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Olympia Summer Seminars 2012 report

Since the summer of 2002, Olympia has been hosting, with growing success, an annual international graduate summer program in peace and conflict studies. Thanks to the collaboration of Greek universities with Yale University's Program on Order, Conflict and Violence, the hospitality of the city of Ancient Olympia, and the generosity of Greek foundations, the Olympia Summer Seminars bring together every year a highly diverse and talented group of graduate students, professionals, practitioners and professors from more than 30 countries from around the world.

During the course of these years, the program has acquired a stellar reputation not only for its high academic standards, but also for its distinct identity that blends effectively the scholarly exchange with the friendly atmosphere, thus providing participants with the opportunity of a multicultural and holistic academic experience.

We are, thus, particularly proud for:

- the collaborations that we have established with internationally leading academic institutions, such as Yale University, Harvard University, Boston University, the University of St. Andrews, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and several European research consortia (Microcon 2008 & 2010).
- having established a hub of research excellence, which provides opportunities for the creation and consolidation of scholarly networks of cooperation.
- the multicultural and geographically diverse group of talented students (over 500 students from more than 30 countries) that OSS brings together every year.
- our alumni most of whom have continued with their academic career as professors at various universities all over the world.
- having developed an academic niche by means of being the only long-standing summer school in Europe that focuses on issues of conflict and political violence.

Program Purpose

The purpose of the seminars is to create a forum for high quality academic work in a unique setting of Olympia, and to provide opportunities for the creation and consolidation of scholarly networks of cooperation. Moreover to survey the above fields and disseminate new research advances and to create a forum for high quality academic work by promoting intellectual debate on conflict and violence related issues.

Courses 2012

Due to high demand, the 2012 program offered four cycles of studies. The OSS 2012 provided a 10 working days high-level teaching activity where four carefully defined conflict and political violence related areas were treated in depth and by Professors of international standing. The teaching cycles/programs that comprised the OSS were:

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CYCLE A: The Transformation of Conflict

July 4-15, 2013

Course Description

The study of conflict has made tremendous strides in the past two decades: new tools and new perspectives have advanced our understanding of its causes, dynamics, and consequences. In particular, the rigorous empirical and theoretical study of the various forms of conflict and political violence has gained considerable traction. The objective of this course was to review the evolution of this field, in a way that is simultaneously sophisticated, and accessible. In exploring the intersection of large-scale collective action and political violence, we drew from several disciplines: primarily political science (including both subfields of international relations and comparative politics), but also history, sociology, and economics. We discussed historical, quantitative, and experimental approaches that have been deployed in the study of conflict and we examined a broad cross-section of topics, including the causes and dynamics of civil war, ethnic conflict, mass violence, genocide, riots, and terrorism; and the logic of rebel group formation, cohesion, and performance. Our geographic focus was broad, reflective of the faculty's diverse expertise. At the end of the course, students had acquired a good grasp of cutting edge research on conflict.

CYCLE B: Religion & International Politics

July 10-15, 2013

Course Description

The idea that religion matters in international politics is no longer a subject of much controversy in academia. Yet, this welcome break from a rather long-standing disciplinary "secularizing" silence/bias has, nevertheless, yielded rather little in terms of robust theorizing on how religion matters to politics at the national, international, and transnational contexts. This cycle offered a survey of the state of the field when it comes to understanding the nexus between religion and politics. Our regional focus was comparative, with particular emphasis on cases from Turkey, EU, and Greater Middle East. We examined the role that religious issues play in the practice of international relations and, in particular, their influence on nationalism and identity politics, democratization, international norms, foreign policy, conflict and violence, and peace and negotiation.

CYCLE C: Terrorism & Counterterrorism

July 4-10, 2013

Course Description

Terrorism, and our response to it, are among the most compelling of global political issues: they dominate news headlines, public anxiety, and political strategies alike. Yet few attempt to analyze systematically this pressing phenomenon. Surely, no amount of analytical precision will rid us of the existence of terrorism, but if we want to respond effectively to the policy challenge that it poses we need first to respond effectively to its analytical challenge. To this end, the seminar sought to provide an overview of the state-of-the-art in the study of terrorism, while also debated whether there is a significant continuity or transformation in terrorist behaviour. Topics that were covered included: the place of terrorism within the

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broader context of political violence; the causes of terrorism; the inherent difficulties in defining terrorism and compiling reliable data on terrorist attacks; the distinction between 'old' and 'new' terrorism; the politics of terrorist risk perception; the global war on terror and counterterrorism.

CYCLE D: Negotiating Peace

July 10-15, 2013

Course Description

Negotiation has become the most widely used means to manage and resolve conflicts and to make decisions in international affairs. For most of human history, negotiation was considered an "art", something one was born with – or without – the ability to do well. However, in the last 40 years, scholars and practitioners have studied effective negotiators and negotiation processes, and have distilled analytic frameworks and skill sets that are teachable and learnable. This course provided an overview of the basic elements of negotiation theory and practice, drawing upon the concepts of distributive and integrative bargaining. The emphasis was on understanding the processes of negotiation and how they affect outcomes in international and intra-state (inter-group) conflicts. We moved to more advanced study of the challenges of negotiating in the international political arena. This included attention to cognitive and psychological barriers to effective negotiation, the effects of intra-party dynamics, negotiating under conditions of power asymmetry, and managing the complexities of multilateral negotiations. Throughout the course, we were using simulations and case studies to build both analytic and practical negotiating skills.

The Venue

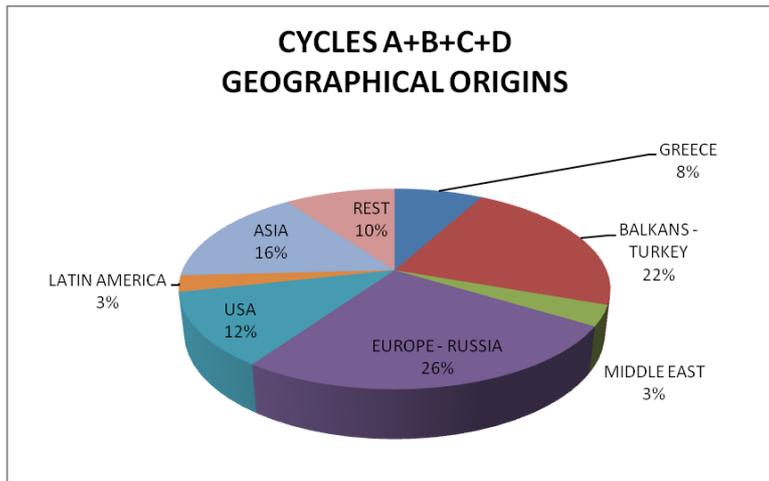
For the first time the OSS was hosted by the [International Olympic Academy](#) (IOA), which functions as a multicultural and interdisciplinary educational center. Its infrastructure provided the OSS a

- a purpose-built conference center with amphitheaters; seminars rooms; library; reading rooms; computer rooms, etc.
- guestrooms; restaurant; cafeteria and other auxiliary facilities.
- sports facilities, like a soccer field; swimming pool; basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts.

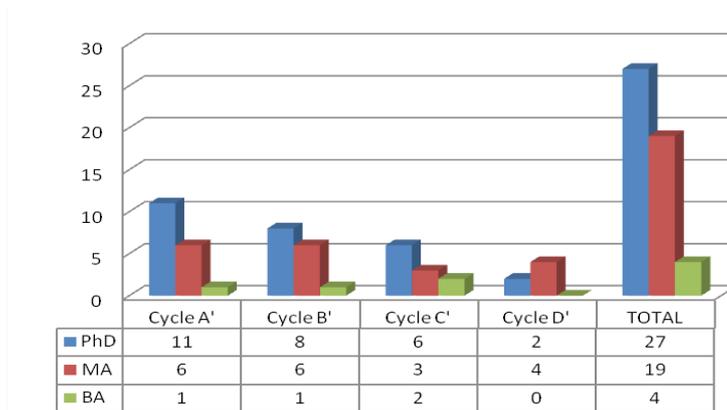
The OSS participants were amazed by the over 225 acres of beautiful green and hilly countryside. As such, it offered a unique educational environment that provided the basis for an intellectually multifaceted and holistic academic experience.

