

Post-Conflict Stabilization and Reconstruction

The Maxwell School of Syracuse University
The Paul Greenberg Building
Washington D.C.
Thursday evenings
6:00pm – 8:45pm

Professor: Stephen Lennon
phone: 202 966-6535
lennonstephen@hotmail.com

Introduction

In an era of terrorism, internal conflicts and aggressive peacemaking, how peace and stability are achieved and consolidated as conflict wanes is especially important to understand. War-to-peace transitions are intense, complex processes where political, social and economic reference points are in continual motion. Assistance organizations often enter transition environments dangerously naïve to the difficulties of these settings – and dangerously unprepared to provide constructive assistance. Yet, there have been few other times in history when the post-conflict transition skills of international assistance organizations have been in such demand.

Course Objectives

Students in this course will acquire the skills that are necessary for a basic understanding of post-conflict transition environments. Students will also learn the fundamentals of navigating in such environments and how to begin to pursue a career within the post-conflict profession. There will be a special emphasis on practical knowledge that will be useful to students anticipating work in field locations where post-conflict transitions are underway. This practical knowledge will be contextualized within the dominant literature and debates about the future of conflict and post-conflict interventions. The course is appropriate for current and aspiring professionals in the military, diplomatic corps, graduate development study, the foundation and private philanthropy worlds, the development profession and humanitarian communities. Participants in the course will:

- Recognize the complexities and distinct challenges that are common in transition environments;
- Knowledgeably participate in the intellectual debate surrounding various models of post-conflict transition;
- Develop an appreciation of the organizational cultures and interaction patterns of various types of international organizations within transition interventions, and develop an understanding of how selected organizations respond to transitions by cultivating a familiarity with a sampling of their programmatic interventions;
- Gain a practical understanding of security, justice, governance and socioeconomic transition initiatives as well as a useful introduction of how to conduct programming in unpermissive environments;
- Develop written and oratorical skills helpful in advocating, defending and designing specific transition interventions;
- Learn the importance of managing stress in the field and of recognizing signs of compassion fatigue in yourself and colleagues;
- Build a network of professional contacts through guest lectures, interviews, dinners and research.

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to be innovative, diligent and active contributors to the course throughout the semester. Grading will reflect this expectation. Students will also be required to demonstrate individual initiative and the ability to work as part of team – both being critically important in the policy world and in field work.

20%	Preparation and class participation
20%	Book review or policy paper
35%	Working group research and final team presentation
25%	Take home final

Preparation and class participation (20%): It is essential for students to come to each class session prepared to discuss the material assigned for that week. Participation includes such things as consistent attendance, evident mastery of the material, thoughtful interaction in the classroom, engagement with the Blackboard internet platform, and personal contributions toward team projects. Count on spending 3 - 5 hours per week outside of the class on reading, writing, Blackboard interaction and research for the course.

Book review/policy paper (20%): Students will have the option of drafting a book review or a concise policy recommendation paper on topics mutually agreed upon with the professor. The **book review** must be approximately 1000 - 1200 words in length. A book review must contain a) analysis of the book's content; b) its bearing on broader issues covered in the course; c) reference to other comparable literature on the topic. If students choose to do a concise **policy paper**, it should be no longer than 1,800 words in length and the document should set out a structured, compelling, detailed argument for a course of action or policy orientation. You will find guidance on drafting both types of writing assignments on the course website. Valuable advice on structuring policy papers and book reviews is also provided on the Blackboard site.

Working groups research and presentation (35%): During the first three weeks of the course students will be assigned to working groups; typically 3-4 students. Working groups will conduct research and informational interviews and make a final presentation to the class on a relevant topic. Teams may choose any subject they feel strongly about, but must clear the topic with the professor before moving ahead with research, interviews and the preparation of a presentation. Topics may include any one of a number of dilemmas common to democracy promotion, or challenges inherent in bringing about stability and security in transition venues. Each member of a working group will be required to make meaningful contributions to the group's research topic, including desktop research, a minimum of 2-3 informational interviews per team member and a share of presentation preparation and actual briefing. Students are to present the character of the challenge and the debate surrounding the topic *as well as* various views, or best practices, on how to overcome such a challenge, including any original suggestions that the team may develop and wish to introduce to the class. Working groups will present a research work plan for discussion to the class in the October 18th course session. Additionally, working groups will conclude their research with a final presentation in the concluding weeks of the course. A multimedia presentation is required as part of the final project presentation. Your peers will assist in the evaluation of your performance. The criteria used by peers and the professor to grade the presentations are described on the Blackboard site. They will also be discussed in class ahead of time as teams prepare this assignment.

