

Amideast Education Abroad Programs

POLS 335: Peace and Conflict Resolution: Opportunities and Challenges in the Middle East and North Africa Syllabus

Program Location: Rabat, Morocco

Credit Hours: 3 Credit Hours

Term and Year:

Course Description:

The course will introduce the students to the interdisciplinary field of peace and conflict resolution, helping them to acquire in the process a set of methods and aptitudes enabling them to work with others in order to mitigate the destructive effects of conflicts and build a realistic process for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence between disputants. The overall aim, therefore, is to develop intellectual and practical mechanisms to work with communities and different parties across the world, and especially in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region, to de-escalate and ultimately resolve ongoing tensions for more peaceful, cooperative, and equitable environments.

The “self-help” system and attending security dilemma on the one hand, and the need to interact and cooperate in a globalized scene on the other; have led states to periodic flare-ups of violence and to the crystallization of various intra- and inter-state conflicts. The field of conflict resolution has, over the last fifty years, produced a tool kit of methods of negotiation and mediation for both the practitioners in the field and the disputants around the world which can be utilized to de-escalate, manage, or transform, if not definitely resolve, some of the most pernicious conflicts of the last century.

The course will start by introducing students to the basic concepts and building blocks of international relations and how these time-honored concepts impact the dynamics of current conflicts. It will then move to the theories and practice of conflict resolution and end with the application of these theories and approaches to some ongoing conflicts worldwide, with particular emphasis on MENA region.

The course will also endeavor to bring to the surface the various feelings, emotions, and value systems of the people surrounding specific conflicts. In particular, it will examine how these people are often embroiled and entangled in questions of identity, culture, history, religion, and perceptions of worth and victimization. This will be evidenced by the simulation exercises by students of conflict negotiation and mediation involving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Western Sahara dispute, where students are called upon to utilize the acquired insights of conflict resolution theories to move towards mutually satisfying resolutions in light of the shifting realities of the current international scene.

Aims and Objectives of the Course:

The course has a three-interlocked tier structure, first walking the students through the complex realities of international relations (with its major building blocks, such as the anarchic system, the balance of power, security, interdependence, and cooperation). The knowledge and insights acquired will enable student to, in a second step, fully integrate the need for and the aims of the discipline of conflict resolution, tracking and analyzing the factors which have led some of the region's conflicts to become intractable, with huge costs to the communities and the potential to seriously threaten world peace. In a third step, and to gain a lasting appreciation of the complexities and dynamic nature of conflicts, the students will be immersed in the tasks of understanding and side-by-side construction of creative scenarios to be applied to the resolution of some of the most enduring conflicts in the Middle East, made more problematic considering the current turbulent realities of the region.

Learning Outcomes:

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Discuss the theories, principles and tools used in the field of peace and conflict resolution.
- Acquire an understanding of the nature, dynamics, and intractability aspects of contemporary world conflicts.
- Develop the skills necessary to confront the challenges of conflict and peace building situations across cultures, with a clear focus on the MENA region.
- Develop an appreciation of cultural diversity through awareness of the most important cultural systems in the world today (mainly, Islamic and Arabic ethos in relation to powerful Western norms).
- Understand the importance of the context and the logistics of mediating conflict resolution on the ground (awareness of, among other things, the importance of impartiality, the right choice of time and place and of the appropriate communication strategies).

Knowledge:

This course is designed to assist students to acquire and demonstrate knowledge about:

- The current international relations scene, from the post-war realities, through the cold war era, into the turbulent post 9/11 period.
- The main theories of international relations.
- The important role played by international institutions and transnational organizations in the resolution of conflicts, but also their limitations concerning the effective and lasting contribution to world peace.
- The main theories of peace and conflict resolution.
- The appropriate use of the tools and techniques of negotiation and mediation.
- The role played by religion, both as a factor of conflict escalation, and an important tool in the hands of religious leaders to positively influence the conflicting parties.
- The history, development, and present dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as knowledge about other conflicts in the MENA region (Western Sahara, balance of power tensions in the Middle East, etc.)