The Participants

The high quality of the Olympia Summer Seminars attracted around 150 applications from all over the world. Among them, students from the best universities and departments in the field of International Relation, Political Science and Peace and Conflict Studies.



Geographical Origins Applicants



Level of Education Participants

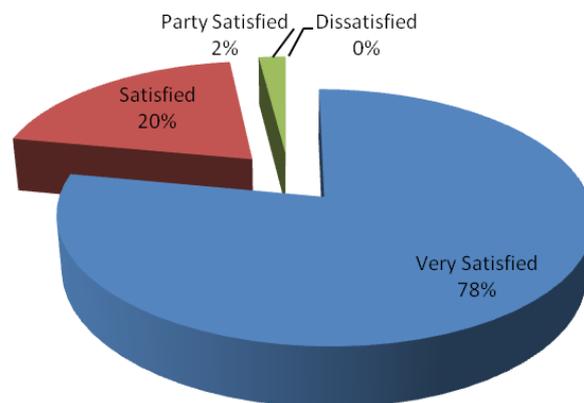
Besides the academic schedule the OSS 2012 included a field trip to the beautiful region of the Western Peloponnes, a guided tour of the Olympia Archaeological Site and Museum and a visit to the winery Merkouri.



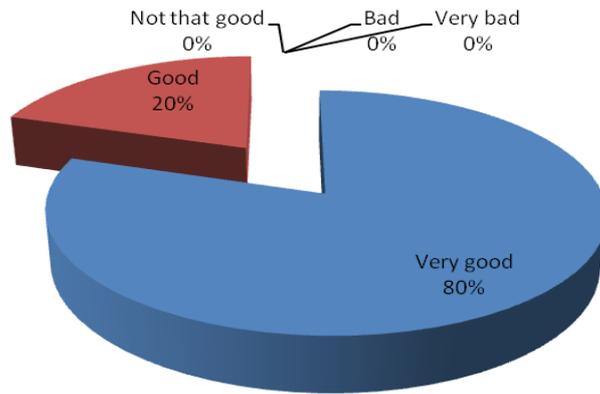
Faculty and students had plenty of time to interact and network together during the various extra-curricular activities organized.

A unique organized briefing on the Post- Chicago NATO Agenda and the current security Challenges followed by a round-table discussion on Terrorism and Counterterrorism with specialists from the scientific community as well as from the institutional side was embraced enthusiastically.

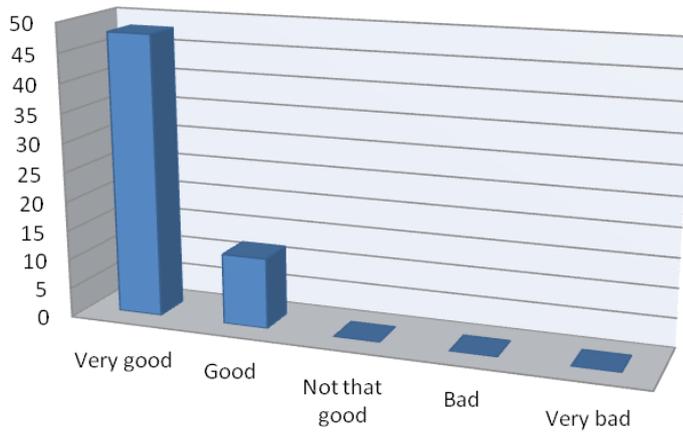
In the post-seminar survey, the 78% of the participants were generally satisfied with the seminar, while the 76% mentioned that they made an intellectual progress on the subject examined by the seminar.



General Satisfaction with the Seminar



Assessment of lectures



Structure of the Program

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Notably, none expressed negative opinion about the organization of the seminar and most cited that the program exceeded their expectations. The impressive success of Olympia 2012 gives additional momentum to the Seminars to grow further allowing more quality students to join the Olympia alumni family.

