

Peace Summer School 2026: Middle East Conflict & Decolonial Peacebuilding

29 June – 2 July 2026, Schlaining Peace Castle

Programme & Information

The Summer School, held from **29 June to 2 July 2026 at Schlaining Castle**, provides an opportunity to engage with key challenges and approaches in contemporary peacebuilding. The programme combines theoretical input with practical insights.

In 2026, the Summer School is organised in two parallel streams, each offering a distinct thematic and methodological perspective: Stream 1 focuses on the Middle East Conflict, Stream 2 discusses Decolonial Peacebuilding.

The Summer School concludes on-site with a **certificate ceremony**. The **University of Graz awards 2.5 ECTS**, and recognition by other universities are possible with reference to the University of Graz's online system.

Requirements include:

- Completion of preparatory readings
- Active participation in sessions and discussions
- Participation in AFP plenary programme elements
- Submission of a short, written assignment (e.g. reflection paper or learning journal)

The Peace Summer School is part of the **4th Austrian Forum for Peace 2026**, which explores peace beyond military approaches through diplomacy, dialogue, and conflict transformation. Under the theme *"The Art of Peace"*, the Forum understands peace as both a craft and a creative practice, combining expertise with empathy, imagination, and context-sensitive approaches, and bringing together policymakers, practitioners, scholars, students, and civil society to engage with peace as an ongoing and evolving process.

The Summer School programme is closely linked to the Forum, with participants able to engage in all elements of the programme, including panels, spotlight conversations, side events, and the cultural programme. This enables them to actively engage with diverse actors as part of an international peace community of practice.

More information on the Austrian Forum for Peace can be found at: www.peaceforum.at

Summer School Streams

Participants enrol in **one of two parallel streams**, each offering a distinct thematic and methodological perspective on peace and conflict and reflecting different dimensions of *"The Art of Peace"* from diplomatic practice to critical and locally grounded approaches.

Stream 1: The Middle East Conflict

This stream examines the Middle East conflict in its historical depth and contemporary complexity, situating current developments within broader political, social, and narrative contexts. It explores the roots of competing national movements, the legacy of European colonialism, and the evolution of conflict dynamics in the region. Particular attention is given to key historical milestones and to the ways in which different actors have shaped both conflict trajectories and peace efforts.

The course further analyses past and present approaches to conflict transformation, from high-level diplomatic agreements such as the Camp David Accords to more recent initiatives like the Abraham Accords. It critically reflects on the role of international actors in mediation and escalation, especially in the context of an emerging multipolar order, and explores the interaction between formal diplomacy and broader multi-track peace processes.

Key Themes:

- Historical trajectories and key milestones (e.g. Arab - Israeli wars, Intifadas, peace agreements)
- Competing narratives, including Zionism, Palestinian nationalism, and colonial legacies
- Peace processes and mediation efforts (from Camp David to the Abraham Accords)
- The role of international actors in a shifting, multipolar global order
- Interactions between high-level diplomacy (track-one) and multi-track peace approaches

Approach:

The course combines historical analysis with a focus on conflict transformation, examining both track-one diplomacy and multi-track mediation, and assessing their successes, limitations, and future relevance.

Faculty:

Adham Hamed (Austrian Centre for Peace)

Alba Losert (Austrian Centre for Peace)

Stream 2: Decolonial Peacebuilding

This stream critically engages with dominant peacebuilding paradigms by introducing perspectives from decolonial scholarship and practice. It examines how mainstream approaches, often shaped by liberal, state-centric, and externally driven frameworks, can overlook local realities and reproduce patterns of inequality, exclusion, and harm.

Moving beyond critique, the course explores alternative approaches to peace that centre the agency, knowledge, and lived experiences of communities affected by conflict. It reflects on how peacebuilding can be grounded in local ownership, relational forms of social cohesion, and a broader understanding of well-being that includes both human and non-human dimensions. In doing so, it opens space to rethink peace as a context-sensitive and transformative process.

