Violence, conflict and the prospect for peace

MA Seminar
HWS 2017
10 ECTS

Monday 12:00 – 13:30, Room: A 102 Seminarraum

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This seminar focuses on the outbreak and the dynamics of violent conflict as well as ways to end wars and sustain peace and stability. We will start by looking at the concepts of "peace" and "war" and examine empirical trends. Is the world more violent or more peaceful than in the past? How can we measure peace and conflict? In the following we will take a closer look at the relationship between religion and war, as well as economics and war. Does religion cause war? Or are economic factors more important for explaining why people fight? We will devote sessions to study terrorism as an alternative way of fighting (as opposed to conventional and civil wars), migration as a source of peace and conflict and the various forms of violence used by different militant groups. Why are some groups so much more violent than others? What is the rational behind using different forms of violence? Finally we will have a look at empirical evidence concerning ways to end conflicts and sustain peace. Are peace missions for example an effective tool to make and sustain peace? Does development assistance foster development? The seminar is designed to provide MA-students with an in-depth insight into peace and conflict research. We will thereby answer (if possible) practical questions with scientific examinations and evidence.
Overview

| Session 1. 04.09. | General Intro into the Course |
| Session 2. 11.09. | Peace and War |
| Session 3. 18.09. | The Empirical Side of Peace and War |
| Session 4. 25.09. | Causes of Peace and War |
| Session 5. 02.10. | Religion, War and Peace |
| Session 6. 09.10. | Economics, War and Peace |
| Session 7. 16.10. | The Other Way to Fight: Terrorism |
| Session 8. 23.10. | Violence |
| Session 9. 30.10. | Refugees and Conflict |
| Session 10. 06.11. | Research week 1 // one-to-one |
| Session 11. 13.11. | Research week 2 // one-to-one |
| Session 12. 20.11. | Strategies for peace: Peace Missions |
| Session 13. 27.11. | Strategies for peace: Democratization and Development Assistance |
| Session 14. 04.12. | Make-up (in case needed) |

Course Requirements & Assessment:

- Regular attendance & active class participation
- Class presentation & leading the class discussion. Every student is obliged to discuss his or her presentation one week in advance during my office ours with me.
- A research paper, DEADLINE: January 22th (12 am). The paper will be 10-15 pages.
- Please hand in an electronic copy AND a printed version. The printed copy must be submitted to my secretary (not my colleagues) on the due date. Make sure to include an anti-plagiarism statement.
Presentation: Your presentation should consist of several components. How you arrange them is up to you.

- A general introduction into the topic. Be creative in your way of communication. No boring presentations are acceptable.
- An overview of the existing literature / types of studies.
- The presentation of at least one academic study including method, data and results (plus a critique of the former) in more detail.
- A group work. The group work may consist of several smaller parts or one large one. I highly encourage you to integrate questions, small group works (brainstorming / collecting ideas...) into your presentation.
- A wrap a slide → In a nutshell, what were the most important points in your presentation.

In total, your presentation (including the group work) should take up ca. 1 hour – depending on the discussions we are having it might take up a little more time.

Detailed Course Plan & Readings

Session 1: General Intro into Course

Session 2: Introduction to Peace and Conflict Research

Essential Readings

Check out:
- UCDP Datasets
- Global Peace Index

Session 3: The empirical side of peace and war

Leading questions: How dangerous is our world today? How can we measure peace and war? What are the long-term and short-term trends?

Essential Readings

Check out also:
- To watch: Steven Pinker on The Decline of Violence & "The Better Angels of Our Nature. Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c__XWMsz4aU
Session 4: Causes of Peace and War

Leading questions: What is peace? Which factors contribute to peace? Are there certain features that “peaceful societies” share?

Essential Readings

Check out:
- UAB College of Arts and Science, Department of Antropology project on “Peaceful Societies”: https://cas.uab.edu/peacefulsocieties/societies/

Supplementary Readings

Session 5: Religion, War and Peace

Leading questions: How important is religion in today’s societies? What does this mean for conflict and war? Which role does religion play in civil wars?

Essential Readings

Supplementary Reading

Session 6: Economics, War and Peace

Leading questions: How important are economic factors for the outbreak and the dynamic of (civil) wars? How important are the individual factors poverty, resources and inequality?

Essential Readings

4 | Peace and Violent Conflict, HWS 2017
• Ross, Michael. 2006. ‘A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War.’ Annual Review of Political Science 9: 265-300. (focus on impact of natural resources on civil war)

Supplementary Reading


Session 7: The other way to fight: Terrorism

Leading questions: Which are the features and strategies of terrorism? Which are the causes of terrorism? Is terrorism an effective strategy?

Essential Readings


Supplementary Readings


Session 8: Violence

Leading questions: What is one-sided violence? What is the empirical evidence for one-sided violence? Which are the causes of one-sided violence? Can one-sided violence be stopped / prevented?

Essential Readings


Supplementary Readings

Session 9: Refugees and Conflict

Leading questions: In how far is conflict a cause for migration? In which way is migration a cause for conflict?

Essential Readings

Supplementary Readings

Session 10: Research Week 1
Session 11: Research Week 2

The two research weeks are for you to think about and decide upon a research topic and a research question for your final paper. Please make sure to make an appointment with me for a one-to-one talk about your concrete ideas, methods and data.

Session 12: Strategies for peace: Peace Missions

Leading questions: What is the rational behind peace missions? Do they work? What does the empirical evidence say?

Essential Readings

Supplementary Readings

**Session 13: Strategies for peace: Democratization and Development Assistance**

**Leading questions:** Does democratization cause peace? Does / how does development assistance work? What does the empirical evidence say?

**Essential Readings**

**Supplementary Readings**

**Session 14: Make up (in case needed)**