



MPhil Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation

Course Overview 2025-26

The MPhil in Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, Trinity College Dublin at Belfast, is an inter-disciplinary course examining conflict and peacebuilding in Ireland and around the world. This document provides an overview of the modules on offer in the academic year 2025-26.

At Trinity, course elements are weighted with credits according to the European Credit Transfer Scheme – ECTS. The required ECTS for the MPhil is 90. All Master's students **must complete** the Research Skills module (10 ECTS), plus a further 50 ECTS worth of taught modules (5 modules) and a dissertation (30 ECTS). Module registration takes place at the beginning of the course and students **must complete and return a module registration form**.

It should be noted that students may also take for credit or audit up to two modules from **two Dublin MPhil programmes**, International Peace Studies (IPS), and Contextual Theology and Interfaith Relations (CTIR). This will require Belfast-based students to travel for classes held in Dublin and those who wish to do so should make sure that timetabling clashes can be avoided and their visa allows them to travel to the Republic of Ireland. The Dublin timetable will be provided.

It is recommended that you balance your modules over the two terms. Please note you may not take more than four modules in one term. Community Learning is an exception to this rule as it is available over two terms. You may also audit modules (i.e. take the class but not for credit).

*Information provided below is done so in good faith and is correct as of June 2025. **Modules may be amended depending on staff availability. In addition, module availability depends on numbers of interested students.***



Research Skills EM7301

Co-ordinator: Dr David Mitchell (damitche@tcd.ie)

Time: Michaelmas/Autumn Semester

Format: Weekly lectures, most Tuesday mornings 10.30-12.30

Assessment: Dissertation proposal and proposal presentation

Overview

This module provides an insight into some of the core skills needed to develop as a graduate student here at Trinity College Dublin. The module will reflect on a number of core themes including: reading and writing; theories of knowledge production; qualitative research methods; ethical considerations in research; and data analysis. It has been designed in such a way as to support the successful completion of written assignments in the taught modules and serves as early preparation for the MPhil dissertation. In addition, the sessions will provide an orientation to some of the resources available for studies during the programme and an analysis of academic skills involved in graduate work.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the different theoretical arguments surrounding the production of knowledge.
- Grasp issues pertaining to qualitative and quantitative enquiry.
- Submit academic work in an appropriate structure and format, with a full bibliography and consistent referencing.
- Distinguish between proper academic use of research material of others and inappropriate plagiarism.
- Develop a coherent plan for the dissertation.

Select Reading

- Lamont, Christopher (2021) *Research Methods in International Relations 2nd Ed.* Sage: London.
- Bryman, Alan (2015). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press.



Conflict and Peace in Northern Ireland EM7469

Co-ordinator: Dr Brendan Ciarán Browne (brbrowne@tcd.ie)

Time: Michaelmas/Autumn Semester

Format: Weekly lectures, most Thursdays 10.30-12.30 plus field visits

Assessment: Reflective essay

Overview

This course analyses the origins and dynamics of the conflict across the region with a view to assessing the prospects for peace and reconciliation. Core topics include, *inter alia*: explanations of the conflict (colonial, economic, religious, ethno-nationalist); Irish republican/nationalist, and Ulster unionist/loyalist perspectives of the conflict; the peace process and Good Friday Agreement; prisons as sites of resistance during the troubles, and reimagining Belfast as a post-conflict city. Students will be invited to form their own views on the current, complex condition of Northern Ireland and to examine the multi-faceted nature of Northern Ireland's transition. (Note field visits are a core component in this module, meaning there may be a small charge for transport/fees and/or entrance into museums).

Learning Outcomes

- Identify and analyse the causes of the conflict in the north of Ireland including the merits of different perspectives on the nature of the conflict in Northern Ireland.
- Give a detailed account of processes of change leading up to the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and thereafter.
- Analyse the continuing tendencies for conflict in 'transitional'/post-conflict' Northern Ireland and assess the prospects for real and meaningful reconciliation.

Select Reading

- Cochrane, Feargal (2021) *Northern Ireland: The Fragile Peace*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Coulter, Colin, Niall Gilmartin, Katie Hayward and Peter Shirlow (2021) *Northern Ireland a Generation After Good Friday: Lost Futures and New Horizons in the 'Long Peace'*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cox, Michael, Adrian Guelke and Fiona Stephen (eds) (2006) *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Mitchell, David (2015) *Politics and Peace in Northern Ireland: Political Parties and the Implementation of the 1998 Agreement*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.



