# COURSE DETAIL

| SEEKING JUSTICE: A TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF WAR CRIME TRIALS |
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| **Country**<br>France |
| **Host Institution**<br>Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Sciences Po) |
| **Program(s)**<br>Sciences Po Paris |
| **UCEAP Course Level**<br>Upper Division |
| **UCEAP Subject Area(s)**<br>Legal Studies International Studies History |
| **UCEAP Course Number**<br>168 |
| **UCEAP Course Suffix** |
| **UCEAP Official Title**<br>SEEKING JUSTICE: A TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF WAR CRIME TRIALS |
| **UCEAP Transcript Title**<br>WAR CRIME TRIALS |
| **UCEAP Quarter Units**<br>4.50 |
| **UCEAP Semester Units** |

3.00

**Course Description**

This course investigates the ties between resorting to criminal justice and the making of postwar international and domestic orders. The story of post-World War Two war crime trials was long told from a Western standpoint in a context where justice was (also) a way of waging the Cold War by proxy. Moreover, until recent years scholarly attention has predominantly focused on a few highly publicized international trials, especially the Nuremberg and the Jerusalem trials, leaving in the shadows the diversity of legal proceedings that took place before national courts of law and failing to account for what was "a continent-spanning, decades-long, ever-evolving project" (Devin O. Pindas). This course departs from these perspectives in at least two ways: First, the course argues that trials for war crimes offer a fascinating window into several geopolitical, political and social processes. As arenas where a diversity of historical and social battles are being waged, they tell us about the crafting of regime changes, evolving power hierarchies, social norms, as well as the dominant social representations of gender at a given point in time. Second, national and international trials are shown to have been transnational in terms of the circulation of legal qualifications, material evidence, defendants, witnesses, and lawyers, as well as the entanglement between multiple legal proceedings. Three questions lie at the center of our investigations: Firstly, how can one account for the evolving conceptions of the role of justice in the management of postwar settlements and regime changes? Secondly, how can one shed light on the ways in which justice has been served – and has been seen to be served – since the end of World War Two? Thirdly, how have international and domestic trials of war criminals impacted the ways in which large scale violence is told by historians and remembered by victims and outsiders? In order to address these issues, this course provides a vision of justice attentive to the plurality of protagonists – legal as well as non legal professionals – that have contributed to its shaping, both within the judicial arena (prosecutors, judges, defense counsels, witnesses, translators, stenographers, etc.) and beyond it (Holocaust survivors, historians and archivists, journalists, political decision-makers, etc.). The assumption here

is that a trial takes shape from the moment when the pretrial investigations are started and ends at the moment when the legal narratives are incorporated into ways of retelling and remembering war crimes. The course builds upon a diversity of oral, print and visual sources, including filmed trials and archival documents. Several scholars who have studied and/or taken part in legal proceedings for war crimes are also invited to share their insights with the students.

**Language(s) of Instruction**
English

**Host Institution Course Number**
DAFF 25A52

**Host Institution Course Title**
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**Host Institution Course Details**
https://syllabus.sciencespo.fr/en/?202520/291233

**Host Institution Campus**

**Host Institution Faculty**

**Host Institution Degree**
Seminar

**Host Institution Department**
International Relations

**Course Last Reviewed**
2025-2026

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