

## Syllabus/Programme

### Critical Peace and Civil Society (in Kurmancî)

Dr. Ferda Fahrioğlu

When & Where:

Hosted by: Humboldt University with 4 ECTS Certification\*

Department

#### \*How to count your Off university course towards credit?

Successful completion of a course at Off University is certified by the host university. This means that you are able to use these credits at any university in the EHEA in a programme you are enrolled in, or you may count this as previous knowledge in a future study programme. In order to be sure that you can transfer the credits, we suggest you get written confirmation by your home university's students' office. And if you are not enrolled in any university programme: You are very welcome to join! All our courses are free of charge and open to anyone: students, scholars, activists.

#### Description:

The online laboratory “Critical Peace and Civil Society” examines the role of civil society as a central mid-level actor in peace-building processes, drawing on the foundational framework of John Paul Lederach and his influential work *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (1997). Building on Lederach’s tripartite model of peace-building leadership—top-level, mid-level, and grassroots—the course focuses specifically on mid-level actors, including civil society organizations (CSOs), religious and ethnic leaders, intellectuals, and professional associations, and their capacity to bridge decision-makers and conflict-affected communities.

The course engages with key debates in critical peace theory regarding the normative and practical roles of civil society in divided societies. Particular attention is given to the seven functions of civil society identified by Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurk (2006)—protection, monitoring and accountability, advocacy, socialization for peace, social cohesion, mediation and facilitation, and service provision—and how these functions operate in contexts of protracted conflict. Through a combination of theoretical readings and case-based analysis, students will critically assess both the transformative potential and the limitations of civil society interventions.

Structured as an interactive seminar, the course integrates academic literature with experiential knowledge. Representatives from civil society organisations, including member organizations of the Critical Peace Network, including groups working in human rights, women’s rights, LGBTQI+ advocacy, cultural heritage, memory, and education, will participate as guest speakers. The course places particular emphasis on peace-building initiatives related to the Kurdish issue in Turkey and Syria, with contributions from practitioners and students from Rojava University, who will share field experiences from civil society work conducted under challenging conditions. Each week, a representative from a civil society organization working on the relevant topic will share their

experiences. Following that, students from Rojava University will give presentations on similar civil society initiatives in Rojava, and a comparative discussion will take place.

Students will engage in weekly thematic discussions, practitioner dialogues, and case study analysis. Course requirements include active participation and a research paper examining a civil society organization operating in a peace-related field in Syria. Designed to provide a secure environment for all participants, the course aims to foster critical reflection, comparative analysis, and context-sensitive understanding of civil society's evolving role in sustainable peace-building processes.

### Digital Self Defense

Our platform is dedicated to spread knowledge threatened by authoritarian and right-wing populist regimes and to put measures in place that enable people to practice digital self-defense.

We encourage all users to sign up for the platform anonymously and respect others' preferences for staying anonymous. **Please do not force anyone to share personal information or take screenshots of others without their knowledge.**

The courses take place on Off University's Moodle. The platform includes an encrypted video-call option, a cloud storage, as well as a messaging system. We would like to remind all users that communication with other users outside of the platform (i.e. e-mail, Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp or other video conferencing tools) may put them at risk.

### Learning Outcomes

1. A detailed understanding of the concept "Critical Peace".
2. An introduction to interdisciplinary thinking encompassing the fields of political science, peace and conflict studies, and sociology..
3. Examining cases in conflict zones from a perspective of peace and conflict resolution.
4. The development of argumentation and deliberation skills for the purpose of engaging in evidence-based debate.
5. Listening to and conducting comparative analysis of field experiences from civil society representatives in Turkey and Syria.

### The methodology includes:

The methodology encompasses the following:

1. Lectures and Seminars,
2. Readings,
3. Discussions,

4. Case studying,
5. Preparing presentations
6. Writing a research paper
7. Members of the Critical Peace Network in Turkey participating in the class as guests and sharing their experiences.

### **The final grade for the course will be based on the following:**

The final grade for the course will be determined by the following criteria:

\*Active participation and engagement in discussions is measured at 20%.

- \*Written assignments (40%): Case Study Analysis. All written work must be original, properly referenced, and comply with academic integrity standards.

\*The final assessment will consist of a 40% contribution from a 15-minute slide presentation, to be followed by a 5-minute question-and-answer session. Participants are tasked with the preparation of a research study on a right-based civil society organisation.

