

The Psychology of Peace

MDES/PSYC-3500 (3 credits)

Morocco: Geopolitics, International Relations, and the Future of the Middle East

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Description

This interdisciplinary seminar addresses theory and practice of peace psychology, the psychological causes of violence and nonviolence, nonviolent struggle, non-violence and social change, the role of emotions in peacebuilding, negotiations of political disputes, and the impact of exiled and displaced populations on the psychology of peace and conflict resolution. The seminar also assesses applications of human psychology to the study of international politics. Psychological analyses of foreign policy and decision making, international conflict, and conflict resolution greatly contribute to the understanding of international relations. Students study the psychology of diverse actors of international relations, international relations and foreign policy decision making, role of biases, role of emotions in political decision making, and other psychological factors contributing to better understanding and explanation of international relations and politics. Through field visits with NGOs working in psychological services, health institutions, and discussions with academics, diplomats, and peace negotiators, students learn about the psychology of peace as it impacts conflict resolution and peace processes in Jordan and the Middle East.

Learning Outcomes

The *Psychology of Peace* course comprises 45 hours of instruction (3 credits). Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze the components of the psychology of peace and international politics;
- Describe the conceptual and empirical frameworks of the psychology of international negotiation and diplomacy;
- Explain peacebuilding and conflict transformation from a psychological perspective;
- Apply psychological perspectives in the analysis of geopolitics in the Middle East;
- Assess the future of peace in the Middle East using psychological theory.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English. Students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Course Schedule

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.*

Module 1: The Psychology of Peace, Conflict, and Security

This module introduces main conceptual and theoretical frameworks for the analysis of psychological approaches to peace and international conflicts and conflict resolution. The focus is on peace psychology and the psychology of conflict resolution.

Session 1: The Psychology of Peace: Theoretical Frameworks

This session provides an overview of peace psychology and psychological approaches to conflict resolution. The session also addresses the role of emotions in peace negotiations.

Required Readings:

Praszquier, Zabłocka & Munnik (2023). Peace-Oriented Mindset and How to Measure it. [Europe's Journal of Psychology](#) 19(3):232-243.

Balvin, N., Haji, R., & McKeown Jones, S. (2025). *Peace psychology and global challenges*. Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 31(2), 127–131.

Session 2: The Psychology of Conflict, Conflict Resolution, and Reconciliation

This session will provide an overview of the psychological understandings and explanations to international conflicts. Students also learn factors contributing to international conflicts and how psychology conceptualizes them. This session exposes students to psychological foundations of international conflict resolution and psychological components of reconciliation efforts that help resolve international conflicts and create and maintain reconciliation among nations and governments.

Required Readings:

[Iyad Aldajani](#) & [Martin Leiner](#) (2024). Reconciliation, Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies. Ch 1: Reconciliation, Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies. Pp3-15. Springer.

Ilin, Mykhailo, Shimjeong (2024). A Psychological Perspective on Global Conflict Resolution. *Kostiuk Institute of Psychology of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine*.

Shiundu, Teresia. (2024). Social and Psychological Factors Influencing Conflict Origins Shaping Negotiation Dynamics. 1-10.

Module 2: Psychology in International Relations

This module addresses the role of psychology in international relations. The focus is on psychological factors impacting international relations, in particular emotions, biases, and stereotypes.

Session 1: Psychology in the Context of IR and Psychological Factors Affecting IR

This session provides students with introductory concepts and key elements of psychology within different international relations' domains. Students learn about how psychological factors

might affect international relations. This session also analyzes the link between psychology and international relations main theories. Students will discuss psychological dimensions and factors that play significant role in the field of international relations.

Required Readings:

Houde, Anne-Marie. (2023). Emotions, International Relations, and the everyday: Individuals' emotional attachments to international organisations. *Review of International Studies* 51(3):1-19.

Landau-Wells, M. (2024). Building from the brain: Advancing the study of threat perception in international relations. *International Organization*, 78(4), 627–667.

