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? This class session outlines 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 encompasses four class sessions: we start with state-centered explanations, then proceed to theories based in economics and resources, various types of grievances, and finally examine the role of intra-group competition, political leaders, 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,” as well as rebel recruitment and cohesion.

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, who prevails in civil wars, and how civil wars end. 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 a class session 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, Liberia, Libya, Mozambique, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Syria, Uganda, United States, Vietnam, and former Yugoslavia.
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 writing either short papers on assigned topics or a research paper. 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
- Understand and critique the research designs and methodologies employed in the literature, and think about how to improve on them
- For Ph.D. students, identify interesting questions or unresolved puzzles in the literature for potential research papers or dissertations

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

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE COMPUTATION

Students may elect either of two assignment tracks, one based on three analytical papers and the other based on a research paper. Students must choose which track they will follow by February 7, the day the first paper topic is distributed. Grades will be based on the following criteria.

All Students

- Class Attendance and Participation (25%): Students are expected to attend every class session, do all of the required reading before class, and come prepared to discuss it. Missing more than one class session without an excuse will adversely affect the participation grade. Participation in discussion will be judged not only by the quantity of a student’s remarks, but also by their quality.

Track I

- Three Analytical Papers (25% each): 8 double-spaced pages maximum, due in HARD COPY at the beginning of class on Week 5 (February 14), Week 11 (March 28), and Week 15 (April 25). Questions will be distributed in class the week before the due date. You may be asked to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a theory discussed in class or in the readings, compare the explanatory power of two or more theories, or apply theories to a case. Papers turned in after the start of class will be accepted for up to 24 hours but will be penalized one letter grade; papers will not be accepted more than 24 hours late. Exceptions will be made for illness or personal/family emergency.
Track II

- **Research Paper (75%)**: 20-30 double-spaced pages on some aspect of civil war (broadly defined) to be chosen in consultation with the instructor; HARD COPY due on Monday, May 13 (same lateness policy applies as above). Students electing this track should meet with the instructor at their earliest convenience to discuss their interests and potential topics, *but no later than February 15*. Ph.D. students are strongly encouraged to pursue the research paper track.

**BOOKS**

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase at the GWU Bookstore or from many online outlets.


**ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS**

All of the journal articles listed in the required reading below are available online in databases accessible through the George Washington University Library. From the library website (http://www.library.gwu.edu/), search “E-Journals” 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.”

**ADDITIONAL READING**

An excellent resource for students who wish to explore any of the topics covered in class in greater detail is Paul Staniland’s Civil War syllabus at the University of Chicago, which may be found here: http://home.uchicago.edu/~paul/StanilandPLSC36100Winter12.pdf. Students should also feel free to consult the instructor.

**POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

- **Class Policies**. Students are expected to attend every class session, do all the 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. All papers turned in for this class must be double-spaced, have one inch margins on all sides, be printed in 12-point font, and stapled. 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 illness or personal/family emergency; if you find yourself in such a situation, consult the instructor as soon as possible. Laptops are allowed in class for note-taking purposes, not for checking e-mail, Facebook, or surfing the web. 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. In particular, do not collaborate on the analytical papers or research paper. 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. January 17 Course Introduction
2. January 24 Definitions

#### Part II. Causes of Civil War

3. January 31 Causes of Civil War I
4. February 7 Causes of Civil War II Paper topic #1 handed out
5. February 14 Causes of Civil War III Paper #1 due
6. February 21 Causes of Civil War IV

#### Part III. Conduct of Civil War

7. February 28 Causes of Violence I
8. March 7 Causes of Violence II
9. March 14 No Class: Spring Break
10. March 21 Effectiveness of Violence Paper topic #2 handed out
11. March 28 Rebel Recruitment/Cohesion Paper #2 due
12. April 4 No Class: ISA
13. April 11 Counterinsurgency

#### Part IV. Duration, Outcome, and Termination of Civil War

14. April 18 Civil War Duration/Alliances Paper topic #3 handed out
15. April 25 Civil War Outcome Paper #3 due
16. April 30 Civil War Termination
17. May 13 Research paper due
COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I. Introduction

1. Course Introduction January 17

2. Definitions January 24

Part II. Causes of Civil War

3. Causes of Civil War, Part I: The State January 31

4. Causes of Civil War, Part II: Economic and Resources February 7
   *Paper Topic #1 Handed Out*

5. Causes of Civil War, Part III: The Evolution of Grievances

   February 14

   Paper #1 Due

   - Read one of the following:

6. Causes of Civil War, Part IV: Leaders, Competition, and External Factors

   February 21


Part III. Conduct of Civil Wars

7. Causes of Violence and Terrorism in Civil War, Part I

   February 28

   - Kaylvas, *Logic of Violence in Civil War*, all, especially chapters 4-5 and 7-9.
8. **Causes of Violence and Terrorism in Civil War, Part II**  
March 7


9. **No Class: Spring Break**  
March 14

10. **Effectiveness of Violence and Terrorism in Civil War**  
March 21

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

11. **Rebel Recruitment/Participation and Cohesion**  
March 28


12. **No Class: International Studies Association Annual Meeting**  
April 4
13. Counterinsurgency


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

14. Civil War Duration and Alliances

- Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*.

15. Civil War Outcome

16. **Make-Up Session: Civil War Termination**

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 (1946-2010)
  - 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 (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: