COURSE DESCRIPTION

Civil war is the most common form of state-based armed conflict today. Depending on how one counts, between 110 and 260 civil wars have been fought since the end of World War II, compared to 30 to 45 interstate wars. Civil wars are also extremely deadly, causing the deaths of millions of people, the majority of them noncombatants. The end of the Cold War focused the attention of scholars of comparative politics and international relations on civil conflict, leading to a growing literature on all facets of civil war, including civil war onset, duration, outcome, and termination; causes and effectiveness of targeting civilians (a.k.a., terrorism) in civil wars; why people join rebel groups or decide to become terrorists; the effectiveness of various forms of intervention in civil wars; counterinsurgency; and more.

This course explores some of the new literature on civil war, and is divided into four parts. The first part is mainly definitional: what is a civil war? What kinds of civil wars are there? What are insurgency and counterinsurgency? What is terrorism? These class sessions outline working definitions for each of these phenomena that we will use during the remainder of the course.

The second section of the course looks at the causes of civil war. War is a costly and risky endeavor, and rebels face particularly steep odds going up against states that are typically far more powerful. Why then do civil wars occur? Which kinds of factors increase the odds that civil conflict will break out? This section covers the greed versus grievance debate that has dominated the literature for the past two decades, but also examines the role of political leaders, institutions, and external actors in provoking or mediating the outbreak of violence.

The third part of the course turns to the conduct of civil wars with an emphasis on one particularly prevalent but unsavory practice: violence against civilians. Civil wars—the majority of which are waged as guerrilla insurrections—place the civilian population directly in the middle of the contest: insurgents need civilian support to survive and thrive, while the government seeks to deny rebels access to the population. Both sides use violence as a resource to compel collaboration and deter defection. This type of “terrorism” is both very common and underappreciated. This part of the course will study the causes and effectiveness of this kind of terrorism, as well as terrorism perpetrated by groups specifically labeled as terrorist organizations. We will also look specifically at counterinsurgency, including less violent strategies like “hearts and minds” and “decapitation,” as well as the effect of ethnicity on violence and why individuals choose to join rebel groups.

The final section of the course looks at what makes civil wars last so long and what eventually brings them to an end. Specific topics covered include civil war duration, cohesion of rebel groups, and civil war outcomes. Of particular interest is the question of what (if anything) outsiders can do to facilitate the termination of civil wars and prevent their recurrence. To that end, we spend several class sessions on different types of settlements to civil wars and different methods of international engagement.

It is important to note that this class is not about any particular civil war(s). Rather, the course is devoted to explaining the causes, conduct, and termination of civil wars in general, or to explaining these phenomena in a handful of different types of civil wars. We will draw on examples from many different conflicts, including (but probably not limited to) civil wars in Afghanistan, Algeria, Chechnya, Colombia, DRC, El Salvador, Greece, Iraq, Kashmir, Libya, Mozambique, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Peru, Rwanda, South Africa, Spain, Syria, Uganda, United States, Vietnam, and former Yugoslavia.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE COMPUTATION

The course is organized into two meetings of one hour and fifteen minutes per week. Grades will be based on the following criteria.

- **Class Attendance and Participation** (20%): Students are expected to attend every class session, do all of the required reading before class, and come prepared to discuss it. The instructor will not lecture for the entire period. Questions are provided below for each session that will form the basis for discussion. You will be called on by the instructor at some point during the semester, so do keep up with the reading.

- **Midterm Examination** (15%): Thursday, October 4. In-class, closed-book short-answer exam covering the first two sections of the course.

- **Final Examination** (20%): Tuesday, December 18, 12.40 – 2.40PM. Cumulative, closed-book final exam, consisting of short answers and essays, emphasizing the last two sections of the course.

- **Research Paper** (45%): due Friday, December 7, by 5.00PM in HARD COPY at instructor’s office, circa 20 pages. See below for more details.

Final grades will be calculated according to the percentages above, and will be assigned as follows: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), and F (0-59). Grades for this course will not be curved.

BOOKS

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase at The George Washington University Bookstore.


ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

All of the journal articles listed in the required reading below—unless otherwise indicated—are available online in databases accessible through the George Washington University Library. From the library website (http://www.library.gwu.edu/), click the “Journals” tab, search for the desired title, and navigate to the correct volume and issue. If you are accessing the library website from off campus, you will need to enter your last name and your GWID to obtain access. For several class sessions I have assigned book chapters in addition to journal articles. These are placed on E-Reserve, and are indicated by the term “e-res” in parentheses after the citation. These texts are easily obtained through the Blackboard site that has been established for the class. Click on “Blackboard” from the “My GW” page (http://my.gwu.edu), log in, go to the page for this class, and click on “E-Reserves.”

RESEARCH PAPER

In consultation with the instructor, students will select a civil war about which they will write a research paper. The goal of the paper will not be to "explain" the entire conflict from start to finish. Rather, following the outline of the syllabus, students will write about the causes, conduct, or termination of their chosen conflict. From within these broad categories, students will choose (in consultation with the instructor) a specific question (or, in rare cases, questions) to answer about the war, such as:

- Which factor or combination of factors best explains why civil war occurred?
- What patterns of violence characterized the conflict, and what explains them?
- Was violence/terrorism effective?
• Why did one side prevail?
• If the conflict was protracted, what explains why it lasted so long?
• Was there external intervention, and did it facilitate a lasting settlement?
• If the conflict reignited, why did peace fail to last?

Papers are expected to engage the theoretical literature examined in class that relates to the question addressed in the paper. Papers that attempt to explain civil war onset, for example, should incorporate the literature from Part II of the course on causes of civil war.

All students must turn in a one-page memo in class on September 20 that performs four tasks:

• Specifies which war will be the focus of your paper
• Specifies which specific aspect of the conflict you intend to explore
• Provides a short background and summary of the conflict
• Lists 3-5 books or articles you have identified as potential sources of information

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor at their earliest convenience to discuss their interests and get started on the paper. It is not mandatory to have a meeting before the memo is due, but the instructor will schedule conferences with each student after the memos are turned in. See the appendix at the end of the syllabus for some resources on civil wars to help you get started.

GOALS OF THE COURSE

The most important goal of the course is to impart to students a solid understanding of theories and empirical evidence regarding the causes, conduct, and termination of civil wars. This will be achieved by reading the required material, discussing it in class, and responding to questions about the readings on the exams. The second major goal is for students to obtain detailed knowledge of at least one civil war by writing a research paper on some aspect of that conflict. Additional goals include the following:

• Educate students regarding the different types of civil wars that exist
• Unpack the different forms of violence that are currently consolidated under the rubric of “terrorism”
• Examine the different strategies that states use to combat insurgencies
• Evaluate the relative merits of strategies that use a lot of violence versus those that use minimal violence
• Within the category of violence, evaluate the relative merits of selective versus indiscriminate violence
• Understand how civil wars end, and which endings prove more stable than others
• Help students learn how to read social science research and not only understand it, but criticize it

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

• Distinguish among different types of civil wars
• Identify risk factors that make states vulnerable to civil war, and which make social groups more likely to launch a rebellion
• Determine which civil wars are more prone to violence and terrorism against noncombatants, and what type of violence it will be
• Evaluate the relative efficacy of different forms of violence used by actors in civil wars, and the conditions under which these strategies may be more or less effective
• Evaluate the merits of low versus high violence counterinsurgency strategies
• Make informed conjectures about which civil wars will last longer, and which side will prevail
• Critically evaluate social science theories, not only those about civil wars, but theories in general
POLICIES AND RESOURCES

- **Class Policies**
  - **Attendance and Reading**: Students are expected to attend every class session, do all of the assigned reading before class, and come prepared to discuss it. Exceptions will of course be made for religious holidays. Students who know they will miss class owing to observance of a religious holiday need to notify the instructor during the first week of the semester.
  - **Late Papers**: Late papers will be accepted up to 24 hours after the deadline, but one letter grade will be deducted. Papers that are more than 24 hours late will not be accepted. Exceptions will be made only in cases of incapacitating illness or extraordinary personal or family emergency; if you find yourself in such a situation, consult the instructor as soon as possible to discuss an extension.
  - **Exams**: Students must take the final exam at the time and date assigned by the Academic Scheduling Office. Students who have three final exams on one day may petition for one of them to be rescheduled. Note that this must be done at least three weeks prior to the last day of classes: see http://www.gwu.edu/~regweb/web-content/scheduling/exam_policies.html.
  - **Technology**: Laptops are allowed in class for note-taking purposes only, not for checking e-mail, Facebook, surfing the web or online shopping. Note that the use of laptops is a privilege that can be taken away if it is abused! The only cell phones allowed in class are those that have been turned off.

