

# SUMMERSCHOOLSYLLABUS

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## CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT ANALYSIS: ACTORS, ISSUES & TECHNOLOGIES OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY WARFARE

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## SUMMARY

Owing to the ever-changing nature of warfare, the field of conflict studies requires an informed approach towards answering the question of why various actors resort to violent conflict. This summer school equips scholars and professional practitioners alike with cutting-edge knowledge and transferable skills for mapping, analysing and responding to warfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: who is fighting and how do they relate to one another (actors); what are they fighting over and why (issues and interests); and how exactly are they fighting (technologies and practices).

## DESCRIPTION

Rarely a day passes without the media reporting on violent uprisings, military coups, international interventions, suicide bombings, drone attacks, and civilian casualties, and refugee crises all over the world. In conflict studies, these events are often discussed using a range of concepts such as 'civil war', 'protracted social conflict', 'invasions' and 'terrorism'. More recently, new terms such as 'hybrid warfare', 'remote warfare' and 'algorithmic warfare' have been coined to try and capture the essence of contemporary conflict. Despite this proliferation of terms, clarifying the complexity of violent conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century remains a challenging task.

After following this course you will be a conflict analyst, able to untangle the challenging realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare. Rather than focusing on a single theory, concept or case, this summer school programme covers a range of theoretical topics, such as conflict mapping, theories of violent conflict, and war propaganda, as well as more empirical subjects, such as the role of the (non) state actors, paramilitarism, special operation forces, technology, and civilian harm. These topics will be covered with reference to empirical cases from around the world, such as Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Mali, Uganda, Sri Lanka and Colombia.

Throughout the course we will address pressing issues in contemporary warfare like: How are terrorist organisations able to mobilize people towards violent action? How do rebel groups govern the territories they control? Why do states deploy starvation and sieges as a weapon of war? Why do states outsource violence to paramilitaries and special operation forces? What drives perpetrator behaviour - is it their disposition, or the situation they find themselves in? If advanced militaries are able to wage war from a distance, will they become less war prone, or more? What does it mean when algorithms define who is worthy of elimination and protection in 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare? And why is tracking civilian harm so important for democratic control over contemporary warfare? How does social and political engagement with refugees shape conflict in host and home countries?

Collectively, grappling with these different layers of analysis in isolation and in relation to one another will sharpen your conceptual and analytical capacities greatly. You will acquire valuable skills and knowledge relating to the actors, issues and technologies involved in 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare. With a solid foundation in conflict analysis, you will be well-equipped to apply this to a range of academic and professional contexts, such as fieldwork in (post-)conflict areas, conflict management, negotiation, and tracking civilian harm.

This course is delivered through a combination of lectures and interactive workshops. All participants receive the book *Theories of Violent Conflict* by Demmers (2017) and [a reader with the course literature](#) at the beginning of the course. The reader contains a number of scholarly, policy-oriented and operational articles, as well as specific readings relating to the cases covered in the course. Each day you will complete an in-class assignment and at the end of the programme you will present a conflict map on a case study of your choice. Academic lecturers and practitioners from the field delivering this course either belong to or are closely linked with the [Intimacies of Remote Warfare](#) programme and the Centre for Conflict Studies (CCS) of Utrecht University. This Summer School falls under the IOS and UGlobe Contesting Governance flagship.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

This course provides a concise overview of the contemporary topics and debates in the field of conflict and security studies. It is therefore appropriate for students and professional practitioners looking to acquire knowledge and skills for theorising, mapping and analysing present day warfare. This course also provides a useful bridge towards the [MA in Conflict Studies & Human Rights](#) offered by Utrecht University.

## COURSE FORMAT

Given the current Covid-19 situation, the summer school will be offered in hybrid format, meaning that students have the option to attend in-person on location at Utrecht University, or they can also follow the classes online in our Microsoft Teams environment. In addition, a small number of the lecturers speaking at the Summer school may offer their classes online, with a member of staff in-person in the classroom to facilitate the class discussions.