Skills:

This course is designed to assist students in acquiring or enhancing the following skills:

- Using various negotiating techniques and strategies to deal with, manage, and attempt to resolve some of the most intractable conflicts of our time (exemplified by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict);
- Developing critical thinking and listening.
- Having empathy with the other side; and while negotiating, learning to be hard on the issues rather than on the people.
- Using the appropriate mediation approach to any given conflict situation.
- Collaborating with team members to plead for a common cause and writing a final conflict resolution report.
- Dealing with current political, economic, cultural, and social phenomena from different perspectives.
- Communicating effectively and constructively across cultures.

Attitudes:

This course is designed to encourage development of the following attitudes:

- Distancing oneself from social stereotypes.
- Transitioning from holistic to differentiated approaches.
- Making sense of social phenomenon.
- Cultural relativism as opposed to essentialist approaches.

Required Readings:

1. Nye, Joseph S. *Understanding International Conflicts. An Introduction to Theory and History* (9th edition, Pearson 2014)
2. Wallensteen, Peter. *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace, and the Global System* (Sage, 2002)
3. Sandole, Dennis J. D., and Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste and Jessica Senehi, eds. *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (Routledge, 2009)
4. Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation, Reconstruction in Divided Societies* (United States Institute of Peace, 1997)
5. Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to YES: Negotiating an Agreement Without Giving In* (Random, 2nd edition)
6. William Zartman, *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2008)
7. Newman, Edward and Oliver Richmond, eds. *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers during Conflict Resolution* (United Nations University Press, 2004)
8. Huntington, Samuel P., "The Clash of Civilizations?" in *Foreign Affairs*, 72:3 (1993: Summer)
9. Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2004)
10. Barker, Paul J., ed. *The Clash of Civilizations Twenty Years On* (e-International Relations, UK, October 2013)
11. Broadhead, Philip and Damien Keown, eds. *Can Faiths Make Peace? Holy Wars and the Resolution of Religious Conflicts* (I.B.Tauris, 2007)
12. Harms, Gregory, and Todd M. Ferry. *The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Basic Introduction* (Pluto Press, 2005)
13. Josh Rushing, *Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World*. Palgrave, 2007.

Assessment Overview:

Description	Weight	Due Date
Engagement	10%	Continuous
Reading Summaries	10%	Continuous
In Class Individual Presentations	15%	Varies by student's assignment
Midterm Exam	25%	Week 7
Research Paper	20%	Week 13
Final Exam: Simulation of a conflict resolution session	20%	Week 15

Attendance and Engagement:

Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes and come prepared to participate fully in class activities. Students are further expected to be on time for all classes. Arriving late for class is disrespectful of both the instructor and fellow students.

For more on the attendance policy, please see the policy posted in the online course and on the Absence request site on the Student Portal.

Reading Summaries:

To prepare for more informed class discussion, students are required to do short two-page summaries of some designated reading material, either as a narrative or in bullet point format. The reading summaries are worth 10% of the final grade for the course.

In-Class Presentations:

Each student is required to make an in-class presentation on one of the assigned readings or a related research topic. Presenters will be informed when to use PowerPoint for their presentations, which could range in length between 20 and 25 minutes. The presenter's role is not limited to reading (the slides) to the class; rather he or she should attempt to be spontaneous and offer insightful interpretations and appropriate linkages to the overall courses' themes and/or the week's material. The in-class presentation is worth 10% of the final grade for the course. Presentations will be assigned on Week 2.

Midterm Exam:

There will be an in-class midterm exam on Week 7. It will cover the material up to that point in the semester. The midterm exam is worth 25% of the final grade for the course.

Research Paper:

Each student is required to write a research paper of at least 3,000 words on a topic approved by the instructor that is relevant to the topics covered in the course. The research paper is worth 20% of the final grade for the course. Due on Week 13.

Final Exam, in the form of a Simulation of a Conflict Case:

Main Case Study: The Israeli Palestinian Conflict on Week 15.

Early in the semester (Week 3), each student will choose a role (negotiator, third party, mediator, etc.) in the conflict under study and sit accordingly around the negotiation table on the last week of class in an exercise destined to simulate a real conflict resolution meeting. Students are therefore required to identify the relevant actors and stakeholders involved, be able to trace the origins, development, dynamics, and transformation of this conflict. From the many approaches available to the practitioner of conflict resolution, and considering the theories, principles and strategies discussed in class, the students will choose the most effective method of bringing the conflict to a mutually acceptable resolution. The conflict simulation session will culminate in the collective drafting of a report containing the appropriate resolutions and recommendations. The efficient discharge of the role of each participant, as she/he performs individually and as a member of a group, is going to be attentively observed and evaluated by the instructor. The Simulation Exercise/Final is worth 20% of the final grade for the course.

