

Course Title	LAI305 Conflict and Peace Studies		Instructor(s)	Rui Saraiva
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Class Style	Lecture		Office Hours	TBA
Track	Global liberal arts		Mode of Instruction	Single
Credits	2		Allocated Year	3 rd year, Fall
Active Learning	2.3. Presentations, 4.1. Interactive lectures, 4.3. Free discussions, 4.4. Case studies, 4.8. Informal debates, 4.9. Group work on questions, 4.10. Think-pair-share and Think-group-share.		Compulsory or Elective	Elective
Course Overview	<p>This course applies theoretical and analytical frameworks to the systematic examination of conflict and peace. Students address foundational questions: What constitutes conflict? What conditions enable violence? What does peace mean beyond the absence of war? The course employs classical conflict analysis frameworks alongside Galtung's structural violence and positive/negative peace typology to examine empirical evidence. The first half develops frameworks for understanding conflict through structured case study methodology, identifying actors, interests, capabilities, and causal mechanisms. The second half examines peace as a spectrum from negative peace (absence of direct violence) to positive peace (presence of resilience, freedom, effective institutions, and structural justice). A central premise is that peacebuilding emerges within complex systems rather than through external imposition.</p>			
Course Objectives	<p>Upon completion of this course, students will analyze conflicts through structured frameworks identifying root causes, triggers, and escalation dynamics, while distinguishing empirical claims from normative judgments. Students will apply Galtung's peace typology using measurable indicators and construct evidence-based arguments synthesizing quantitative data, primary sources, and logical reasoning. They will critique fallacies in public discourse about war and peace, including deterministic and monocausal explanations. Students develop capacities to design comprehensive conflict analyses, evaluate peacebuilding interventions through empirical examination of success rates and contextual variables, and question assumptions about whether peace can be externally engineered or must emerge endogenously.</p>			
Prerequisite				
Course Schedule	No	Contents	Homework	
	1	What Is Conflict? Examining conflict's definition from the ground up. Is conflict inherently problematic? What distinguishes competition from conflict from violence? Examination of Thucydides' framework of fear, honor, and interest as primal motivators.	Can you identify a conflict in your own life where rational interests clashed but violence did not occur? What prevented escalation?	
	2	The Logic of Violence—When Does Conflict Become War? Examining the threshold between non-violent and violent conflict. Introduction to interstate and intrastate conflicts, extrastate and non state armed conflicts, and one-sided violence. Discussion of commitment problems, information asymmetries, and indivisibility issues.	Preparatory readings and assignments.	

3	Data and Evidence in Conflict Studies. Introduction to conflict databases. How do we count wars? What qualifies as battle deaths? Examining the reduction in interstate war versus persistence of civil wars. Critical assessment: What biases exist in conflict data collection?	Workshop Component: Students examine raw armed conflict datasets and identify patterns and limitations. Students are encouraged to use AI tools to assist with data collection, pattern recognition, and visualization, but must critically evaluate AI outputs and verify findings against primary sources.
4	Workshop—How to Conduct Conflict Analysis. Introduction to structured conflict analysis methodology. Students learn the analytical framework: (1) Historical context, (2) Actor mapping, (3) Grievance and interest identification, (4) Trigger events, (5) Escalation dynamics, (6) External interventions, (7) Outcomes and unresolved issues. Hands-on practice applying framework components to sample cases.	Students select their case study for the midterm examination and begin preliminary research. Students may use AI tools to help identify relevant sources, collect background data, and organize information, but the analytical framework and interpretations must be their own.
5	Workshop—Mapping Actors and Interests. Hands-on workshop where students begin mapping actors in their chosen case studies. Who are the primary combatants? Secondary actors? External powers? What are stated versus revealed preferences? Students present preliminary findings for peer critique.	Students bring actor maps and interest analysis for workshop discussion. Students may use AI tools to help gather information on actors and their stated positions, but must verify information through multiple academic sources.
6	Workshop—Root Causes, Triggers, and Escalation Dynamics. Students apply the complete analytical framework to their case studies, identifying root causes (structural conditions), proximate triggers (immediate events), and escalation dynamics (why violence intensified or de-escalated).	Students refine complete conflict analysis drafts incorporating feedback.
7	Midterm Review and Assessment	Students present analyses of their case studies covering actor identification, interest mapping, and initial hypotheses about conflict causation.
8	Negative Peace—The Absence of Direct Violence. Conceptual examination of negative peace. Is preventing war sufficient? When does negative peace become sustainable versus merely delaying violence?	Find an example of a contemporary "negative peace" and assess its stability using available data.
9	Positive Peace—The Presence of Justice. Critical examination of positive peace theory. What	Does Japan exemplify positive peace? Defend your answer with specific evidence.