# OUTLINE PROGRAMME

MORNING 10:00-12:30  
AFTERNOON 13:30-16:00

LOCATION:  
UTRECHT UNIVERSITY &  
ONLINE (MICROSOFT  
TEAMS)

Week	Day	Time	Topic	Leader
Week 1	1 (11/7)	Morning	Introduction to Conflict Studies	Lauren Gould
		Afternoon	Conflict Analysis	Lauren Gould
	2 (12/7)	Morning	Theories of Violent Conflict	Lauren Gould
		Afternoon	Theories of Violent Conflict cont.	Lauren Gould
	3 (13/7)	Morning	Conflict Mapping	Lauren Gould
		Afternoon	Conflict Mapping cont.	Lauren Gould
	4 (14/7)	Morning	Mobilisation of the Non-state actor	Mario Fumerton
		Afternoon	Rebel Governance	Niels Terpstra
	5 (15/7)	Morning	State Violence	Mohammed Kanfash
		Afternoon	Conflict, Displacement, Securitization	Nora Stel
Week 2	6 (18/7)	Morning	The Turn to Remote Warfare	Lauren Gould
		Afternoon	Special Forces	Jack Davies
	7 (19/7)	Morning	Technology (I)	Marijn Hoijtink
		Afternoon	Technology (II)	Patrick Bolder
	8 (20/7)	Morning	Perpetrators of Mass Violence and Accountability	Iva Vukusic
		Afternoon	Reporting in the Field	Edmee van Rijn
	9 (21/7)	Morning	Presentation Conflict Maps	Lauren Gould
		Afternoon	Continuation of Presentations	Lauren Gould
	10 (22/7)	Morning	Awards Ceremony	Lauren Gould

## DAY 1 [11/7/22]

Morning

Introduction to Conflict Studies

Dr. Lauren Gould

In this session, an introduction will be given to the field of conflict studies, the most important assumptions, concepts and definitions herein, and how the field and the nature of violent conflicts around the world have developed over time.

Literature (the complete reader can be found [here](#))

Demmers, Jolle. 2016. 'Introduction: Conflict Analysis in Context' in Demmers, J. Theories of Violent Conflict, New York and London: Routledge.

Demmers, Jolle. 2016. 'Identity, boundaries and violence' in Demmers, J. Theories of Violent Conflict, New York and London: Routledge.

Afternoon

Conflict Analysis

Dr. Lauren Gould

## DAY 2 [12/7/22]

Morning

Theories of Violent Conflict

Dr. Lauren Gould

There exists a wide range of theoretical explanatory models for explaining and understanding how and why people resort to violent action against others, each with their own assumptions. In this session, we will discuss these different models, paying particular attention to group formation, the dynamics of interaction, and collective action. Equipped with this knowledge, you will be well placed to analyse contemporary conflicts through a variety of theoretical lenses and - crucially - you will be able to identify the fundamental assumptions others base their analysis on.

Literature

Demmers, Jolle. 2016. 'On love and hate' in Demmers, J. Theories of Violent Conflict, New York and London: Routledge.

Demmers, Jolle. 2016. 'Violence and structures' in Demmers, J. Theories of Violent Conflict, New York and London: Routledge.

Demmers, Jolle. 2016. 'Rational choice theory' in Demmers, J. Theories of Violent Conflict, New York and London: Routledge.

Demmers, Jolle. 2016. 'Telling each other apart' in Demmers, J. Theories of Violent Conflict, New York and London: Routledge.

Afternoon

Theories of Violent Conflict cont.  
[Dr. Lauren Gould](#)

As above, cont.

## DAY 3 [13/7/22]

Morning

Conflict Mapping  
[Dr. Lauren Gould](#)

In this session, we will reflect on a number of analytical models in the field of conflict studies and how you can use them to engage in the skill of conflict mapping. Conflict mapping is a key tool in making a sound analysis of the complex dynamics and actors involved in contemporary violent conflict.

Literature

Mitchell, C.R. 1981 The Structure of International Conflict, Houndmills Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, pp. 15-33.

United Nations, 2016. United Nations Conflict Analysis Practice Note. Geneva: United Nations.

Afternoon

Conflict Mapping cont.  
[Dr. Lauren Gould](#)

As above, cont.

## DAY 4 [14/7/22]

Morning

Mobilisation of the Non-State Actor  
[Dr. Mario Fumerton](#)

In this session, we will consider how intrastate armed conflicts happen not as the inevitable outcomes of emotions and motivations like fear, inter-ethnic hatred, or grievance, and not just of conditions such as poverty or inequality, but rather as a product of human choice and co-ordinated collective human action by non-state actors that is organised through socio-political mobilisation.

Literature

Jackson, R. and Dexter, H., 2014. The Social Construction of Organised Political Violence: An Analytical Framework. *Civil Wars*, 16(1), pp.1-23.

Mason, David T. Theories of Revolution: The Evolution of the Field. Caught in the Crossfire: Revolution, Repression, and the Rational Peasant. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.