### **Organization of the course**

<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Guests</b>
<b>Week 1</b> <b>14.04.2026</b>	Introduction to civil society's role in peace-building	
<b>Week 2</b> <b>21.04.2026</b>	Critical Peace Network Experience	-International Solidarity
<b>Week 3</b> <b>28.04.2026</b>	Peace, Human Rights and Transitional Justice	-Human Rights Association (İHD)
<b>Week 4</b> <b>05.05.2026</b>	Peace and Law	-Foundation for Society and Legal Studies (TOHAV)
<b>Week 5</b> <b>12.05.2026</b>	Peace and Law II	-Association of Lawyer for Freedom (ÖHD)
<b>Week 6</b> <b>19.05.2026</b>	Peace and Cultural Heritage	-Diyarbakır Association for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets (DKVD)
<b>Week 7</b> <b>26.05.2026</b>	Peace and Gender I	-Rosa Woman Association -Woman Times Association
<b>Week 8</b>	Peace and Gender II	-LGBTİ+ Initiative for Peace (BİLGBTİ+)

<b>02.06.2026</b>		
<b>Week 9</b> <b>09.06.2026</b>	Peace and Memory I	-Memory Center
<b>Week 10</b> <b>16.06.2026</b>	Peace and Memory II	-Association of Roman Memory Studies (Romani Godi)
<b>Week 11</b> <b>23.06.2026</b>	Peace and Education	-BİRARADA Institute - OFF University
<b>Week 12</b> <b>30.06.2026</b>	Peace Journalism	
<b>Week 13</b> <b>07.07.2026</b>	Peace Culture	
<b>Week 14</b> <b>14.07.2024</b>	Evaluations and Feedback	

## Focus/Topic of the week & Reading List

### **Week 1: Introduction to civil society's role in peace-building**

In the preliminary course on peace and conflict resolution, the roles of actors in peacebuilding will be discussed. The role of civil society organisations, which can be considered as mid-level actors, in the process of peacebuilding will be explained with examples from global experiences.

#### ***Reading materials***

Lederach, J.P., 1997, Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC

Thania Paffenholz, "Civil society and peacebuilding" [https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/DHF\\_DD63\\_p108-118.pdf](https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/DHF_DD63_p108-118.pdf)

- Paffenholz (ed), Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010)

### **Week 2: Critical Peace Network Experience**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a representative from the civil society organisation listed below to participate as a guest speaker.

- International Solidarity

### ***Reading materials***

- <https://peace.pubpub.org/>

### **Week 3: Peace, Human Rights and Transitional Justice**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a representative from the civil society organisation listed below to participate as a guest speaker.

- Human Rights Association (İHD)

### ***Reading materials***

-İHD Report, “2024 special report on testimonies, interviews, informant-making and abductions through coercion and threats” <https://ihd.org.tr/en/2024-special-report-on-testimonies-interviews-informant-making-and-abductions-through-coercion-and-threats/>

- İHD Report “2023 Monitoring Report: Rights Violations in Turkish Prisons” <https://ihd.org.tr/en/2023-monitoring-report-rights-violations-in-turkish-prisons/>

### **Week 4: Peace and Law**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a representative from the civil society organisation listed below to participate as a guest speaker. Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

- Foundation for Society and Legal Studies (TOHAV)

### ***Reading Materials***

TOHAV Rapor “Rapora Çavdêriyê li Ser Binpêkirinên Mafan li Zindîgehên Herêma Mamarayê” <https://tohav.org.tr/ku/yayinlar/rapora-cavderiye-li-ser-binpekirinen-mafan-li-zindigehen-herema-marmaraye-137>

### **Week 5: Peace and Law II**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a representative from the civil society organisation listed below to participate as a guest speaker.

Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

-Association of Lawyer for Freedom (ÖHD)

### ***Reading Materials***

#### **Week 6: Peace and Cultural Heritage**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a representative from the civil society organisation listed below to participate as a guest speaker. Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

- Diyarbakır Association for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets (DKVD)

### ***Reading Materials***

- DKVD Report “Mîrasa Çandî ya Belgeyî ya Diyarbekirê”  
[https://www.dkvd.org/yayin/diyarbakirin\\_belgesel\\_kulturel\\_mirasi/](https://www.dkvd.org/yayin/diyarbakirin_belgesel_kulturel_mirasi/)

#### **Week 7: Peace and Gender I**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a representative from the civil society organisation listed below to participate as a guest speaker. Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

- Rosa Woman Association
- Woman Times Association

### ***Reading Materials***

- DEMOS Report “Peace and Gender: The Colombian Peace Process”  
<https://en.demos.org.tr/peace-and-gender-the-colombian-peace-process/>

-Komelaya Dema Jinan “Rapora Şopandina Ya Di Çarçoveya Rêveberiyên Heremî Ya Xwe Di Gihandina Mekanîzmayên Serlêdana Tundiya Bi Zimanê Dayîkê Ya Jinên Kurd Ên Ku Li Stenbolê Dijîn” <https://www.kadinzamani.org/kur/rapora-sopandina-ya-di-carcoveya-reveberiyen-heremi-ya-xwe-di-gihandina-mekanizmayen-serledana>

### **Week 8: Peace and Gender II**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a representative from the civil society organisation listed below to participate as a guest speaker. Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

-LGBTI+ Initiative for Peace (BİLGBTI+)

### ***Reading Materials***

- “The exclusion of LGBTQ+ in Turkey’s democratic opposition”

<https://theloop.ecpr.eu/the-exclusion-of-lgbtq-in-turkeys-democratic-opposition/>

- DEMOS report “From Converging Roads to Narrowing Grounds: The Struggle for Peace by LGBTI+ and Women’s Organizations in Turkey” <https://en.demos.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/from-converging-roads-to-narrowing-grounds-the-struggle-for-peace-by-lgbti-and-womens-organizations-in-turkey.pdf>

### **Week 9: Peace and Memory I**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a representative from the civil society organisation listed below to participate as a guest speaker. Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

-Memory Center

### ***Reading Materials***

- Hafıza Merkezi Report “Heta Edalet Bi Cî Neyê Aştî Jî Çênabe”: Pêpeskirinên Mafên Jîyanê Yên Li Bajarên Kurdan Li Ser Zarok û Ciwanan Tê Meşandin (2000-2015)”

<https://hakikatadalethafiza.org/kur/wesanen-me/heta-edalet-bi-ci-neye-asti-ji-cenabe-pepeskirinen-mafen-jiyane-yen-li-bajaren-kurdan-li>

- Hafıza Merkezi Report “Bêyî Dadweriya Dema Têperî Tespîta Heqîqetê ya Fermî: Komîsyonên Lêkolînê yên Meclîsê Li Tirkîyê” <https://hakikatadalethafiza.org/kur/wesanen-me/beyi-dadweriya-dema-teperi-tespita-heqiqete-ya-fermi-komisyonen-lekoline-yen-meclise-li>

- Hafıza Merkezi Report “Kêşeya Kurdî ya Herêmî ya Dinyaya Kurewî: Zêhniyet, Siyaset û Dînamîkên Jeopolîtîk” <https://hakikatadalethafiza.org/kur/wesanen-me/keseya-kurdi-ya-heremi-ya-dinyaya-kurewi-zehniyet-siyaset-u-dinamiken-jeopolitik>

### **Week 10: Peace and Memory II**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a representative from the civil society organisation listed below to participate as a guest speaker. Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

-Association of Roman Memory Studies (Romani Godi)

### ***Reading Materials***

- Romani Godi Report “Relocation Without Rights in Turkey: The Impact of Urban Transformation on Bağlarbaşı’s Romani Residents” <https://romanigodi.org/?p=3609>

### **Week 11: Peace and Education**

Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

-BİRARADA Institute

- OFF University

- OFF University Report “Li Tirkiyeyê Xebatên Aştîyê yên Rexneyî” <https://off.pubpub.org/pub/jzws6ilg/release/1>
- OFF University Rapor “Li Herêma Kurd Rehendên Dîrokî yên Sepandinên Rêveberiya Mehelî” <https://off.pubpub.org/pub/o8u1w1kf/release/1>

### **Week 12: Peace Journalism**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a journalist as a guest speaker. Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

### ***Reading Materialism***

- “What is Peace Journalism?” <https://mediapeaceproject.smpa.gwu.edu/2017/12/14/what-is-peace-journalism/>

### **Week 13: Peace and Climate**

Following the discussion of relevant literature and the case analysis, the class will welcome a a guest speaker. Rojava University students will deliver presentations on their research regarding civil society organisations working in the fields of peace and intersectionality in Syria.

### **Week 14: Evaluations and Feedback**