Dynamics of Reconciliation EM7451

Co-ordinator: Dr David Mitchell (damitch@tcd.ie)

Time: Michaelmas/Autumn Semester

Format: Weekly lectures, Wednesdays 10.30-12.30

Assessment: Essay and presentation

Overview

This module interrogates the concept of reconciliation from a range of disciplinary perspectives and within various domains. What is reconciliation? Is it possible and why does it attract criticism, scepticism and even hostility? Does reconciliation mean abandoning justice and 'forgiving and forgetting'? What are the personal and social psychological dimensions of reconciliation? Is it an inherently religious idea – and how and why has it so often been promoted from a faith-based perspective? How can sport and the arts and symbolism contribute to reconciliation? What is political reconciliation? What roles do apology and forgiveness play? Can we measure reconciliation, and can we find it?

Learning Outcomes

- Understand reconciliation as a concept.
- Critically appraise the relationship between reconciliation and justice.
- Grasp how reconciliation has been pursued in various domains such as politics, sport, and the arts.
- Understand how reconciliation has been understood in different traditions, such as faith traditions and liberal human rights tradition.

Select Reading

- Kim, Dong Jin, Mitchell, David, and Wylie, Gillian (2003) *Peace and Conflict in a Changing World: Key Issues In Peace Studies*. Palgrave.
- Bar-Simon-Tov, Taacov (ed.) (2004) *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*, edited by Yaacov Bar-Simon-Tov, (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Lederach, John Paul (1997) *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Conciliation Resources (2021) *Reconciliation in Focus: Approaching Reconciliation in Peacebuilding Practice*. Briefing Paper. Online.
- Bloomfield, David, Teresa Barnes, and Luc Huyse (eds.) (2003) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Online.



Mediation and Peacebuilding Skills EM7487

Co-ordinator: Dr. Carlo Aldrovandi (aldrovac@tcd.ie)

Time: Michaelmas/Autumn Semester

Format: One week intensive, 1-5 December 2025

Assessment: Essay

Overview

The Mediation and Conflict Analysis Skills Module is taught as a one week intensive. The aim of the module is to provide a theoretical and practical introduction to mediation and dialogue facilitation skills in the context of intractable conflict. In addition, the module offers an insight into political negotiations and conflict management practices, and outlines how to prepare for, and conduct dialogue in challenging environments.

Learning Outcomes

- Develop an understanding of mediation, dialogue and conflict analysis models.
- Grasp various dialogue methods and facilitation techniques as well as planning, conducting and monitoring a dialogue process.
- Begin the cognitive and emotive process of operationalizing how to translate different conflict resolution/transformation theories of change into facilitation and dialogue theories of practice.

Select Readings

- Dugan, M. A. (1996). *A Nested Theory of Conflict. Women and Leadership: Sharing the Vision* 1(1), 9–19.
- Lederach, J.P. (2005). *The Moral Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Meadows, D. (2010). Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System, *The Solutions Journal*, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 41-49
- Anderson, M. & Olson, L. (2003). *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Cambridge, MA: Collaborative for Development Action.



Community Learning and Reflective Practice EM7454

Co-ordinator: Dr Brendan Ciarán Browne

Time: Michaelmas/Autumn Semester **&/or** Hilary/Spring Semester

Format: Placement OR assignments

Assessment: Reflective portfolio (completed throughout the year) and supervisor evaluation (for placement) OR assignments

Overview

- *Option 1*

Students undertake a placement with a partner organisation, allowing them to connect this experience with what is being learned in the classroom. Those who choose to undertake a placement should do so in line with their interests and abilities and consult with the Module Co-ordinator to identify an appropriate organisation. In this module, students are expected to work a minimum of 70 hours with the organisation between October 2025 and April 2026. Students submit a reflective essay on completion of the placement. Students enrolled in this class must also take the 'Conflict and Peace in Northern Ireland' module to ensure that their experiences in the community are grounded in a sound understanding of the socio-political context.

- *Option 2*

Alternatively, students can opt to complete a package of assignments (inc. podcasts, reviews, reflective journal) focussed on reporting and assessing peace/justice work taking place in the community.

Please note, this module will be awarded a **pass/fail** grade.

