, T., Gaudino, U., & Oando, S. (Eds.). (2024). *Methodologies in Critical Terrorism Studies: Gaps and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Routledge.