Course Schedule:

Week	Topic(s) Covered and Learning Outcome(s) Addressed	Readings/Work Due	Exams, Trips, and Holidays
	<i>Orientation Week</i>		
Week 1	Session 1: Introducing the course - To give a general overview of the course, clarify the expectations, and set the dates of the assignments and exams. Session 2: Introducing the discipline of conflict resolution - Students will be introduced to the general contours and concerns of the discipline of conflict resolution	Start reading next week's assignments	
Week 2	Session 1: The Current State of International Relations: The Traditions of Realism and Liberalism - Students will learn about the main building blocks of international relations, with appropriate linkages to the present situation and the implications on ongoing conflict zones and current conflict resolution practice Session 2: Focus: The League of Nations and the Attempt to End All Wars - The Focus section will elucidate the limitations of collective security on the one hand, and the constant efforts by states to remedy to collective threats on the other.	Nye, Joseph S. Understanding International Conflicts. An Introduction to Theory and History (9th edition, Pearson 2014) pp. 7-42; and 119-129.	Class Presentations will be assigned
Week 3	No Class: Holiday		

Week 4	<p>Regional World Conflicts: Sovereignty, nationalism, Intervention. The doctrines of "Just War," "Preemptive War," and "Preventive War")</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will gain an appreciation of the strength of the concepts of sovereignty and nationalism. They will also learn that intervention is both a necessary and problematic tool for the world community. <p>Focus: The United Nations and the Suez Canal Crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will also learn about the important role played by the UN in resolving conflict (the Suez Canal episode is one of the first UN success stories) 	<p>Nye, Joseph S. Understanding International Conflicts. An Introduction to Theory and History (9th edition, Pearson 2014) pp. 201-264.</p> <p>Wallensteen, Peter. Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace, and the Global System (Sage, 2002); Chapter 9, "The United Nations in Conflict Resolution," pp. 231-248</p>	
Week 5	No Class		Excursion: Zaouiat Ahensal
Week 6	<p>Session 1: Post-Cold War Conflicts according to the Clash of Civilizations Theory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn about the central arguments of the Clash of Civilization Theory, as it still informs the debate around some important present-day conflicts. They will also learn that the theory has been critiqued. <p>Session 2: What are Intractable Conflicts? Conflict Settlement, Conflict Resolution, and Conflict Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn some of the most important theories and approaches of peace conflict resolution. 	<p>Huntington, Samuel P., The Clash of Civilizations? Foreign Affairs, 72:3 (1993: Summer) pp.22-49</p> <p>Murshed, Syed Mansoob, "The Crescent and the Cross," in The Clash of Civilizations Twenty Years On. Edited by J. Paul Barker (e-International Relations, UK, October 2013), pp. 20-27.</p> <p>Wallensteen, Peter. Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace, and the Global System (Sage, 2002). Chapters 1, 2, 3.</p>	
Week 7	<p>Session 1: Introducing the History and Development of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn about the history and dynamics of the seemingly intractable conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis. <p>Session 2: Mid-Term Exam</p>	<p>Harms, Gregory and Todd M. Ferry. The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Basic Introduction (Pluto Press, 2005), pp. 65-193. (Excerpts)</p>	Midterm Exam
Week 8	No Class: Fall Break		

