

Faculty of Economic, Social and Political Sciences



HUMA3860 The geo-politics of conflicts and humanitarian aid

[15h] 2 credits

This course is taught in the 1st semester

Teacher(s): Tanguy de Wilde d'Estmael
Language: French
Level: Third cycle

Aims

Using as its basis a definition of geo-politics by Yves Lacoste ("knowing how to think" of the space in which to elucidate the struggles that unfold, and to explain the perception of the space of the actors who oppose one another there), the course focuses on being able to identify the geo-political issues in present-day international conflicts, and changes in the kind of conflict that in turn brings about change in the perception of humanitarian action.

The aim is to be able to situate humanitarian aid among the ways of managing conflicts occurring at international level, and identifying the ambiguities of humanitarian aid in this setting.

Main themes

- The development of humanitarian action from 1945 to the present day, as a function of the development of conflicts.
- Through a detailed geo-political analysis of conflicts, to study the various conjunctures that have led to the deployment of humanitarian action. A distinction needs to be drawn between military-humanitarian operations carried out on the initiative of states (e.g. "Provide Comfort" in Iraqi Kurdistan), actions recommended by the United Nations under Chapter VII of the UN Charter as a way of re-establishing peace (e.g. "Restore Hope" in Somalia), peacekeeping missions carried out by the Blue Helmets (e.g. FORPRONU in former Yugoslavia), and one-off NGO activities to provide emergency aid (e.g. various actions by MSF in Africa, and "indiscriminate" multilateral action by the ICRC).
- the meaning and non-meaning of the "right" and the "duty" to engage in humanitarian interference.
- The distinction between humanitarian action and humanitarianism.
- Case-study: Operation Turquoise in Rwanda.

Content and teaching methods

Content

Reading: NOHA network syllabus as an introduction.

Corpus of reading: humanitarian actors and thinkers like Rufin, Brauman and Bettati).

A case-study conducted in the presence of the author: Olivier Lanotte, "L'Opération Turquoise au Rwanda" : intervention humanitaire ou nouvel avatar de la politique africaine de la France ?", Louvain-la-Neuve, UCL, Department of Political and Social Sciences, Collection Département des sciences politiques et sociales, Collection "Notes et Etudes de l'Unité des relations internationales", No 8, 1996, 94 pp.

A complementary case-study relating to the world conjuncture.

Methodology

For the most part, the course is based on classroom discussions on prior reading. The course is planned in this way to make the sessions into spaces for questioning, rather spaces for learning. The teacher will first answer all spontaneous questions that have come out of the reading to make sure that the reading has been understood, and the input from the reading will then be structured in a schematic way.

Other information (prerequisite, evaluation (assessment methods), course materials recommended readings, ...)

Geo-politics (IDRI 2108), a Course running alongside this one.

An oral examination in which students may refer openly to reference material, and two questions of reflection that have come from a list provided at the end of the course. It will be possible to replace one of the questions with a dissertation on one of the themes addressed during the course, or on one of the questions in the list.

NOHA network syllabus and reading.

Programmes in which this activity is taught

HUMA3DS	Diplôme d'études spécialisées en actions humanitaires internationales
POLS3DA/RI	Diplôme d'études approfondies en sciences politiques et sociales (relations internationales)

Other credits in programs

HUMA3DS	Diplôme d'études spécialisées en actions humanitaires internationales	(2 credits)	Mandatory
POLS3DA/RI	Diplôme d'études approfondies en sciences politiques et sociales (relations internationales)	(2 credits)	