

POL358H-F: Conflicts, Minority Rights and Para-States in Europe

CEES, Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy

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Fall Term 2025
Tues 1 – 3 PM
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Course overview:

This course examines conflicts and para-states in the European Union's (EU) backyard. As EU enlargement continues, the European Commission has confirmed that it will be importing any bilateral conflicts into the Union. That said, what happened in Cyprus in joining the EU as a divided island in 2004 cannot happen again.

The course primarily examines a number of unresolved issues in Europe that are largely shaped by real and perceived shortcomings in minority rights. After a section on Roma Rights in Central Europe, our focus turns to the origins and outcomes of largely separatist wars in Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and the peace agreements that followed. Of particular focus is the role of the EU within the framework of European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP), Russia and the United States and the paths to something more than the ceasefires that are now in place. After that, we will examine some issues in the Balkans that continue to present challenges to the EU enlargement process.

The course emphasizes intensive reading along with feature films and documentaries. Students will be expected to be completely familiar with the historical and contemporary contexts along with the peace treaties that shape the region prior to the start of the class.

On Academic Integrity:

"Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information on plagiarism please see Writing at the University of Toronto <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>".

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours

that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- " Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- " Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- " Making up sources or facts.
- " Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:

- " Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
- " Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test.
- " Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work:

- " Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
- " Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesfor_students.html).

On Accommodation:

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs.

GRADING SCHEME

There are four components to the grade for the course that combine participation and different styles of writing. One of the key objectives of the course is to develop different writing skills and the ability to write for different audiences.

- 1) Each week (starting with week 2), students will contribute their reflections, insights, experiences, and analysis to a discussion thread on Quercus about the week's

readings/viewings. In addition, students may reply to others' contributions as the thread develops. Posts do not need to be long, but they should be thoughtful and demonstrate that you are deeply engaged with the ideas presented. Posts will be marked on the degree to which they engage the week's material in a clear, creative, and analytically productive fashion. There are 10 weeks for discussion as we skip the first and last weeks of class. **15%**

- 2) OP-ED: (800 **MINIMUM** - 1000 words **MAXIMUM**) - **35%** - **Due 17 October 2025 – 1159 PM** – You will be expected to write an opinion piece on an issue of central importance now for the places we are studying at this moment. We will discuss the format in detail in class. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with this style of essay by regularly reading similar pieces in the *New York Times*, *Financial Times* or other leading newspapers. Run your topics by me. **Submit papers to me via Quercus in docx format with name in file, no title pages and word count on first page.**
- 3) Final Take Home Essay (3000 words Maximum exclusive of references) - **40%** – **DUE 1 December 2025 – 1159 PM** – This will be a big picture question about the peace building process in general which will allow you to reflect on the prospects for long-term peace. Responses will be based on the course readings and films. **Submit papers to me via Quercus in docx format with name in file, no title pages and word count (exclusive of references) on first page.**
- 4) Regular attendance and participation – **10%**.

The late penalty is 2% per day on all written assignments (including weekends).

Great sources:

The European Council on Foreign Relations: <http://www.ecfr.eu/>

Other sites of interest:

International Crisis Group - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/>

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace - <https://carnegieendowment.org/>

Open Democracy - <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/>

European Stability Initiative - <https://esiweb.org/>

Politico: <https://www.politico.eu/>

EU Observer: <https://euobserver.com/>

Deutsche Welle: www.dw.com

Students should follow the following websites regularly

Caucasus

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/>

<https://eurasianet.org/>

This is a really great site with extremely unique stories:

<https://chai-khana.org/en/about>

This issue had great stories on borders:

<https://chai-khana.org/en/edition/22>

Balkans

www.Balkaninsight.com

www.rferl.org

Watch!

Places that Don't Exist (2005). Directed by Simon Reeve. It has programs on Abkhazia/South Ossetia, Karabagh and Transnistria. Watch all three before the first class. They are a bit dated but still have some value.

[Bizarre Russian States: Life in Abkhazia, Transnistria & Donbas | Documentary](#)

The Distant Barking of Dogs (2018). Directed by Simon Lereng Wilmont. <https://video-alexanderstreet-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/watch/the-distant-barking-of-dogs>

Black Orchards: Azerbaijan and Armenia's wars (2019). Directed by Atakan Kerkuklu. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0H3TJchQ4U>.

Donbass (2018). Directed by Sergei Loznitsa. <https://easterneuropeanmovies.com/drama/donbass>

Class schedule

Week 1: The Roma in Europe

Watch: *Welcome Nowhere* (2013) alongside the 5 minute BBC News video "[Europe's Roma community's life under Covid](#)" (2021).

