



School of Global Affairs

POL 360-AIX 1

The International Law and Politics of Armed Conflict

202627 Fall

Course Details

Credit Hours: 3

Days: Monday/Wednesday

Time: 15:30 - 17:00

Prerequisites: Prerequisite: This course is suitable for an undergraduate student who has successfully completed at least 3 semesters of College-level course work. Successful completion of ENG 101 or equivalent, and 6 credit hours in history or political science or international relations; or instructor permission.

Instructor Information

Gregory Mose

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Course Description

The UN Charter vows to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." Yet armed conflict has remained a constant feature of human history, as have efforts to

somehow mitigate its horrors. The purpose of this course is to explore how international law, international organizations, states and NGOs interact in response to armed conflict, and how such responses can contribute to, or undermine, efforts to end violence. Topics will include the changing nature of warfare in the 21st century, the mechanisms in place to protect refugees, humanitarian aid, conflict prevention, and the role of international law. Significant attention will be paid to international tribunals and the challenges of enforcing the laws of armed conflict.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- identify the organizations and legal regimes that guide international humanitarian responses;
- recognize the political, economic, and legal interests involved in armed conflicts;
- compare and contrast diverse approaches to mitigating suffering among civilian populations and appreciate their limitations;
- distinguish between theoretical aspirations and the practical possibilities of humanitarian responses in the field;
- synthesize the observations of scholars and practitioners into an independent and nuanced understanding of current humanitarian challenges; and
- apply the principles of international humanitarian law to real world scenarios.

Instructional Methods and Activities

We will explore the interrelated set of topics comprising this course through a combination of lectures, class discussions, films, and activities including:

- Structured in-class debates on case studies evoking common challenges in humanitarian aid and transitional justice;
- Student-led oral presentations and class discussion of the conflict dynamics of current armed conflicts;
- Simulation exercises and case study discussions of actual cases in the International Criminal Court and other tribunals;
- Field study to Camp des Milles

Assessment, Evaluation, and Grading

Participation and reflections: 20% - Students will be expected to come prepared and to participate in class discussions, including taking an active role in in-class simulations. Each week will begin with a guided in-class written reflection on the readings for that week.

Conflict report: 15% - Students will give an oral presentation and written report outlining the causes and dynamics of a current or recent armed conflict.

Mock Trial: 15% - At the end of the semester all students will participate in a mock trial simulation based on an actual case in international law.

Mid-term exam: 25% - Short essay questions under closed-book exam conditions.

Final exam: 25% - Short essay questions under closed-book exam conditions.

NOTE: Students are expected to turn in work on time unless an extension is granted by the instructor. Any work turned in more than one day late will be marked down a full letter grade for each subsequent day the work is late.

Grading System/Grade Distribution

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ACM-IAU Grades	Percent Grade	4.0 Scale	Qualitative Meaning of the Grade
A	95-100%	4.0	Outstanding achievement
A-	90-94%	3.7	Superior level of achievement
B+	88-89%	3.3	Meritorious level of achievement
B	84-87%	3.0	Satisfactory level of achievement
B-	80-83%	2.7	Acceptable level of achievement
C+	78-79%	2.3	Average level of achievement
C	74-77%	2.0	Minimal achievement
C-	70-73%	1.7	Minimal achievement
D+	68-69%	1.3	Below minimal achievement
D	64-67%	1.0	Below minimal achievement
D-	60-63%	1.0	Below minimal achievement
F	0-59%	0.0	Unacceptable level of achievement

Attendance

Class attendance and participation are essential to your success at ACM. They will affect your final grade, and unexcused absences will lower your grade by half a letter (e.g., B+ to B). Faculty may also assign additional consequences for excessive or unexcused absences, repeated tardiness, or late work.

What you need to know about our attendance policy

1. If you miss class, submit the Absence Form (AF). You have up to 48 hours after your absence to report it. Use the form—don't just email your professor.
2. You get 2 “self-verification” absences per term. These are for minor or personal issues, such as a cold—no documentation is needed. But self-verification does not excuse you from major academic responsibilities. If you miss something like a presentation, group project, or test, your professor decides what happens next.
3. Your absence will be reviewed and classified as:
 - Self-Verification
 - Excused (with documentation)
 - Unexcused

The Attendance Verifier (AV) will notify your professor, but your professor decides how the absence affects your grade.