Key Themes:

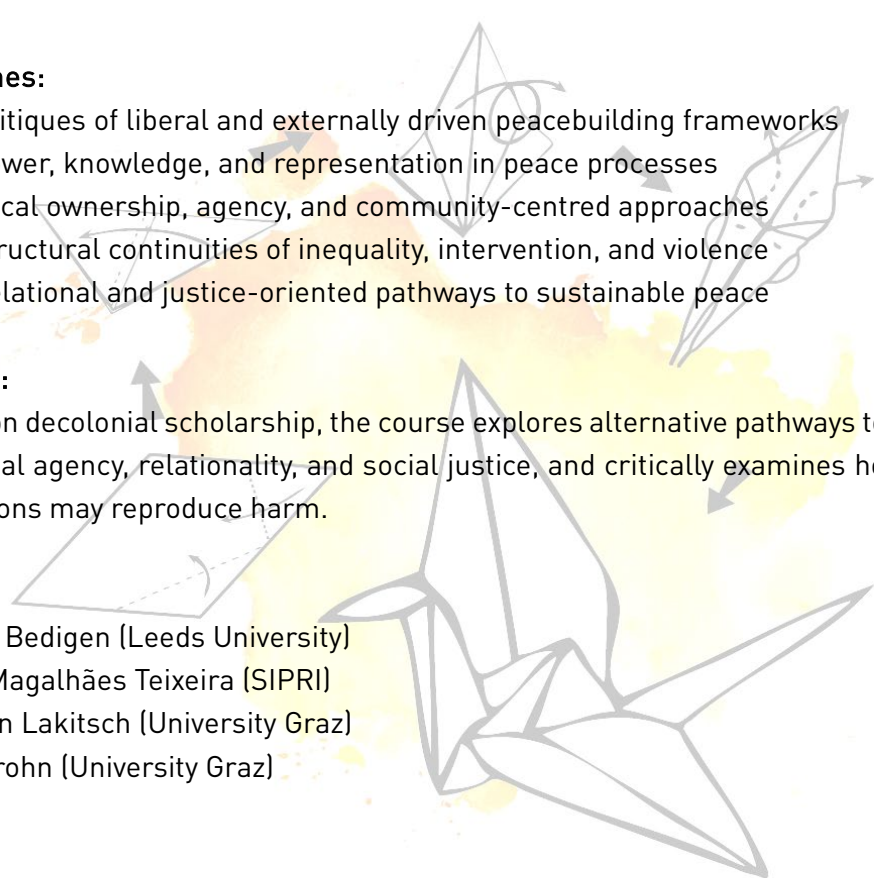
- Critiques of liberal and externally driven peacebuilding frameworks
- Power, knowledge, and representation in peace processes
- Local ownership, agency, and community-centred approaches
- Structural continuities of inequality, intervention, and violence
- Relational and justice-oriented pathways to sustainable peace

Approach:

Drawing on decolonial scholarship, the course explores alternative pathways to peace that prioritise local agency, relationality, and social justice, and critically examines how international interventions may reproduce harm.

Faculty:

Winnifred Bedigen (Leeds University)
Bárbara Magalhães Teixeira (SIPRI)
Maximilian Lakitsch (University Graz)
Juliana Krohn (University Graz)



Logistics & Practical Information

Location

Schlaining Castle, Stadtschlaining, Austria

Dates

29 June 2026, 11:00hrs – 2 July 2026, 15:00hrs

Target Group

Students (BA/MA/PhD) with an interest in peace, conflict, and international relations

Language

English

Accommodation & Meals

ACP has made a group reservation at [Gästehaus Oberwart](#) and [Gästehaus Pinkafeld](#) for students attending the Summer School. The accommodation is located approx. 10 km from Stadtschlaining. A cost-free shuttle service to and from the conference venue is provided.

Meals are served at the conference venue. Vegetarian options are available.

Participation Fee

A participant contribution of **€ 200 is required**, covering participation in the Summer School and plenary sessions of the Austrian Forum for Peace, all meals at the conference venue, accommodation at [Gästehaus Oberwart](#) or [Gästehaus Pinkafeld](#), and a daily shuttle between the conference venue and the nearby towns of Oberwart, Bad Tatzmannsdorf, and Pinkafeld.

This contribution represents only a portion of the actual programme costs, which are largely covered by the organisers. A limited number of full and partial scholarships is available. Applicants requiring financial support are invited to indicate this in their application. **Scholarships are awarded based on funding criteria and financial need.**

Application Process

To apply for the AFP Summer School, please send your CV and a short letter of motivation (max. 500 words), clearly indicating the stream you are applying for, to kathrin.maderbacher@uni-graz.at.

Application deadline is 15 May 2026. You will be informed of the decision of the admissions board by 22 May 2026.