Session 2: Cognitions, Biases, and Emotions in International Relations and Negotiation

This session addresses cognitive/mental processes, biases, prejudices, discriminations, stereotypes, and emotional states, and the role they play in the international relations arena. Students will learn about the main emotions and main emotional states that are known to psychology and their importance in the international relations negotiation process. The focus is on how these may contribute positively or negatively to the field of international relations, and the role of emotions as negotiation strategy in the field of international negotiations.

Required Readings:

[Fabrício H. Chagas-Bastos](#) & [Peter Marcus Kristensen](#) (2025). Mapping Quality Judgment in International Relations: Cognitive Dimensions and Sociological Correlates. *Perspectives on Politics*.

Zemanová, M., & Madarászová, A. (2025). *Emotions and feeling rules in political discourse: The case of NATO–Russian relations over Ukraine*. *Czech Journal of International Relations*, 60(2).

Module 3: Psychology of Political Leadership and Foreign Policy

This module analyzes the role of psychology and decision making in the context of foreign policy. Students learn about various mental and cognitive processes of decision making and the psychological of political leadership.

Session 1: Psychology of Political Leadership

This session explores political leaders and their main psychological qualities and characteristics. Students learn the major psychological attributes that make a good politician and/or have characterized main politicians.

Required Readings:

[S. Ramesh](#) (2024). The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Political Leadership: A Management Approach to Political Psychology. *Journal of Psychology and Political Science* 4(41):10-16.

Birkenmaier, L., & Lechner, C. (2025). Measuring politicians' public personality traits using computational text analysis: A multimethod feasibility study for agency and communion. *Political Analysis*. 00, 1-19.

Session 2: Psychology of Foreign Policy Decision Making

This session analyzes the mental/cognitive processes of decision making in the political context. Students will be introduced to the process of political decision making from a psychological perspective.

Required Readings:

[Irfan Maqbool](#), [Ansar Mahmood](#), [Khalid Mahmood Awan](#), & [Komal Hina](#) (2024). Cognitive Biases in Leadership Decision-Making: A Comprehensive Study of Western and Middle Eastern Power's Responses to the Ukrainian and Palestinian Refugee Crises Amid Global Geopolitical Tensions. *Comparative Research Journal Archive.*, Vol. 2. No. 04.

Luis Felipe Sarmiento, Pamela Lopes da Cunha, Sonia Tabares, Gustavo Tafet, Amauri Gouveia Jr (2024). Decision-making under stress: A psychological and neurobiological integrative model, *Brain, Behavior, & Immunity - Health*, Volume 38.

Module 4: The Psychology of International Negotiation and Preventative Diplomacy

This module is focused on the analysis of the role of psychological factors in the negotiation process. Students also learn about impact of psychology on political communication and meet with diplomats to discuss their experience in the field of diplomacy.

Session 1: Psychology of International Peace Negotiation

This session will focus on the international negotiation process between international players and psychological factors that might contribute to the peace-specific international negotiation processes. Students will learn how psychology contributes to peace negotiations between nations and governments and negotiation skills and strategies designed by the field of psychology to help in the international negotiation efforts.

Required Readings:

John L. A. (2025). Responding to the Israel–Palestine conflict. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. VOL. 106, NO. 1, 155–164.

Julian A (2024). Uncertain Readiness: Process Design and Complexity Management in Peace Negotiations. *International Studies Review*, viae006

Session 2: Psychology and Diplomatic Activity and Political Communication

This session analyzes the psychological factors that play significant role in diplomatic activities, and how these psychological contributions might be used by diplomats to better conduct their diplomatic activities. This session analyzes political communication skills based on psychologically sound communication skills. Students study communication skills that psychologists advise politicians to use while communicating politically and communicating political content.

Required Readings:

[Papathanassopoulos](#) S. [Giannouli](#) I. (2025). Political Communication in the Age of Platforms. *Encyclopedia*. 5.(2):77.

Arslan, S. (2025). Political communication and political psychology perspectives on the Ukraine crisis: A framing and discourse analysis (2013–2025). *GPH-International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 8(10), 93–155.

