Abstract:
Wartime rape has been part of the armed conflicts from time immemorial. In today's conflicts, armed groups use rape against the civilian population as a weapon, a tactic, and a means to exterminating the enemy. Wartime rape is a difficult phenomenon to explain, generalize and ultimately stop given the variance of factors and actors involved. When civil war became the primary form of warfare around the world in the 1990s, wartime rape became one the essential components of prosecuting warfare. The aim of this thesis is to explain the high prevalence of wartime rape in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Drawing on contemporary theories used to explain the rationale behind wartime rape (gender inequality, ethnic hatred, genocidal rape and strategic rape), this thesis argues that the subordinate position of women, ethnic cleavage, the occurrence of genocide and forcible recruitment implying hierarchy increase the level of wartime rape. Using a mixed method, the first stage compromises a statistical analysis exposing the general trends, which are surprisingly contrary to expectation. The subsequent case studies – Rwanda and the DRC – argue that the high level of wartime rape in the Great Lakes region is the result of a spill over effect and all its related implications and complications.