Afternoon

Rebel Governance  
[Dr. Niels Terpstra](#)

Whereas traditional perspectives on rebel groups focus on warlordism, looting, human rights abuses, and their role as 'spoilers' in development and democratization, in practice, the activities of rebel groups over the world and throughout history vary considerably. This session focuses on governance performed by rebel groups in violent conflict and civil war. Rebel groups can have substantive involvement in several governance domains, and as such acquire authority and legitimacy among their constituents. International actors, such as states and non-governmental organizations

(NGOs), struggle to decide on whether or how to engage with rebel groups. The governance efforts of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka and the Taliban's shadow judiciary in Afghanistan will serve as case studies throughout this session.

#### Literature

Kasfir, Nelson. "Rebel Governance – Constructing a Field of Inquiry: Definitions, Scope, Patterns, Order, Causes." *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, edited by Ana Arjona et al., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, pp. 21–46.

Schlichte, Klaus, and Ulrich Schneckener. "Armed groups and the politics of legitimacy." *Civil Wars* 17.4 (2015): 409-424.

## DAY 5 [15/7/22]

Morning

The State Actor

[Mohammed Kanfash](#)

Whose violence is it and who is responsible? States are no unitary actors and their various organisational levels: local, regional and central, impact how they interact with the various social groups within their territories, including how violence is deployed and to what ends. In this session, and using Syria as a case-study, we will study how the state deployed starvation and sieges as weapons of war against rebellious areas and how the interest of state actors at different levels shaped the use of violence and the level of suffering it caused.

Afternoon

Conflict, Displacement, Securitization

[Nora Stel](#)

Violent conflict generates displacement and displacement can fuel violent conflict. But how exactly are these dynamics related? How does social and political engagement with refugees shape conflict in host and home countries? Whose security is at stake in the governance of displacement? Through the case-study of the Syrian refugee crisis, this interactive session critically explores the dialectic relations between war and forced mobility. Juxtaposing European and Middle Eastern governance of the Syrian refugee crisis, it introduces securitization theory and framing analysis to investigate how different portrayals and perceptions of the potential threats that refugee communities are often considered to pose affect the fate of refugees and the societies they fled from and to.

#### Literature

Hammerstadt, A. (2014) The securitization of forced migration. In: E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, G. Loescher, K. Long & N. Sigona (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp, 1-14.

Van Houtum, H. & Bueno Lacy, R. (2020) The autoimmunity of the EU's deadly bordering regime: overcoming its paradoxical paper, iron and camp borders. *Geopolitics*, 25 (3): 706-733.

## DAY 6 [18/7/22]

Morning

The Turn to Remote Warfare

[Dr. Lauren Gould](#)

While the protracted social conflicts discussed so far are generally defined as intrastate conflicts, there are multiple international influences, linkages and actors involved in these kinds of conflicts. This session looks at the international dimensions of these conflicts. In particular, it looks at how the international community, with a specific focus on the West, has increasingly assembled practices of remote warfare to intervene in local settings of violent conflict. The lecture aims to understand why we see this shift to remote warfare and reviews the moral and political challenges that this new way of war has given rise to. The key argument is that the secrecy

around remote warfare operations, their portrayal as 'precise' and 'surgical', as well as the asymmetrical distribution of death and suffering they entail, thwarts democratic political deliberation on contemporary warfare.

#### Literature

Waldman, T. (2018) 'Vicarious warfare: The counterproductive consequences of modern American military practice.' *Contemporary Security Policy* 39 (2): 181-205.

Demmers, J. & L.M. Gould (2018). 'An Assemblage Approach to Liquid Warfare: AFRICOM and the 'hunt' for Joseph Kony.' *Security Dialogue* 49 (5): 364-381.

The Remote Warfare: Interdisciplinary Perspectives. E-International Relations Publishing Collected Volume. (choose a chapter of your interest)

#### Afternoon

#### Special Forces

Jack Davies (MA)

In today's seemingly endless wars, when public opinion may be faltering, Special Operations Forces (SOF) are an attractive tool in the arsenals of state actors. In this session, the tactical, strategic, political and financial advantages of using SOF will be considered, as well as the potential costs and side-effects of engaging in covert operations in this manner.

#### Literature

Watling, J., 2021. *Sharpening the Dagger Optimising Special Forces for Future Conflict*. London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies.

Moran, Jon. "Time to Move out of the Shadows: Special Operations Forces and Accountability in Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency Operations." *UNSWLJ* 39 (2016): 1239.

