



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

**Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts**

of

THEA LEWIS

BA (University of Ottawa, 2017)

**“The Peaceful, Deadly Violence of Embargo: Deconstructing
hegemonic discourses in International Relations theory”**

Department of Political Science

Monday, December 2, 2019
1:30 P.M.
David Turpin Building
Room A318

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Claire Cutler, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Rita Dhamoon, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Elizabeth Vibert, Department of History, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Xuekui Zhang, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

While dominant International Relations (IR) theory has constructed the concept of security in such a way that excludes economic sanctions from considerations of violence, the track record of embargo tells a different story, one with a significantly higher death toll. This project challenges the borders of the hegemonic IR discourse to make room for a theoretical and political account of the deadly impacts of sanction regimes. Through a discourse analysis of IR theory, using Laclau and Mouffe's holistic discourse theory, it looks to the spaces of meaning negotiation emerging from feminist IR theory. The renegotiated concepts of human security and structural violence make visible economic sanctions as an act of violence, and displace the binary oppositions of international/domestic, military/economic, public/private which shield embargo from the sight of own violence. Having broken embargo out of its conceptually locked box, this project pushes further, and interrogates the connections of embargo and empire. Embargo functions to uphold imperial control and Western interests, while (re)producing racist colonial narratives. While deconstructing and reconstructing three competing understandings of embargo – embargo-as-nonviolent, embargo-as-violence, and embargo-as-imperial – I interrogate the political implications of hegemonic ways of knowing. I argue that, by challenging the hegemony of IR, we can unmask the practice of embargo, and locate its violent role in upholding imperial structures of power.