- **Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Integrity**. According to the university’s Code of Academic Integrity, “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the rest of the code, see http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html. In general, I expect that you will not lie, cheat, steal, or otherwise conduct yourselves dishonorably, and will do something if you observe others engaging in such conduct. All work you submit for this course must be your own. **I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty**. Suspected cases will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity. If you have questions about what constitutes proper use of published or unpublished sources, please ask the instructor.

- **Disabilities**. Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202.994.8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/.

- **Counseling**. The University Counseling Center (UCC, 202.994.5300) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include crisis and emergency mental health consultations, confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals (see http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices).

- **Security**. In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.
COURSE CALENDAR

Part I. Introduction and Definitions
1. August 28 (Tu) Course Introduction
2. August 30 (Th) No Class
3. September 4 (Tu) Definitions I
4. September 6 (Th) Definitions II

Part II. Causes of Civil War
5. September 11 (Tu) Psychology
6. September 13 (Th) Ethnicity and the State
7. September 18 (Tu) Opportunity/Greed
8. September 20 (Th) Return to Grievances
9. September 25 (Tu) Democracy and Democratization
10. September 27 (Th) Leaders and within-Group Conflict
11. October 2 (Tu) External Sources of Internal Conflict
12. October 4 (Th) PAPER TOPICS DUE

Part III. Conduct of Civil War
13. October 9 (Tu) Causes of Violence and Terrorism I
14. October 11 (Th) Causes of Violence and Terrorism II
15. October 16 (Tu) Causes of Violence and Terrorism III
16. October 18 (Th) Effectiveness of Violence and Terrorism I
17. October 23 (Tu) Effectiveness of Violence and Terrorism II
18. October 25 (Th) Alternatives to High Violence COIN I
19. October 30 (Tu) Alternatives to High Violence COIN II
20. November 1 (Th) Case Study: Iraq
21. November 6 (Tu) Rebel Recruitment/Individual Participation
22. November 8 (Th) Ethnicity and Violence

Part IV. Civil War Duration, Outcome, Termination, and Aftermath
23. November 13 (Tu) Civil War Duration
24. November 15 (Th) Rebel Group Cohesion and Fragmentation
25. November 20 (Tu) Civil War Outcomes
26. November 22 (Th) NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING
27. November 27 (Tu) Ending Civil Wars I
28. November 29 (Th) Ending Civil Wars II
29. December 4 (Tu) Ending Civil Wars III
30. December 6 (Th) Perverse Consequences of Intervention
31. December 10 (M) Make-Up Day: Course Wrap-up and Review
32. December 18 (Tu) FINALEXAM
COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I. Introduction and Definitions

1. Course Introduction
   - August 28

2. No Class: American Political Science Association Annual Meeting
   - August 30
   - Get a head start on the reading for next week.

3. Definitions, Part I
   - September 4

   Discussion Questions:
   - What kinds of conflicts are included and excluded by mainstream definitions of civil war? Are these inclusions/exclusions justified? Why?
   - What are the different ways that scholars categorize civil wars? What are the key axes along which these conflicts vary?
   - Has the nature of civil war changed over time?

4. Definitions, Part II
   - September 6

   Discussion Questions:
   - What distinguishes guerrilla warfare/insurgency from conventional war?
   - What is terrorism?
   - Is terrorism limited to non-state actors, or can states be terrorists too?

Part II. Causes of Civil War

5. Psychology: Relative Deprivation and Group Comparison
   - September 11
Discussion Questions:
- What is relative deprivation?
- Why does comparison invite conflict?
- Is inter-group conflict emotional?