Week 9	<p>Introducing the “Western Sahara” Dispute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will gain a deeper understanding of the Western Sahara dispute, and of the ongoing efforts to put this conflict on the path of resolution 	Western Sahara, The Middle East Institute Viewpoints, Vol. 6; 2008	In-class viewing and discussion of Al Jazeera piece, “Western Sahara,” from the Program, Inside Stories, Al Jazeera English
Week 10	<p>Negotiation theory: Interests, Positions, Needs, and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn about the different techniques of negotiation, generally; as well as in relation to international conflicts. 	<p>Roger Fisher and William Ury, Getting to YES: Negotiating an Agreement Without Giving In (Random, 2nd edition). A quick read, covering Weeks 10 and 12.</p> <p>William Zartman, Negotiation and Conflict Management Essays on Theory and Practice (Routledge, 2008), pp. 153-173</p>	<p>For the following week, watch the BBC/PBS documentary, “Israel and the Arabs: Elusive Peace” (October 2005). Length: 3 hours.</p> <p><i>The viewing will take place outside class.</i></p>
Week 11	<p>The Core Issues of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jerusalem 2. Refugees 3. Settlements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn to bring break down conflicts to better manage them. Additionally, they will gain an appreciation of the difficulty of negotiating around questions of value (religion and identity). <p>The Middle East Peace Process and the Difficult Negotiations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through a discussion of the BBC/PBS documentary, “Israel and the Arabs: Elusive Peace” (October 2005), the students will learn about the peace process since the Oslo Accords, and in particular the 2000 Camp David talks, and getting an appreciation of why negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis are difficult. 	<p>Wilkes, George R., “Religious Attitudes to the Middle East Peace Process,” pp. 17-26; in Can Faiths Make Peace? Holy Wars and the Resolution of Religious Conflicts. Editors, Philip Broadhead and Damien Keown (I.B.Tauris, 2007)</p> <p>Magnus Ranstorp, “The Israeli-Palestinian peace process: The Strategic Art of Deception,” pp. 242-261; in Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers during Conflict Resolution, Edited by Edward Newman, and Oliver Richmond (United Nations University Press, 2004)</p> <p>Wallensteen, Peter. Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System (Sage, 2002); in particular, Section 8.3, “Major Powers and Conflict Complexes” pp. 252-262</p>	
Week 12	No Class		Excursion: Fez

<p>Week 13</p>	<p>Session 1: Reconciliation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn about the process of reconciliation: a crucial phase that follows the sudden resolution of enduring conflicts. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions play an important role in the speed of recovery of the societies long subjected to injustices and violence. Students will gain useful insights from meeting the people behind these efforts, here the Moroccan IER. <p>Session 2: Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding in Zones of Conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn that peacekeeping and peacebuilding are fundamental components of conflict resolution and to prevent sliding back to the previous state of conflict. The positive role of the UN will be highlighted, as well as the challenges facing peacekeeping missions throughout the globe. 	<p>Lederach, John Paul. Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation, Reconstruction in Divided Societies (Unites States Institute of Peace, 1997), pp. 23-35</p> <p>Roland Paris, At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 13-54; 97-111</p> <p>Wallenstein, Peter. Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System (Sage, 2002); Chapter 9, "The United Nations in Conflict Resolution," pp. 252-262</p>	<p>Research Paper Due</p> <p>Outside-class viewing: For the following session, watch the documentary, Control Room (2004). <i>(Only excerpts will be shown in class)</i></p>
<p>Week 14</p>	<p>Session 1: Arab and Western Media systems and the Potential for Escalation or De-escalation of the Conflicts in the Middle East: Coverage of the Gulf War as Example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will discuss the documentary, Control Room, (2004), focusing on Arab Media (Al Jazeera) and Western media, represented by Western journalists in the Cent Com Communication Center during the first months of the 2003 Gulf War. The students will learn about the roles, interests and positions of media and media professionals in either fanning the flames of existing geopolitical and cultural conflicts or advancing peace agendas. <p>Session 2: Mediation of International Conflicts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn about types of mediation, how to conduct mediation, and when to bring conflicts to the mediation. 	<p>Josh Rushing, Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World. Palgrave, 2007. Chapter 5.</p> <p>Andrew Woolford, and R. S. Ratner, "Mediation Frames/Justice Games" pp.315-327; and Jacob Bercovitch, "Mediation and international Conflict Resolution: Analyzing Structure and Behavior," pp. 339-353; in Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. Edited by Dennis J. D. Sandole, Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste and Jessica Senehi (Routledge, 2009)</p>	

Week 15	<p>Final Exam: The exam will take the form of a simulation of a negotiation and resolution session of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and —if the students number allows it— of the Western Sahara dispute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will be observed (and graded on their individual performance and group interaction) as they appreciate and react to the complexity and intensity of conflict resolution meetings, and, through empathy, critical listening, and win-win logic, move forward with mutually acceptable resolutions of the conflict phase.
Week 16	Reflection Week