DRAFT SYLLABUS
GOVT 444 - 002: Political Violence and Civil War
Fall 2019
Wednesdays 4:30pm – 7:10pm
Location: Robinson Hall B368

Professor: Philip A. Martin (pmarti5@gmu.edu)
Office hours: TBD
Office: Research Hall, 339

Course Description
This seminar provides a general overview of the causes and consequences of political violence and civil wars. We will examine and discuss major theories and scholarly research concerning the following topics: 1) the onset of civil wars (including ethnic wars, irregular insurgencies, and separatist conflicts), 2) civil war processes (e.g. participation, violence, and wartime governance), 3) how civil wars end (e.g. peace agreements, military victory, and international intervention), and 4) post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization. The course will also familiarize students with the basic research tools employed by scholars of political violence, including case studies, survey research, and the quantitative analysis of datasets. We will apply these concepts and tools in diverse regional contexts in the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Learning Objectives
Students who actively engage with course readings, seminar discussions, and assignments will:

1. Become familiar with major concepts and debates in the field of political violence and civil wars.
2. Improve their understanding of how and why countries suffer armed conflicts, as well as potential remedies for violence.
3. Understand the long-term political, economic, and social legacies of armed conflict.
4. Be prepared to analyze policy issues related to conflict, peace, and stabilization in a rigorous and informed manner.
5. Be able to ask original research questions that might advance the frontiers of knowledge in the study of armed conflict.

Required Readings
All required readings will be available on Blackboard.

Course Requirements and Grading
The course will be run as a seminar. It is therefore essential for students to do all readings and come prepared to participate in class discussions.

Grading will consist of two short memos (20% each), one longer paper (30%), and an in-class presentation (15%). Students will also receive a grade for seminar participation (15%).
The final grade will be assigned on the following scale:

97-100% A+
93-96 A
90-21 A–
87-89 B+
83-86 B
80-82 B–
77-79 C+
73-76 C
70-72 C–
67-69 D+
63-66 D
60-62 D–
< 60 F

Assignments

1. Students will write two short memos (20% each) that summarize and critique assigned readings for one week. These memos should be 3-4 pages in length (double-spaced in 12-point font). The memos are due in class on the week of the seminar where the readings will be discussed. Students will be assigned due dates for their memos at the beginning of the semester.

2. Students will write one longer research paper (30%) due on December 11. Papers should be 10-15 pages in length (double-spaced in 12-point font). The paper may take one of the following forms:
   a. A research paper that explains the onset, internal dynamics, termination, or recurrence of one or more cases of armed conflict. Paper topics should be approved by the instructor (via email) no later than Week 8.
   b. A critical evaluation of a policy or intervention (past or present) aimed at reducing or ameliorating political violence or armed conflict in at least one country. The policy could be a peacekeeping intervention, a grassroots campaign, a media initiative, etc. The paper should 1) clearly outline the origins and content of the policy initiative, 2) engage with the concepts and theories covered in the course to critically evaluate the underlying causal theory of the policy, and 3) evaluate the effectiveness of the policy (or likely effectiveness).

3. Based on their research paper, there will be in-class presentations (15%) in Week 13 and 14. The presentations will be an opportunity for students to share their findings with the rest of the class and receive feedback to help improve their papers. Details about the presentation format will be discussed beforehand.

Academic Integrity

Faculty in the Schar School have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism) and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code. Please familiarize yourself with the Honor Code here: https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/.

If you have any doubts about the rules concerning plagiarism, please ask for clarification. No grade or assignment is worth academic misconduct.
Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

Laptop / Cellphone Policy

To facilitate an engaged and respectful learning environment, students are encouraged to take notes during seminars using a paper and pen/pencil (research has demonstrated that taking notes by hand is associated with better learning and performance outcomes). If you must use a laptop to take notes during class, please disable the internet connection. The use of other technology (i.e. mobile phones) is not permitted; please silence your phones during class.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Part 1: Introduction


Further reading (optional):


Part 2: Onset

Week 2 (Sept 4): Strategic Origins


Week 3 (Sept 11): Identity and Ideology


**Week 4 (Sept 18): Political Economy and Material Resources**


**Part 3: Process**

**Week 5 (Sept 25): Participation**


**Week 6 (Oct 2): Violence**


**Week 7 (Oct 9): Organizations, Governance, and Order**


Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion*, selected pages.

**Part 4 – Termination and Recovery**

**Week 8 (Oct 16): Barriers to Settlement**

Barbara Walter, “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement,” *International...*


Week 9 (Oct 23): War Recurrence and Conditions of Termination


Review Kauffman, “Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars.”

Week 10 (Oct 30): Intervention and peacekeeping


Week 11 (Nov 6): Democratization and Statebuilding


Week 12 (Nov 13): Social and Political Legacies


Sarah Zukerman Daly, *Organized Violence after Civil War: The geography of recruitment in Latin America*, selected pages.

**Week 13 (Nov 20): Student presentations**

**Week 14 (Nov 27): Thanksgiving break, no classes**

**Week 15 (Dec 4): Student presentations (if necessary) and conclusion**