

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



PROTEST IN PROGRESS: RESISTANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

- FEBRUARY 6 - 7, 2015 -

*9th Annual Peace,
Conflict and Justice
Conference at the
University of
Toronto*



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Ninth Annual Peace, Conflict and Justice Conference at the University of Toronto

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The Trudeau Centre's annual Peace, Conflict and Justice Conference is an important catalyst for meaningful discussion amongst some of the world's top academics and experts. Housed in the University of Toronto's prestigious Munk School of Global Affairs, this Conference is unique in that the entire Conference is planned, organized, and executed strictly by students. After nearly a decade of existence, the student-run conference has earned a reputation for its professionalism, relevance, and its innovative approach to the studying the field's most cutting-edge issues.

The Peace, Conflict, & Justice Conference is shaped by two overriding goals. We provide a platform for the world's top experts and practitioners to discuss international issues that are at the cutting-edge of academia. Secondly, we aim to provide the University of Toronto community with a forum to engage with the most relevant international issues of the day.

In its ninth year, the conference is tasked with studying the causes and character of conflict, the challenges presented by competing claims of justice, and the possibilities for peace in the international context. To do this, the Conference consistently addresses the themes of peace, conflict and justice by analyzing them through relevant international issues. This year, the Conference sets its sights specifically on social movements and protests in the 21st century.

The 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented explosion in the prevalence, scale, and intensity of protest movements. Whether characterized in the form of millions pouring into city squares or by small-scale rural protests, the international system has never before experienced such an unprecedented level of social activism in the form of protest. As such, this Conference will determine the significance—or lack thereof—of protest movements in the 21st century.



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FORMAT

KEYNOTE

The conference will begin with a keynote presentation focusing on the utility of modern protest movements. Scheduled for the evening of February 6, the keynote will serve a dual function. First, it will set the stage for the following day's discussions by addressing the importance of resistance in matters of peace, conflict, and justice. Secondly, it will prove to be a valuable opportunity for our esteemed speakers to meet their fellow academics and practitioners.

We are very excited to have Professor Suzanne Staggenborg, the chair of the department of sociology at the University of Pittsburg and an expert on social movements, as the keynote speaker for this year's conference. She has written extensively about protests and grassroots movements, recently focusing on environmental and women's activism.

PANELS

The next day, February 7, will feature four separate panel presentations and a debate. Each panel consists of 3 to 4 experts who will address an overarching theme. These themes, centered around the conference's main theme, include, rural protests, urban protests, social media, and 'hacktivism'. Two sets of panels will be running concurrently, with social media and 'hacktivism' in the morning and urban protests and rural protests in the afternoon.

DEBATE

The debate segment will engage the conference audience through a formal debate venue that works through the following motion: *be it resolved that social movements should strive to achieve their ends by fighting to win the support of mainstream electoral parties*. This debate would be conducted in parliamentary style, structured as follows: seven minutes devoted to the introductory and concluding remarks, a ten-minute-rebuttal section, followed by a ten-minute audience round. The debate promises to be an energetic and compelling conversation that raises poignant questions about how power interacts with popular demands.



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THEMES

RURAL PROTESTS

The panel for Rural Protests will focus on discussing the dynamic impacts of rural protests. Attention will be directed towards specific characteristics of rural protests, namely land disputes, resource access, and leftist political affiliations. The significance and consequences of these characteristics will be evaluated, along with the importance of rural protests for both rural and urban areas. The panel will consist of speakers with diverse expertise in various rural movements around the globe.

URBAN PROTESTS

The panel for Urban Protests will pay particular attention to how protests have impacted urban development and influenced government policy. The panel will also address important questions such as: What makes urban centres the focal point of political protests? How does public space in the urban sphere interact shape political participation and activism? In addition, the political atmosphere in the 21st century—characterized by the confluence of technology, globalization, social media, and urban environments—that has led to the enduring strength of horizontal social movements will be examined. Despite all the activity, it must be asked whether urban protests and the contestation of control of public space are actually translating into political capital. The phenomenon of protest is showing no signs of dissipating, nor does its relationship with our increasingly urbanized world. As such, exploring this relationship is more important than ever.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The panel for Social Media will seek to explore the past, present and future implications of social media on social movements. The panel aims to assess the impact of social media on protests in the past (Egypt), the present (Scotland/Hong Kong) and any potential future impact social media could have on China. Based on the experiences of Egypt and Scotland/HK, what can one expect from the interaction of social media with the Chinese authoritarian regime? Will the use of social media to spark mass mobilization lead to the democratization of the country? By assembling an impressive array of speakers on exactly this issue, the Social Media Panel will provide a conclusive answer to such questions.



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THEMES (CONTINUED)

HACKTIVISM

With the rise of Wikileaks, Anonymous, and Edward Snowden, hacktivism has not only shaped our understanding of privacy and security but also our basic relationship with technology itself. The Hacktivism panel will examine Hacktivist culture and its relation to political agency. With a diverse mix of experts of professional from government and security agencies, academia, and Hacktivist groups themselves, this panel will catalyze a rich, open and innovative discourse around the use of hacktivism as a political tool and its criminalization.



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SCHEDULE

FEBRUARY 6TH, 2015

- 6:00 - 7:00 Reception
- 7:00 - 8:30 Keynote Speaker & Moderated Q&A

FEBRUARY 7TH, 2015

- 10:00 - 10:45 Light Breakfast
- 10:45 - 12:45 Cyber Protest:
Panel A: Social Media
Panel B: Hacktivism
- 12:45 - 1:30 Lunch
- 1:30 - 3:30 Debate: Effectiveness of Nonviolent Protests
- 3:30 - 4:00 High Tea
- 4:00 - 6:00 Protests and Spaces:
Panel A: Urban Protests
Panel B: Rural Protests