Take home final exam (25%): The take home final exam will give students the opportunity to integrate an entire semester's worth of knowledge gained through course reading, writing assignments, course-related research, class discussions, interview results, listserv content, the presentations of guest speakers and current events. There will be several questions on the exam from which to choose. You will be given the final exam several weeks in advance of its due date, so that you can spend considerable time on it.

Class Resources, Expectations and Teaching Methods

A website on the Blackboard system will be available for this course. Required and recommended readings will be posted on the website as will course announcements, assignment due dates, information on job opportunities, internships, interactive discussion forums, pages for working groups, and links to relevant web resources useful during the course. It will be essential to consult the course website often.

Each week participants in the course will be exposed to a number of sources that reflect a diversity of experience and perspectives. As events and the conceptual frameworks of assignments are reviewed, discussion is expected to be dynamic, non-conformist, creative and synergistic. Please come to each course session prepared to share your relevant professional experience as well as thoughtful reflections on the assignments for the week.

Course Reading

Students will be required to stay current with world events and to monitor developments in transition environments by subscribing to various listservs. The first is the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) "Post Conflict Reconstruction Daily Brief". Sign up by emailing PCRBrief@csis.org and writing "subscribe" in the subject line. Mention this course and the instructor in the text. The second is the Peace Negotiations Watch list at American University. Sign up at peacenegotiationwatch@listserv.american.edu. The third is the regular update service provided by the International Crisis Group. See at www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=subscribe&l=1 where you can indicate the various areas of the world you would like to monitor through their update service. Finally, the World Bank- affiliated Development Gateway offers a window for resources, discussions and portals on development and transition work as well as important links to other sources of information on issues of your choice. Sign up at <http://home.developmentgateway.org>.

Most course readings will be available to you free of charge on the Blackboard website. However, the text, *Why States Fail*, Ed. Rotberg, 2004, is a required text and can be found in paperback on Amazon.com or in local bookstores. Occasionally readings will be handed out in hard copy in class or put on reserve, but the great majority of readings are in electronic format for you to access and use when you want them. If you prefer to read course readings in hard copy form instead of digitally, please print out readings for each week and create a reader. It will be the student's choice to pay the copy costs to do so.

Reading assignments will be packaged on the website by date. Under each title will be a synopsis of the document and its page length. This will help students manage their workload. The average reading load per week for this course is on average 100 pages per week. Only readings listed under "Required Reading" are necessary for each course session, but it is strongly suggested that you sample the supplementary resources provided under "Additional Reading" for each course topic.

Additional required weekly readings may be added from time to time as new, relevant reading material comes available. Blackboard announcements will alert students to changes in reading assignments.

Course Outline

September 4, 2008

Introductions, The Experience of State Failure, and Understanding Why States Fail

Post-war environments are often characterized using statistics or the sterile variables of high policy. Often, intended beneficiaries of transition initiatives are anxiously redefining themselves, reckoning with fear and the events of the recent past, all the while readjusting to dramatically changed circumstances. Effective transition work requires a humanistic recognition of political, economic and social identities, and a grasp of the rubrics through which policy makers view post-conflict environments. Practitioners in a post-conflict setting require both an ability to approach the reality of personal and societal suffering that conflict brings, and an understanding of how and why conflict occurs. Students will be exposed to many of the personal characteristics of transition environments through a documentary presentation of individual lives affected by the recent conflict in Nepal. Class discussion will also focus on some of the reasons behind why states fail.

September 11, 2008

State Failure (continued) and The Resuscitation of States

Post-conflict environments and the actions taken by practitioners are contingent on the exigencies of the conflict and regional and local settings are critical to help determine what needs to be done when and by whom. However, there are broad outlines that post-conflict interventions commonly follow. Students will participate in discussion aimed at understanding these broad outlines of post-conflict interventions.

September 18, 2008

The Basics I: Strategies, Themes and Policies Influencing Post-9/11 Development

Over the last seven years, the United State's defense, diplomacy and development establishments have experienced a painful, introspective process of re-orientation and reform. It is a process that is still underway, driven by the imperatives of newly defined threats and interests. In this course session students will learn about salient undercurrents in U.S. foreign policy that steer much of what occurs in contemporary foreign assistance in post-conflict settings. This is an important context setting exercise, necessary to understanding the professional environment.