6. Ethnicity and the State

September 13


Discussion Questions:
- What is the security dilemma and how does it cause civil war? Is the security dilemma a persuasive explanation for civil war in Yugoslavia?
- Is Fearon’s argument different from Posen’s argument? How?
- How do commitment problems contribute to “sons of the soil” conflicts?

7. Opportunity/Greed

September 18


Discussion Questions:
- How do Collier and F&L interpret low GDP? Whose interpretation do you believe?
- What do you think of how Collier and F&L operationalize their key concepts?
- What role do natural resources play in causing civil conflict? How consistent are these causal mechanisms with the greed hypothesis?

8. The Return to Grievances

September 20

Paper Topics Due


Discussion Questions:
- Which do you find more persuasive, grievance explanations or greed/opportunity explanations?
- Can greed or grievance alone explain civil war, or must they both be present?
- What role do case studies play in evaluating these theories, and theories in general?
9. Democracy and Democratization September 25


Discussion Questions:
- What is the logic for why different political regimes have different propensities for civil war?
- Is democratization a force for civil peace or civil war?
- Do consolidated democracies ever have civil wars? If so, why?

10. Leaders and within-Group Conflict September 27


Discussion Questions:
- Is it true that the outbreak of civil war has nothing to do with animosity against the state or other groups? Is it all about within-group conflict and leader survival strategies?
- According to Posen, the security dilemma caused the wars in former Yugoslavia. Not so, says Gagnon. Who is right?

11. External Sources of Internal Conflict October 2


Discussion Questions:
- What are the various ways that external factors can cause civil wars?
- Is foreign-imposed regime change a force for peace or a force for war? Under what conditions?

12. Midterm Exam October 4

Part III. Conduct of Civil Wars

13. Causes of Violence and Terrorism in Civil War, Part I October 9


Discussion Questions:
- What is the difference between selective and indiscriminate violence? Where is each type of violence most likely to occur in Kaylvas’s model?
14. **Causes of Violence and Terrorism in Civil War, Part II**
   October 11


   **Discussion Questions:**
   - What are the key differences in the predictions of Kalyvas’s and Weinstein’s theories?
   - Does the empirical evidence cited in Weinstein’s chapter support his theory?
   - How does violence against civilians differ in conventional and guerrilla wars?

15. **Causes of Violence and Terrorism in Civil War, Part III**
   October 16


   **Discussion Questions:**
   - What is the role of religion in causing suicide terrorism? Are secular or sacred factors more important in causing suicide terrorism?
   - Are there different policy implications that flow from different theories about the origins of suicide terrorism?
   - Have I created a selection bias by assigning readings only on suicide terrorism instead of terrorism in general?

16. **Effectiveness of Violence and Terrorism in Civil War, Part I**
   October 18


   **Discussion Questions:**
   - Is indiscriminate violence an effective or ineffective tool of counterinsurgency? Are there conditions under which it might be more or less effective?
17. **Effectiveness of Violence and Terrorism in Civil War, Part II**  
   October 23

- Review Pape, “Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.”

Discussion Questions:
- Why do Pape and Abrahms reach opposite conclusions about the effectiveness of terrorism? Is one right and the other wrong?
- Do Pape and Abrahms actually disagree? If not, why not?
- Is a suicide attack against a military base or against off-duty soldiers an act of terrorism?

   October 25


Discussion Questions:
- What key assumptions underlie the population-centric COIN strategy? Are these assumptions met in most insurgencies?
- What are the big successes of the population-centric strategy in the historical record?
- Is the population-centric strategy likely to bring stability to Afghanistan?

19. **Alternatives to High Violence in COIN, Part II: Decapitation**  
   October 30


Discussion Questions:
- Which of these two studies do you find most persuasive and why?
- Does the U.S.’s advantage in precision airpower give it a silver bullet in COIN and counter-terrorism?