4. Don't misuse the system. Skipping class because you didn't feel ready, you were traveling, or didn't want to participate is not what the system is for. Patterns like that will be noticed.

Bottom line: You're responsible for using this system honestly and on time. Clear communication helps everyone, but it doesn't guarantee a make-up or exemption.

Academic Policies

All students are responsible for reading, knowing, and understanding the information pertinent to their areas of study available in the ACM Catalog. The catalog contains requirements for all degree programs, course descriptions, academic policies, and regulations that govern ACM. All parts of the catalog are subject to annual changes as university rules, policies, and curricula change. It is your responsibility to keep informed of such changes; failure to do so will not exempt you from whatever penalties you may incur. Catalogs are published from August through July.

Review the latest catalog at: <https://www.acmfrance.org/academics/catalog>

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

The course will be broken down into three interrelated units.

Unit 1: The Changing Nature of Conflict (Weeks 1-4)

- History of the changing nature of armed conflict

- Greed vs. grievance and the “New Wars” debate
- The role of ethnicity
- Economics of conflict: patronage systems, organized crime and the “resource curse”
- 21st century problems: drones, autonomous weapon systems, hybrid conflicts
- Case studies on current/recent conflicts (student-led)
- Reflections on Ukraine

Unit 2: Mitigating the Effects of Conflict (Weeks 5-7)

- Refugees and the 1951 Convention
- Politics and practicalities of humanitarian aid
- Military options: intervention and peacekeeping
- Peacebuilding initiatives and the role of civil society

Unit 3: International Law and Mass Violence (Weeks 8-14)

- The International legal system
- International law vs. international criminal law
- Current international legal instruments
- Fundamental principles of IHL for the protection of civilians
- Case studies

Detailed Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1 (7, 9 September) : Course introduction, case study, why war?

Week 2 (14, 16 September) : A brief history of armed conflict

- Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, Chapter 1
- Mearsheimer, “Why Ukraine was the West’s fault”
- Tickner, *War and Conflict*

Week 3 (21, 23 September) : Conflict in the 21st Century

- Kaldor, *New Wars*, Chapter 2
- Keen, “Greed and grievance in civil war”

Week 4 (28, 30 September) : Student-Led Conflict Presentations

- Conflicts to watch in 2026

FIELD STUDY (2 October) : Camp des Milles

Week 5 (5, 7 October) : Refugees and migration

- UNHCR Protection guide
- Torelli, “Migration through the Mediterranean: Mapping the EU response”
- “Outsourcing Asylum”

Week 6 (12, 14 October): Peacekeeping, Aid, and Intervention

- Kuperman, "Obama's Libya Debacle"
- Ucko, "When Interventions Work: The Instructive Case of Sierra Leone"
- Herman, "A Matter of Principles"
- Accessible Humanitarian Coordination Guidance

Week 7 (19, 21 October): Review + Midterm

FALL BREAK

Week 8 (2, 4 November): State Violence and legal responses

- Transitional Justice Guide
- Case Excerpts: The "Wall" Case
- Hathaway "The Great Unravelling"

Week 9: (No class)

Week 10 (16, 18 November): Tribunals and international criminal law

- Reading: Schabas, The UN International Criminal Tribunals, Chapt. 1
- ICC, "How the ICC works"
- Hendrickse, "A chance for Africa to counter the pitfalls of international criminal justice?"
- "The Court Today"

Week 11 (23, 25 November): International Humanitarian Law

- Reading: Commonwealth Secretariat, "International Humanitarian Law and International

Criminal Justice"

- Sassoli, "Legitimate Targets of Attacks Under International Humanitarian Law"
- Rome Statute Excerpt

Week 12 (30 November, 2 December): IHL contd

- Rizer "Dual Use Objects"
- Military Advantage and Proportionality
- Beck – Developments in customary law
- War crimes comparative table

Week 13 (7, 9 December): Mock Trials

- Reading: Case excerpts TBD