## DAY 7 [19/7/22]

#### Morning

#### Technology (I)

Dr. Marijn Hoijtink

From the spears wielded by the earliest human tribes to the sophisticated drones operated by contemporary pilots, warfare has always been inextricably tied to technological innovation. In this session, we consider how the design, development, and global circulation of (new) security technologies and weapons shapes and re-shapes all aspects of warfare. Exploring the contemporary moment of the 'digital revolution', we will examine how the development of algorithmic technologies is both occurring within and driving the adoption of 'Prototype Warfare', an organisational and operational approach to technological development and deployment which seeks to emulate Silicon Valley's emphasis on informality, entrepreneurialism and experimentation.

#### Literature

Leese, Matthias, and Marijn Hoijtink. "How (not) to talk about technology: International Relations and the question of agency." *Technology and Agency in International Relations*. Routledge, 2019. 1-23.

Suchman, Lucy. "Algorithmic warfare and the reinvention of accuracy." *Critical Studies on Security* 8.2 (2020): 175-187.

Merrin, William, and Andrew Hoskins. "Tweet fast and kill things: digital war." *Digital War* (2020): 1-10.

#### Afternoon

#### Technology (II)

Patrick Bolder

Functional applications of artificial intelligence (AI) based upon machine learning algorithms are in the process of shaping a diverse spectrum of social, business, legal, and political fields. Perhaps nowhere is this more contested than in the context of security and warfare. To some it appears inevitable that autonomous systems will be integrated across almost every aspect of security, from border control to surveillance, predictive policing to autonomous weapons systems. Yet before this vision of a future dominated by weaponised autonomous robots becomes a reality, we must pass through a period of experimentation and tentative implementation. What moral/ethical, legal and strategic questions will commanders face when choosing between placing humans in harms way or handing control over to autonomous robotics? What



considerations will be involved in the decision-making behind these difficult choices?

#### Literature

Watch: <https://hcss.nl/news/documentaire-robotisering-bij-de-nederlandse-landmacht/>

## DAY 8 [20/7/22]

### Morning

Perpetrators of Mass Violence and Accountability

[Dr. Iva Vukusic](#)

Ever since the end of Second World War and the Holocaust, there has been growing scholarly attention to perpetrators of mass violence. The need to understand how people harm others, often their neighbors, has resulted in a growing literature focusing on motivations driving individuals to kill, beat, rape or torture. In this session, we will be focusing on perpetrators of mass violence and genocide, and efforts to hold them accountable, in legal proceedings, in the aftermath. We will be discussing questions of perpetrator agency, and reflect on scholarly debates centering on questions about what drives perpetrator behavior—is it their disposition, or the situation they find themselves in? Furthermore, we will focus on the role of gender, ideologies, personal histories and networks in perpetration, as well as group dynamics.

#### Literature

Read: Uğur Ümit Üngör. "Studying Mass Violence: Pitfalls, Problems, and Promises" *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 7 (2012), Issue 1, Article 8.

Straus, Scott. "Studying Perpetrators: A Reflection" *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 1.1 (2018): 28-38.

Smeulers, Alette. "Perpetrators of International Crimes: Towards a Typology" in A. Smeulers and R. Haveman (eds.) (2008) *Supranational Criminology: Towards a Criminology of International Crimes*, Intersentia, 2008.

Watch: Documentary, The Unforgiven: A War Criminal's Response: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcsUn4x\\_BYs&t=11s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcsUn4x_BYs&t=11s)

### Afternoon

Reporting in the Field

[Edmée van Rijn](#)

This session will address questions such as; What does it take to report from a conflict area? Where do you start? What are the challenges? What makes a good report and what about ethics and your own security? Edmée van Rijn will use her experience as a reporter in the Middle East to answer these questions and more.

#### Preparations

Read: Edmée van Rijn, 2021. *Into the Whirlwind*. Hidden Compass, <https://hiddencompass.net/story/into-the-whirlwind/>

## DAY 9 [21/7/22]

### Morning

Presentation Conflict Maps

[Dr. Lauren Gould](#)

In this session, students will present their conflict maps.

### Afternoon

Continuation Presentations

[Dr. Lauren Gould](#)

In this session, students will present their conflict maps.

## DAY 10 [22/7/22]

### Morning

Awards Ceremony

[Dr. Lauren Gould](#)

In this final session, students will be awarded a certificate confirming their participation in the summer school.