Module 5: The Psychology of Refugees and International Relations

In this module, students will analyze the psychological role of the current refugee crises on international relations, and how the psychological considerations of refugees, humanitarian workers, and politicians affect peace negotiation process. Emphasis will be put on the role of media, communication, the psychological impact that media's representation of the refugee crises has on the general population, and how this affects negotiation, diplomacy, and political communication and decision making.

Session 1: A Picture Can Save a Thousand Lives; The Psychological Impact of Refugees on International Relations and Public Diplomacy

Situated in the context of "viral" photos that have defined the refugee crisis in the past few years, student will analyze how psychology explains international reactions to the refugee crises, the impact of public perception and group psychology on political decision making, and the impact of the psychology of both refugees and decision makers on international relations and public diplomacy. Students will also discuss the role of psychology in building positive peace among displaced communities.

Required Readings:

Christine E. Meltzer a, Pablo Jost b, Christian Schemer b, Simon Kruschinski b, and Marcus Maurer (2025). How (Gendered) Media Portrayals of Refugees Affect Attitudes Toward Immigration. The Moderating Role of Political Ideology. Political Communication, DOI: 10.1080/10584609.2025.2472765.

Danish Refugee Council (2024) *Global Displacement Forecast*. Copenhagen, Denmark.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence.

Description of Assignments:

Students will be assessed in this course through the following dimensions:

Student's Led Discussion (30%) Due date (right after the class of the chosen topic)

Each student chooses one lecture topic (session topic) and leads a group discussion after class. Students should cover the following in the discussion:

1. Include any current middle eastern issue in the discussion in a clear manner
2. Bring in at least one point from the readings to the discussion
3. Bring in at least one point from the topic lecture

Peace and Psychology Current Issues (25%), Assignment 2

Based on assignment # 1 above, each student submits a written paper regarding the discussion she/he led (no more than 2 pages, 1.5 space, times new roman, 12 font) with the following:

1. A brief summary of the discussion he/she led

2. Bring in a psychological construct/concept/notion/theory and embed in the paper context
3. A clear list of what were the main learning points for the student out of assignment 1 and 2.

Comprehensive Analysis Paper (35%), Assignment 3

(In no more than 5 pages, 1.5 space, times new roman, 12 font) present a comprehensive analysis of the various aspects of psychology of peace in Jordan and Turkey. In your analysis; pick at least one concept of each class (covered prior to the date of this assignment) and analyze it from the lens of a political psychologist. In your analysis, towards the end of analyzing each psychological aspect, bring in your experience in Turkey o the analysis, and compare and contrast with Jordan.

Participation and Attendance: (10%)

Attendance during the thematic seminar is mandatory, and your grade will reflect your involvement in class and outside class.

Students are responsible for the timely reading of materials assigned for each session. In addition to readings, it is also your responsibility to keep up to date with current events. At a minimum, you are required to read the *Jordan Times* newspaper (in hardcopy form or online <http://www.jordantimes.com>). It is also recommended that you read a daily newspaper available on-line in English (for example, *Ammon News* at <http://en.ammonnews.net/>)

Assessment:

Lecture and Module Discussion	30%
Peace and Psychology Current Issues	25%
Comprehensive analysis paper	35%
Participation and Attendance	10%

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared. Be on time. Have your Reading completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.

- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done according to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (those of classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits, etc.). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Credit Hours: School for International Training (SIT) adheres to the standard that 1 credit hour equals no less than 45 hours of coursework. The calculation is based on the standard 50-minute academic hour. The number of credits each course carries determines how many total hours each course involves in a semester. Of the 45-hours for 1-credit hour, one third is designated for direct faculty instruction. Direct faculty instruction includes all learning activities led by the faculty whether in the classroom or in the field — lectures, guest speakers, site visits, hands-on field activities, etc.

The full policy on credit hours can be found [here](#).

AI Usage: SIT's [policy on Generative AI and Academic Programs](#) is included as an addendum to the academic integrity policy.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Accessibility Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.