20. **Case Study: Iraq**  
   November 1


Discussion Questions:
- Which argument do you find most persuasive for the decline in violence in Iraq?
- What implications does your answer have for U.S. efforts to pacify Afghanistan?
21. Rebel Recruitment/Individual Participation  
   November 6


Discussion Questions:
- What implications does Kalyvas and Kocher’s argument in this article have for Kalyvas’s earlier argument about the effectiveness of selective versus indiscriminate violence?
- Each of these readings is about why individuals join rebel movements more or less voluntarily. Under what conditions do rebel groups resort to forcible recruitment?

22. Ethnicity and Violence  
   November 8


Discussion Questions:
- Is ethnicity a reliable predictor of who will end up on which side in a civil war? If not, why not?
- Why would members of the same ethnic group fight on opposite sides?
- Why are co-ethnics more effective counterinsurgents?
- What does the Lyall article imply for U.S. COIN strategy?

Part IV. Civil War Duration, Outcome, Termination, and Aftermath

23. Civil War Duration  
   November 13


Discussion Questions:
- What do Fearon’s findings on civil war duration tell us about why (civil) wars start in the first place?
- What additional light does Christia’s argument shed on the role of ethnicity in civil wars?
24. Rebel Group Cohesion and Fragmentation  

November 15  


Discussion Questions:  
- Why do some armed groups remain cohesive during and after wars whereas others go kaput?  
- Is rebel group fragmentation a good thing or a bad thing for civil war duration and termination?  

25. Civil War Outcomes  

November 20  


Discussion Questions:  
- Are democracies doomed to defeat in COIN? Why or why not?  
- Is there an ideal state counter-strategy for every insurgent strategy, as Arreguin-Toft implies?  
- Is the contrast between nineteenth and twentieth century warfare sketched out by Lyall and Wilson a persuasive explanation for changing COIN outcomes over time?  

26. NO CLASS: HAPPY THANKSGIVING  

November 22  

27. Ending Civil Wars, Part I: Draconian Solutions  

November 27  


Discussion Questions:  
- Can war be a force for stability? How?  
- Why – if decisive victories provide more stable endings to civil wars than negotiated settlements – are the latter so preferred by the international community?  
- Does partition combined with ethnic separation provide lasting peace?  

28. Ending Civil Wars, Part II: Happy Solutions  

November 29  

Discussion Questions:
• What is the critical barrier to civil war settlement? Is it surmountable? How? Is military intervention necessary, or can institutions solve the problem?

29. Ending Civil Wars, Part III: Peacekeeping December 4

• Samantha Power, “Bystanders to Genocide,” The Atlantic (September 2001), 84-108.

Discussion Questions:
• How do peacekeepers prevent renewed wars from breaking out?
• Why is peacekeeping undersupplied? How can peacekeeping go wrong?

30. Perverse Consequences of Humanitarian Intervention December 6

Research Papers due December 7 by 5.00PM


Discussion Questions:
• What are some of the unintended consequences of intervening in someone else’s civil war?
• In light of these articles, how should we weigh the morality of humanitarian intervention?

31. Course Wrap-Up and Review December 10

32. Final Exam December 18

• Duques 359, 12.40 – 2.40PM
APPENDIX: LISTS OF CIVIL WARS

Good lists of civil wars may be found in the following articles, books, or locations on the web.

- Correlates of War Project Intrastate War Data, v. 4.0 (1816-2007)
  - http://www.correlatesofwar.org/


- James Fearon and David Laitin’s list of civil wars (1945-1999) used in their 2003 *APSR* article
  - http://www.stanford.edu/~jfearon/papers/addtabs.pdf (pp. 7-10)

- Nicholas Sambanis’s civil war data (1945-1999)
  - http://pantheon.yale.edu/~ns237/index/research.html#Civil (scroll down to “Data”)
  - See also his coding notes at the same url

- UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, v. 4 (1946-2011)
  - http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp_prio_armed_conflict_dataset/
  - These data contain four different conflict types: extrasystemic, interstate, internal, and internationalized internal. See the codebook for definitions. Only interstate wars (type = 2) are clearly not civil wars.
  - Note also the lower fatality threshold for a conflict to be included in the dataset

  - http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/pitf/pitfdata.htm

Broadly similar lists of civil wars for the post-World War II period may be found in several books and articles:


Finally, for a good general reference on armed conflict, see: