

Pathways to Peace: Case Studies from the East (Spring 2026)

Theories and Insights into the Causes of Violence

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Class Date/Period: TBD

Classroom: TBD

Course Description:

A renowned peace scholar once said that peace is the absence of violence. Global conflicts are replete with all forms of direct and indirect violence, leaving conflict practitioners with limited options to stem hostilities. This course combines academic theories with practical analytical tools used by field practitioners to stem the flow of hostilities in conflict prone areas. This course consists of three parts. First, we will begin with a range of theoretical approaches to peace and conflict studies, all of which explore the nature of violence and chart opportunities for interventions and creating sustainable foundations for peace. Second, this course profiles conflicts both past and present, through three case studies: Sri Lanka's protracted civil war between 1982 and 2006, the current conflict in post-coup Myanmar, and the lingering conflict in Mindanao (Philippines). The final section of the course profiles tangible contributors to peace, through peace or solutions-oriented journalism or the efforts of non-state actors in the promotion of non-violent approaches.

Course Objectives:

This course aims to articulate three major themes. First, the course provides an introduction and theoretical approach to the concepts of peace and violence, while second it introduces practical conflict analysis and resolution tools to help students visualize and better understand the complexity of conflicts. While a number of regional conflicts are introduced through three major case studies, this course also examines peacebuilding approaches and lessons learned from past conflicts, introducing conflict-sensitive or solutions-oriented journalism as a tool of conflict reduction. This upper-division undergraduate course will review the peace and conflict studies landscape with specific Asia-specific case studies. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- **Conceptualize Peace and Conflict Studies:** What is peace? How attainable is peace? What are the specific causes and varieties of violence? In this course we will approach peace and conflict through theoretical and practical means.
- **Understanding and Analyzing Regional Conflicts:** Most conflicts are now of the intra-state variety. Why do conflicts persist or become intractable? What are the pathways and entry points to conflict mediation, peacebuilding, and reconciliation? In conflict analysis, the first step is to better understand the actors before beginning any intervention or analysis.
- **Reviewing the Country Context** - Students will review specific case studies (Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Mindanao) to highlight ethnic, religious, cultural, or regional conflicts and distinguish related political, social and economic events that may exacerbate conflicts. What is the role of international actors?

Classroom, Literature and Materials:

This course combines formal lectures by the instructor with assigned group work and student-led in-class activities. Before each class session, students are expected to have read the assigned reading before coming to class, where participation is both encouraged and expected. Reading newspapers, periodicals and other relevant material is encouraged. Student knowledge and analysis of the assigned material will be tested in class through substantive conversation and through quizzes, classroom analyses, and the final exam. Students will also be required to participate actively in group presentations. Each session will last 90 minutes, with classes held twice per week. Some classroom time will be allotted to small groups to discuss and prepare for assigned presentations. Regular attendance *is* a requirement for this course.

However, I believe that life somehow will find a way to interfere with regular classroom activities, from family visits, illnesses, pre-arranged travel, and more. If you are ill, please do NOT come to class; instead send me a message no later than 1 hour before class.. No official doctor's certificate is required. Do notify me so I can help you when possible with discussions or class plans that you missed.

Course Readings: Readings for this course have been uploaded to [Blackboard](#). No textbook is required.

Course Schedule: (subject to change)

Class / Date	Reading / Assignments Due
Introduction and Definitions	
1 -	Introduction / Syllabus / Class Dynamics ❖ Please review the course syllabus, become familiar with Blackboard, access all required course readings and familiarize yourself with the KGU Library.
2 -	Definitions of Peace ❖ Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> 6(3), pp. 167-191. ❖ Keen, D. (2000) War and peace: What's the difference? <i>International Peacekeeping</i>, 7(4), 1–22.
3 -	Direct, Structural and Cultural Violence ❖ Jones, W. J. (2017). Myanmar's Rohingya: human rights abuses and systemic violence. <i>Journal of Urban Culture Research</i>. ❖ Tuntivivat, S. (2016). The inter-relationship between violence and education amidst armed conflict in Southern Thailand. <i>Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research</i>, 8(4), pp. 269-278.
4 -	Peace on Paper vs. Peace in Reality ❖ Mac Ginty, R. (2010). Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace. <i>Security Dialogue</i>, 41(4), 391-412. ❖ Mac Ginty, R. (2014). Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies. <i>Security Dialogue</i>, 45(6), 548-564.
5 -	The Role of Time in Peacebuilding ❖ Mueller-Hirth, N. (2017). Temporalities of victimhood: Time in the study of postconflict societies. <i>Sociological Forum</i>, 32(1). 186-206. ❖ Lilja, M. & Baaz, M. (2016) Theorising 'Peace-building' resistance: constructions of time and different temporalities at play in the Preah Vihear Temple conflict. <i>European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology</i>, 3(4), pp. 426-446.
6 -	In-Class Analytical Essay ❖ Prepare for an in-class analytical essay: Scoring will be based on your understanding of the course readings to date and your ability to critically think about the material in relation to the question the essay will pose.
Conflict Analysis Tools	
7 -	Conflict Mapping Tools/Analysis (Attendance Critical!) ❖ The Conflict Tree ❖ Conflict Diagrams ❖ The Conflict Triangle ❖ Actor Mapping

8 -	Actor Mapping, Conflict Mapping Exercise ❖ This exercise will cover a simplified topic (<i>not a real-world scenario</i>) that we will conceive of and map in class. Prior understanding of the previous lecture's tools will be of critical importance. Missing this exercise is <u>not</u> recommended. You will need an official excused absence (medical/previously authorized).
9 -	Designated Group Presentation Preparation Period #1 ❖ This period has been set aside for preparations for your Group Presentations scheduled for the end of the semester. ❖ NOTE: Attendance is mandatory (unless you have a medical/family reason).
Case Study #1: Myanmar <i>coup d'etat</i> (February 2021 - present) Additional outside reading on this case study is strongly encouraged.	
10 -	Origins of Ethnic Struggle in Myanmar ❖ Druce, S. C. (2020). Myanmar's unwanted ethnic minority: a history and analysis of the Rohingya crisis. <i>Managing Conflicts in a Globalizing ASEAN: Incompatibility Management Through Good Governance</i>, 17-46. ❖ Ganesan, N. (2014). The Myanmar peace center: Its origins, activities, and aspirations. <i>Asian Journal of Peacebuilding</i>, 2(1), 127-141.
11 -	Myanmar Before the Coup ❖ Thawngmung, A. (2016). The Myanmar elections 2015: why the national league for democracy won a landslide victory. <i>Critical Asian Studies</i>, 48(1), pp. 132-142. ❖ Akins, H. (2018). The two faces of democratization in Myanmar: A case study of the Rohingya and Burmese nationalism. <i>Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs</i>, 38(2), pp. 229-245.
12	Myanmar: An Uneasy Alliance - On-Demand Activity #1 ❖ Watch Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rw8ORqIZ8nk
13 -	A Morning Coup ❖ Kipgen, N. (2021). The 2020 Myanmar Election and the 2021 Coup: Deepening Democracy or Widening Division? <i>Asian Affairs</i>, 52(1), pp. 1-17. ❖ Vrieze, P. (2022) Joining the Spring Revolution or Charting Their Own Path?, <i>Asian Affairs</i>. pp. 1-31
14 -	A Regional Problem ❖ Dunst, C. (2021). The Myanmar Coup as an ASEAN Inflection Point. <i>Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs</i>, Special Issue, pp. 37-43. ❖ Cogan, M. S. (2025). Pragmatism at the Expense of National Security: Thailand's Bilateral Relations With Myanmar. <i>Asian Politics & Policy</i>, 17(4), 1-12.
15 -	Conflict Mapping Exercise: Myanmar ❖ This mapping exercise will cover the Myanmar case study. The goal is to understand the complexities of the conflict through proper actor mapping. Understanding of the course readings on Myanmar and additional outside research will be advantageous. ❖ NOTE: Participation in this exercise is critical and will be graded as part of your Class Participation grade. (see Grading Rubric for details).
16 -	Designated Group Presentation Preparation Period #2 ❖ This period has been set aside for preparations for your Group Presentations scheduled for the end of the semester.

	❖ NOTE: Attendance is mandatory (unless you have a medical/family reason).
Case Study #1: Sri Lankan Civil War (1982-2006) Additional outside reading on this case study is strongly encouraged.	
17 -	Root Causes of Conflict in Sri Lanka ❖ DeVotta, N. (2000) Control Democracy, Institutional Decay, and the Quest for Eelam: Explaining Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka. <i>Pacific Affairs</i> 73(1), pp. 55-76. ❖ DeVotta, N. (2002) Illiberalism and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 13(1), pp. 84-98.
18 -	A Fragile Peace ❖ Höglund, K., & Orjuela, C. (2011). Winning the peace: conflict prevention after a victor's peace in Sri Lanka. <i>Contemporary Social Science</i>, 6(1), pp. 19-37. ❖ Sri Lanka: a bitter peace. (2010). <i>International Crisis Group</i>. Asia Briefing N°99. www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/sri-lanka-bitter-peace
19 -	Peacebuilding and Reconciliation ❖ Lassée, I. (2019) The Sri Lankan Transitional Justice Process: Too Little, Too Late?, <i>The Round Table</i>, 108(6), 709-719. ❖ Thiranagama, S. (2013). Claiming the state: Postwar reconciliation in Sri Lanka. <i>Humanity: an international journal of human rights, humanitarianism, and development</i>, 4(1), 93-116.
20 -	Conflict Analysis Exercise: Sri Lanka ❖ This conflict analysis exercise will cover the Sri Lanka case study. The goal is to understand the roots of the conflict through proper conflict analysis. Understanding of the course readings on Sri Lanka will be advantageous. ❖ NOTE: Attendance is required (unless you have a medical/family reason) to receive Class Participation points.
21 -	Designated Group Presentation Preparation Period #3 ❖ This period has been set aside for preparations for your Group Presentations scheduled for the end of the semester. ❖ NOTE: Attendance is mandatory (unless you have a medical/family reason).
Case Study #2: The Mindanao Peace Process Additional outside reading on this case study is strongly encouraged.	
22 -	Root Causes of Conflict in Mindanao ❖ Adriano, F. & Parks, T. (2013). The Contested Corners of Asia. The Case of Mindanao, Philippines Executive Summary. <i>Asia Foundation</i>. ❖ Schiavo-Campo, S., & Judd, M.P. (2005) The Mindanao conflict in the Philippines: Roots, costs, and potential peace dividend. Vol. 24. Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network, <i>World Bank</i>. ❖ Abubakar, C. (2004). Review of the Mindanao peace processes. <i>Inter-Asia Cultural Studies</i> 5(3), pp. 450-464. (Optional)
23 -	Is Autonomy a Solution? ❖ Söderberg-Kovacs, M., Höglund, K., & Jiménez, M. (2021). Autonomous Peace? The Bangsamoro Region in the Philippines Beyond the 2014 Agreement. <i>Journal of Peacebuilding & Development</i>, 16(1), pp. 55-69. ❖ Abuza, Z., & Lischin, L. (2020). The Challenges Facing the Philippines'

	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region at One Year. <i>United States Institute of Peace</i> .
24 -	The Peace Process ❖ Trajano, J. C. (2020). Bottom-up peacebuilding: Role of grassroots and local actors in the Mindanao peace process. <i>Asian Journal of Peacebuilding</i>, 8(2), pp. 357-372. ❖ Loesch, J. (2017). The GPH-MILF peace process in the Philippines to prevent and transform violent extremism in Mindanao. <i>Journal of Peacebuilding & Development</i>, 12(2), pp. 96-101.
25	The Philippines' Fragile Truce With Its Muslim Separatists - On-Demand Activity #2 ❖ Watch Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpR0CN27Sf8
26 -	Conflict Mapping Exercise: Mindanao ❖ This mapping exercise will cover the Mindanao case study. The goal is to understand the complexities of the conflict through conflict tools.
27 -	Designated Group Preparation Period #4 ❖ This period has been set aside for preparations for your Group Presentations scheduled for the end of the semester. ❖ NOTE: Attendance is mandatory (unless you have a medical/family reason).
Group Presentations / Final Exam	
28 - 5/12 29 - 5/14 30 - 5/19	Group Presentations ❖ The following three class periods are reserved for Group Presentations. See the Course Assessments for details.

Class Etiquette:

- Come to class prepared to learn and engage.
- Do not rest your head on your desk or fall asleep in class. I take great care in preparing for each lecture.
- Falling asleep or deliberately tuning out class discussions is disrespectful. If you need a drink of water or need coffee to help maintain focus, do so.
- Cellular phones or other mobile devices must be put away--turned off or put on silent.
- Laptops are allowed, but should be used for note-taking purposes only.

Learning Assessment/Course Rubric:

Class Participation:	10%
Discussion Participation:	25%
In-Class Writing Assignment:	15%
Group Presentations:	30%
Final Exam:	20%

Class Participation (10%): You get points just for showing up, but you can lose them very quickly. All absences must be approved in advance or excused by valid medical or personal reason.

Discussion Participation (25%): There will be class discussions of different contexts, but with similar objectives. Your knowledge and mastery of the conflict tools, as well as the course materials will be critical to doing well.

Peace/Violence Writing Assignment (15%): A writing assignment will be distributed in class to assess your comprehension and critical analysis of the concepts of peace and violence. Keeping up-to-date with all course readings will be key to your success.

Group Presentations (30%): You will be divided into small groups. Each group will give a 40-50 minute presentation on a conflict of their choice in broader Asia. Your task is to give the class a detailed examination of the country you selected, using at least two of the analytical tools discussed in class. Your task is to accurately map and provide constructive analysis of the conflict situation you have chosen. Audio-visual/multimedia presentations are strongly encouraged. All topics must be approved in advance. Each group must provide an outline of their presentation for approval. Working *together* outside of class is essential to your success.

Final Exam (20%): The final exam will feature two (2) short-answer essay questions over required readings, class lectures, and discussions. The exam is cumulative. The exam should take you no longer than the length of a class period to complete.

Classroom Policy Information:

- **Disability Statement:** *This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation.* Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible (within the first week of class). It is the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor then meet to determine reasonable accommodation based on the official documentation/accommodation list.
- **Syllabus:** I reserve the right to modify the course syllabus at any time, especially if I feel it enhances the learning experience. I will provide advanced warning of any changes.
- **Free Speech/Safe Space:** This course will likely cover difficult topics which will result in a wide range of personal opinions and emotions. It is important to come to class with an open mind and a respect for diversity of opinion. Discrimination, marginalization or other abhorrent behavior based on gender, sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation will not be tolerated. Violators will be asked to leave the classroom. In this classroom, we respect each other.