Contemporary Issues in Conflict and Security Studies

E625 - Autumn - Course - 6 ECTS
Mondays 10:15-12:00 (ROTH)

Course Description

This course will examine a selection of issues in contemporary security studies. The course does not deal directly with the “classical” issues (such as causes of war, strategy, deterrence, arms control or alliance theory), and does presume some background knowledge of them. Instead, the course deals with contemporary themes and issues such as security communities, “securitization,” the political economy of conflicts, state collapse and reconstruction, and migration and societal security.

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Syllabus

Introduction

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Each issue is selected to illustrate a particular concept or approach to conflict and security studies, and the course makes no claim to being exhaustive. Overall, the course adopts a critical approach to security studies, and examines issues from both Northern (European) and Southern (post-conflict) security challenges. While not comprehensive, the course is broad enough to allow students to explore a range of conceptual and practical issues within critical approaches to contemporary security studies.

The course is also a prerequisite for “Political Violence,” (E 626), an in-depth research seminar scheduled for the second semester that focuses on contemporary manifestations of violence and violent conflict.

Since security studies cannot claim theoretical coherence or a governing orthodoxy, students will be expected to demonstrate familiarity with a wide range of approaches and concepts.

Those interested in practical or descriptive knowledge will be required to provide conceptual grounding for their analyses; conceptually inclined students will be forced to acquire “local knowledge” wherever possible.
Full participation is expected of students in the seminar. This includes reading all the required readings – and this is a heavy reading course – as well as being prepared to discuss them critically. Final grades will in part be determined by the level and quality of seminar participation, and by presentations of the readings that will be scheduled according to the number of students in the seminar.

Readings are not introductory-level, and presume some familiarity with main theoretical developments in International Relations. For those with too-little background, I recommend reading:

- Edward Kolodziej, Security and International Relations
- Peter Hough, Understanding Global Security.

These will not substitute for the course readings, but can bring you somewhat “up to speed.”

Assignments

The main assignment in the course is the research paper. This must be an empirically-grounded, theoretically-informed, exploration of a particular theme relevant to this course. It cannot be a mere review of theoretical literature, or simply a narrative account of a particular case. It must have an argument, a conceptual framework, an empirical “field” (case or cases, or data, etc.), and a coherent research strategy or method. Case studies that examine a particular theme in the context of a recent or current conflict (Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, etc.) are particularly welcome.

On occasion, the large number of students in this course has made it impossible to assess an adequate participation grade for all students or to schedule class presentations for all students. I thus may use two slightly different grading schemes — one for MIA and one for MIS and doctoral students. If this is the case, I will announce the scheme we will use in week three (when numbers of students becomes clear).

- class presentations 10%
- literature review (6 pages), due week material is discussed 20%
- participation 20%
Readings

The required readings for weeks four onwards will be made available in a “kit” or polycopie. The polycopie must be ordered through the ‘imprimerie minute’. You must do the readings to participate in (or do well in) the course.

Finally, some sessions of the seminar will have to be rescheduled to accommodate some unavoidable commitments on my part. I will provide as much warning as possible for this.

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Introduction: From Strategic to Security Studies (September 22)

No readings.

(Re)Thinking Security (September 29)

Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear, second edition, 1-34.

Socialization, Community, and Western Security Practices (October 6)


Note: This class will have to be rescheduled

Security and “Securitization” Theory (October 13)


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Securitization Theory Applied: Migration and Security (October 20)


Pinar Bilgin, “Individual and Societal Dimensions of Security,” International Studies...

HIV/AIDS and International Security (October 27)

Environmental Security (November 3)
Research,”
Environmental Change and Security Project Report, 6 (Summer 2000), 77-94.

State-building and Southern Security Dynamics (November 10)

Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime”, in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Theda Skocpol, eds., Bringing the State Back In, 169-191.
Charles Tilly, Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990, 192-225.

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State Collapse and Failure (November 17)

Also: read the Fund for Peace 2008 Failed State Index country profiles available at:
http://www.fundforpeace.org

The Political Economy of Conflict (November 24)

Philippe Le Billon, Fuelling War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflict, Adelphi Paper 373 (March 2005), 7-49.

Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Peacebuilding (December 1)


Gender and (In)Security (December 8)

Joshua Goldstein, War and Gender, 1-58.
Lene Hansen, “Gender, Nation, Rape,” International Feminist Journal of Politics, 3:1 (April 2001), 55-
75.

**Human Security** (December 15)