Read: [In But Not of Europe?: The Precarious Rights of Roma in the European Union](#)
[Jacqueline Bhabha](#)

Doi:

<https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1215/9780822371564-009>

[The end of a decade: what happened to Roma inclusion? | openDemocracy](#)

Week 2: Karabagh

Read:

“Picturing the Uncertain Calm on Armenia’s Front Lines.” *International Crisis Group*. December 4, 2019. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/armenia/picturing-uncertain-calm-armenias-front-lines>

<https://eurasianet.org/in-renewed-fighting-azerbaijan-captures-additional-territory-in-karabakh>

<https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2020/11/a-precarious-peace-for-karabakh?lang=en>

Week 3: Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Read:

“Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Time to Talk Trade.” *International Crisis Group*. May 24, 2018. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/georgia/249-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia-time-talk-trade>

Thomas De Waal, South Ossetia Today
<https://3dcftas.eu/publications/south-ossetia-today>

Re-examining the Radicalizing Narratives of Georgia’s Conflicts

<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/05/re-examining-the-radicalizing-narratives-of-georgias-conflicts?lang=en¢er=europe>

Week 4: Transnistria

Read:

Rogstad, Adrian. “The Next Crimea?” *Problems of Post-Communism* 65, no. 1 (2018): 9-64. https://resolver-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/resolve/10758216/v65i0001/49_tnc.xml.

Beyer, John and Stefan Wolff. “Linkage and leverage effects on Moldova's Transnistria problem.” *East European Politics* 32, no. 3 (2016): 335-354. https://resolver-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/resolve/21599165/v32i0003/335_laleomtp.xml.

Week 5: Donbas

Read:

Hauter, Jakob. "How the War Began: Conflict Escalation in the Donbas." https://f54611c8-e9cf-4ce0-bcf2-1737869516c7.filesusr.com/ugd/ff1dca_1743f093afc04b1d8942efa0ff0f083a.pdf

Watch:

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/20-days-in-mariupol/>

And: DIY Country – available through Kanopy on the Library site.

Week 6: Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Read:

Ker-Lindsay, James. "Great Powers, Counter Secession, and Non-Recognition: Britain and the 1983 Unilateral Declaration of Independence of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 28, no. 3 (July 2017): 431-453. https://resolver-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/resolve/09592296/v28i0003/431_gpcsanotronc.xml.

Week 7: Northern Kosovo

Read:

Beha, Adem. "Disputes over the 15-Point Agreement on Normalization of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia." *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 102–121. <https://www-cambridge-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/core/journals/nationalities-papers/article/disputes-over-the-15point-agreement-on-normalization-of-relations-between-kosovo-and-serbia/6A33B594176C93A609D0D5F8BE9B75D0>.

Hajrullahu, Arben. 'The Serbia Kosovo Dispute and the European Integration Perspective'. *European Foreign Affairs Review* 24, no. 1 (2019): 101–120.

Week 8: Bulgaria and North Macedonia

Read:

<https://balkaninsight.com/2022/07/08/in-north-macedonias-protest-wave-right-and-left-mingle/>



[In North Macedonia's Protest Wave, Right and Left Mingle](#)

The rallies against acceptance of the French proposal for lifting Bulgaria's blockade on North Macedonia's EU talks draw on discontent felt across the political spectrum.

balkaninsight.com

<https://www.rferl.org/a/thousands-protest-north-macedonia-bulgaria/31926735.html>



[Thousands Protest In North Macedonia Against Compromise With Bulgaria](#)

Famed Soviet and Russian animator Leonid Shvartsman has died at age 101, Russia's TASS news agency reports on July 2.

"Leonid Aronovich Shvartsman, a legend of animated cinema, a unique artist ...

www.rferl.org

<https://balkaninsight.com/2022/07/11/anger-over-french-proposal-fails-to-shake-north-macedonias-ethnic-peace/>



[Anger Over French Proposal Fails to Shake North Macedonia's Ethnic Peace | Balkan Insight](#)

On the weekend of July 2 and 3, some media and many social networks were flooded with claims that "people in KLA uniforms are parading through Tetovo and Gostivar", suggesting that this was a ...

balkaninsight.com

Week 9: Republika Srbska

Read: <https://www.politico.eu/article/secession-threat-bosnia-milorad-dodik-eu-limited-options/>

Watch: What's Next for Bosnia
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTuw4DLKVV0>

Week 11: Case Study of Albanian Language Rights in North Macedonia

Read: [North Macedonia's Language Law of 2018: Too Good to be True?](#)

Lantschner, Emma

European yearbook of minority issues, 2021, Vol.18 (1), p.184-202

<https://balkaninsight.com/2019/12/30/language-law-tests-ethnic-relations-in-north-macedonia-again/>

Week 12: Film TBA!! Essay Due!!!