Learning Outcomes

- Engage in 'reflective practice'.
- Connect 'theory' from the classroom with 'practice' in various organisations.
- Identify skills gained through community-based work.

Select Reading

- Carol Bergman, ed. (2003) *Another Day in Paradise: International Humanitarian Workers Tell Their Stories*, Maryknoll NY, Orbis.



Transitional Justice EM7447

Co-ordinator: Dr Brendan Ciarán Browne

Time: Hilary/Spring Semester

Format: Weekly lectures, Thursdays 10.30-12.30

Assessment: Podcast, photo essay, & presentation

Overview

The aim of this course is to provide students with a critical examination of the fundamental questions and concerns of transitional justice, and to unpack the many ways that transitional justice mechanisms have been trialled in conflicted/post-conflict societies across the world. The core areas of transitional justice, including its liberal underpinnings, the role of domestic/international criminal tribunals, truth recovery, reparations, institutional reform, and memorialisation are covered. In so doing, students are provided with the framework to better interrogate some of the challenges associated with dealing with the past in conflicted and transitional societies. The interdisciplinary nature of the module is one of the great attractions of studying transitional justice and permits students to engage with sociological, anthropological, legal, and political material. In addition, case studies are used to illuminate and bring to the fore some of the core issues.

Learning Outcomes

- Comprehend the theoretical and historical underpinnings of the field of transitional justice.
- Assess the legal, political and sociological concepts relevant to the field of transitional justice and critically reflect on the role of transitional justice in aiding reconciliation and dealing with the past.
- Utilise practical case-study examples in order to bring the field of transitional justice to light and to highlight its (in)applicability in any given context.

Select Reading

- Teitel, R. G. (2000) *Transitional justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hayner, P. B. (2011) *Unspeakable truths: Facing the challenge of truth commissions*. New York: Routledge,
- McEvoy, K., & McGregor, L. (Eds.) (2008) *Transitional justice from below: Grassroots activism and the struggle for change*. Hart Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Roht-Arriaza, N., and J. Mariezcurrena, eds. (2006) *Transitional justice in the twenty-first century: beyond truth versus justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kritz, N. J. (1995) *Transitional justice: how emerging democracies reckon with former regimes*. Vol(s). 1- 3, US Institute of Peace Press.
- Browne, B. C. (2023) *Transitional (In)Justice & Enforcing the Peace on Palestine*. Palgrave MacMillan.



Contemporary Conflict and Peacemaking: Global Perspectives EM7448

Co-ordinator: Dr Brendan Ciarán Browne /Dr David Mitchell

Time: Hilary/Spring Semester

Format: Weekly lectures, most Tuesdays 11.00-13.00

Assessment: Essay and presentation

Overview

The module provides students with a theoretical understanding of the causes and dynamics of violence inter-group conflicts and approaches to their resolution. It offers a series of significant and diverse country/regional case studies, including Israel-Palestine, the former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, and the Korean peninsula. In each instance a series of questions are posed: what are the causes of inter-group tension and violence?; in what forms has the conflict manifested itself over time?; what role have regional and transnational factors played?; how have political leaders, civil society and third parties sought to resolve the conflict, and how successful have those efforts been?; and what are the prospects for, and the contextual constraints on, reconciliation? By taking a global approach, this module highlights successes, dilemmas, challenges, and cross-national learning, in contemporary conflict resolution.

Learning Outcomes

- Appraise the context of global conflict resolution today, including the distinct features of contemporary violent identity conflict.
- Compare and contrast a number of cases of violent inter-group conflict, identifying similarities and differences.
- Evaluate the variety of strategies which have been used in these cases to manage and transform conflict.

Select Reading

- Özerdem, Alpaslan and Roger Mac Ginty (eds.) (2019) *Comparing Peace Processes*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mac Ginty, Roger and Anthony Wanis-St. John (eds.) (2022) *Contemporary Peacemaking: Peace Processes, Peacebuilding, and Conflict*. London: Palgrave Macmillan
- Tonge, Jonathan (2014) *Comparative Peace Processes*. Cambridge: Polity
- Paffenholz, Thania (2010) *Civil Society & Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*. London: Lynne Rienner.



Dissertation

Co-ordinators: Dr David Mitchell/Dr Brendan Ciarán Browne

Assessment: 12,000 words, to be supervised by an appropriate member of staff. Supervisors will be allocated following the submission of formal dissertation proposals at the beginning of March.

Submission Date: August 2026