	constitutes "justice"? Whose definition? Examination of the Institute for Economics and Peace's Positive Peace Index. Can we measure peace and justice empirically? Can external actors impose peace, or must it emerge from within?	
10	Workshop—Analyzing Negative and Positive Peace I. Hands-on workshop where students select and analyze one contemporary case that exemplifies either negative or positive peace. Introduction to analytical frameworks: SIPRI violence-to-peace spectrum, IEP Positive Peace Index, and Galtung's typology. Students begin positioning their cases and identifying factors that maintain current peace conditions.	Students may use AI tools to gather data on peace indicators, economic statistics, governance metrics, and conflict incidents, but must critically evaluate sources and explain their analytical reasoning.
11	Workshop—Analyzing Negative and Positive Peace II. Students continue developing their peace case analyses, focusing on measuring peace indicators empirically. What evidence supports classification as negative versus positive peace? What structural conditions maintain stability or enable movement toward greater peace? Workshop includes comparative analysis across student cases.	Refine peace analysis incorporating measurable indicators and addressing measurement limitations.
12	Workshop—Analyzing Negative and Positive Peace III. Deep examination of what enables or constrains movement from negative to positive peace. Can societies transition from mere absence of violence to structural justice? What role do internal versus external factors play? Students examine trajectories and turning points in their selected cases.	Students present comparative findings on factors enabling or hindering peace transitions. Discussion of whether positive peace can be externally engineered or must emerge endogenously.
13	Workshop—Analyzing Negative and Positive Peace IV. Final workshop synthesizing findings across all student cases. What patterns emerge? Under what conditions does negative peace become sustainable? What structural conditions enable positive peace?	Students practice case study analysis. Structured comparison across cases to identify general versus context-specific insights.
14	Peacekeeping, Mediation, Peacebuilding, and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) —What Can Outsiders Actually Do? What types of peace interventions work and under what conditions? Why do so many interventions fail? Discussion of standard versus adaptive approaches.	Preparatory readings and assignments.

	15	Final Case Presentations and Course Synthesis	Students use course concepts and analytical frameworks to analyze a positive peace scenario.
Grading	Participation (30%) Assignments and presentations (20%) Midterm Examination (25%) Final Examination (25%)		
Textbooks	Students will be asked to read sections of the books listed in the reference section. Other relevant reading materials will be provided by the instructor.		
References	Chandler, D. (2014). <i>Resilience: The governance of complexity</i> . Routledge. de Coning, C., Muto, A., & Saraiva, R. (Eds.). (2022). <i>Adaptive mediation and conflict resolution: Peacemaking in Colombia, Mozambique, the Philippines, and Syria</i> . Palgrave Macmillan. de Coning, C., Saraiva, R., & Muto, A. (Eds.). (2023). <i>Adaptive peacebuilding: A new approach to sustaining peace in the 21st century</i> . Palgrave Macmillan. de Coning, C., Saraiva, R., & Muto, A. (Eds.). (2025). <i>Resilience, peacebuilding, and preventing violent extremism: A complex systems perspective on sustaining peace</i> . Routledge. Fearon, J. D. (1995). Rationalist explanations for war. <i>International Organization</i> , 49 (3), 379-414. Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> , 6 (3), 167-191. Institute for Economics and Peace. (2024). <i>Positive Peace Report 2024</i> . IEP. Kalyvas, S. N. (2006). <i>The logic of violence in civil war</i> . Cambridge University Press. Pettersson, T., & Öberg, M. (2020). Organized violence, 1989–2019. <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> , 57(4), 597-613. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2024). <i>SIPRI Yearbook 2024: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security</i> . Oxford University Press. Uppsala Conflict Data Program. (2024). <i>UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia</i> . Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University. Wallensteen, P. (2019). <i>Understanding conflict resolution: War, peace and the global system</i> . SAGE Publications.		
NOTES	Attendance: Mandatory. Missing more than 2 sessions significantly impacts your participation grade. Missing more than 5 sessions means you will not be able to pass this course. Preparation: Students must complete the reading and other assignments before each class. Intellectual Honesty: Any use of AI tools to generate analysis must be disclosed. Students are encouraged to use AI for research assistance, data collection, and information gathering, but must critically evaluate AI outputs and do their own analytical thinking. All AI-assisted research must be verified through primary sources.		