*Students will be assigned to groups in this course session.

September 25, 2008

The Basics II: Frameworks and Actors

Countries emerge from conflict under diverse circumstances. These circumstances determine the nature of the international intervention. However, nearly all transition interventions include security,

justice, governance and economic initiatives. In this course session, students will examine the primary communities and agents in transition environments (donors, diplomatic corps, multi-laterals, the military, NGOs and contractors, and beneficiary populations). Guest speakers from USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, Conflict Mitigation and Management, and the State Department's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization will attend the second half of the class to provide an overview of their respective organizations and field questions.

October 2, 2008

Security and Development – Two Course Sessions

Security is a precondition for all other post-conflict initiatives. It refers to the establishment of a safe environment and the eventual development of legitimate and stable security institutions. At minimum, it is the protection of citizens and aid providers from ongoing violence or a resumption of hostilities. In its fullest sense, it culminates in building human security as well as local capacity to ensure physical security and stability. Counterinsurgency programming is a growing portion of programmatic initiatives where security and development intermingle. Students will examine the actions inherent in promoting and sustaining security in a post-conflict environment including disarmament, demobilization, & rehabilitation of ex-combatants; counterinsurgency stabilization efforts, and protection of aid personnel and assets. In addition, students will be introduced to ongoing development efforts to work in unstable environments.

October 9, 2008

Continuation of Security and Development & Introduction of working group project concepts and work plans

Each working group will provide a brief on their team's topic and their research work plan. This is an opportunity for team's to clearly define the nature of the problem they are researching, present a summary of the direction of their research is taking to date, and elicit comment and suggestions from their peers.

October 16, 2008

Justice and Reconciliation

Justice and reconciliation initiatives are designed to promote impartial and accountable judiciaries, effective law enforcement and professional corrections systems. They also include transitional justice mechanisms and the development of extra-judicial, community based mechanisms for effective and peaceful resolution of grievances. Students will review and analyze initiatives of this type, and look at the difficulties in implementing such initiatives in highly politicized transition environments.

October 23, 2008

Governance and Participation

Governance and participation initiatives are designed to promote a constitutionally-based system of government that is representative, effective and democratic in orientation. Initiatives of this type also often attempt to promote participation, strengthen civil society, enhance administrative capacity, and create an ethic of public service. Students will study the social construction of legitimacy, the role of media, and the various ways rules are rehabilitated or developed in transition environments for political decision-making, the efficient exchange of ideas and accountability.

October 30, 2008

Economic and Social Well Being

Initiatives of this kind are found throughout a transition process and include the effective provision of relief, restoration or improvement in public service delivery, currency and banking reforms, and privatization. Early on in transitions, these initiatives usually are humanitarian in character. As security and other basic needs are met, economic and social well-being programs often grow into longer-term developmental interventions. Students will examine the range of initiatives under this rubric, their timing, utility, and political content.

November 6, 2008

U.S. government offices relevant in post-conflict reconstruction

Washington D.C. offers students interested an opportunity to meet with representatives from some of the U.S. government's primary offices that deal with post-conflict reconstruction. Representatives from the USAID Offices of Transition Initiatives, the Office for Conflict Mitigation and Management, and the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization will present to the class on the mandate, characteristics, usefulness and challenges facing their respective offices in particular, and U.S. interventions in post-conflict reconstruction efforts in general.

*Book reviews or policy briefs due

November 13, 2008

Group Presentations

Working groups will present their final topic presentations.

November 20, 2008

Group Presentations II

Working groups will present their final topic presentations.

Thanksgiving Holiday

December 4, 2008

Course Dinner

Each semester that this course is taught, a dinner is held that brings together practitioners and students for an evening. This is an opportunity for you to ask how these field hands and administrators began their careers, how they juggle the demands of family life and work, what their perspectives are on the future of post-conflict intervention and what opportunities lay ahead for a new generation of post-conflict professionals.

December 11, 2008

Starting Your Career: Where to Begin and What to Watch Out For?

Nuts and bolts on getting started and how to avoid some of the most common mistakes newcomers often make in the field. This course session will also serve as a more free-form capstone review session for the class.