

PLSC 349 / INRL 539:
The Political Economy of Civil War and Terror

Fall 2009

Seminar time: 9:20am – 11:10am Thursdays

Seminar location: 77 Prospect Street, Room B012 (basement)

Instructor: Chris Blattman, Assistant Professor, Departments of Political Science & Economics

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Course blog: <http://wordpress.common.yale.edu/plsc349/>

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Purpose and Nature of the Course:

We are going to focus on a handful of questions: Why is there civil war? How is war conducted? Who participates? What motivates terrorism and violence against civilians? How is guerrilla and terror groups organized?

Some portray civil war and terror attacks as acts of hatred and resentment; violence is barbaric, irrational and incomprehensible. Others suggest that war and violence follow a rational logic, and is the consequence of strategic calculation and the systematic breakdown of bargains and settlements. Conflict, it adds, is driven by opportunism and opportunity.

The goal of this course is to familiarize the student with approaches to the study of war and terror: economic, historical, analytical, formal theoretical, and statistical. Most of all, the course is designed to get students to think critically about traditional explanations and approaches.

The focus of the course will be on civil war and the use of violence and terror in civil wars. You can see from the readings that coverage of 'conventional' terrorism is covered, albeit less so.

Admission:

Admission is at the discretion of the instructor, with a target class size of 14 to 16 students. Roughly half the places are reserved for MA/IR students and half the places for Yale College students. In each case, graduating students will receive priority.

Introductions to microeconomics and statistics are strongly recommended, but not necessarily required.

Requirements:

Students will be evaluated on the basis of their class participation (20%), the quality of their written comments (40%), and the insightfulness of a final short critical essay (40%).

Undergraduates and IR master's students will complete similar assignments. IR masters students will be held to a higher standard of analysis, critical writing, and outside research.

Roughly 4-5 papers and book chapters will be assigned each week. **Students are expected to read all readings prior to coming to class.** Class discussions will form the bulk of the seminar, and will focus on the students' critical assessment of the readings. Exhibiting knowledge and critical commentary of the readings is essential.

Since this weekly workload is higher than average, students will not be responsible for a midterm or final exam. At the end of the semester, however, students will be expected to submit a long essay.

The purpose of the seminar is to generate a critical discussion of the readings and the ideas behind them. Classes will generally follow the following structure:

- 15 minutes: Individual review of classmates' written comments
- Remainder: Group discussion, led by instructor

The class participation grade is based on the quality of your contribution to the class, not necessarily the quantity. One must aim to contribute something of interest to the discussion on a regular basis. The aim is to have productive intellectual debates. Too much contribution, crowding out of other opinions, uncivil comments, and diatribes will count against you.

Students are expected to keep updated on the course blog. I highly recommend receiving the RSS feed by e-mail or a blog reader such as Google Reader that you see daily or (at least) weekly. Important course announcements, comments, and materials will be made via the course blog.

Participation

20 percent of your grade is based on the quality of your contribution to the class conversation on the readings. Thoughtfulness, appropriateness, and civility are all crucial. The idea is to create a dialogue between class members, and responding civilly but critically to ideas presented by your classmates is rewarded at least as much as new or independent points.

The participation grade is not mechanically set, and rather is a subjective judgment by the instructor.

Note that participation is not based on quantity of participation, and overbearing, out-of-turn or unrelenting comments could penalize you.

Persistent lateness will be noted and can also reduce your participation grade, since the first 15 minutes of class (where we read others' commentaries) is so important.

Weekly critical essays:

Students will post a short critical essay to the course blog by 6pm on Wednesday night before class (so that I can read them all beforehand). Copies of the typed comments should also be brought to class—one for each student.

The seminar will meet 13 times. At least 8 of the meetings you are expected to submit a short critical essay. No essay is submitted the first or last class. That means you should prepare an essay for at least 8 of the 11 meetings in between.

Each essay should include concise and original comments on or critique of the readings. Essays should be roughly 750 to 1500 words in length.

The purpose of these essays is to get you think critically about the principal readings beforehand, to generate a productive discussion during seminar time, and to enhance your absorption of the material. You should also aim to improve your critical writing capacity over the course of the semester.

I also want you to learn to write concisely. Focus on stating your ideas briefly and precisely. Remove what is superfluous and retain the core essence and argument. Discuss evidence, but not exhaustively. This will mean you have space develop a good number of high-quality ideas in a very small number of words.

The essays should demonstrate knowledge of the majority of the readings for full credit. Discussing just one or two papers is ill advised.

You will be graded on your 8 best submissions, and so you will be able to skip up to three without penalty. Submitting all 11 potential comments is to your benefit.

Essays should be written in concise prose—that is, sentences not phrases or bullets. You should develop a minimum of 4 or 5 main comments, critiques, or new ideas. You should avoid repeating material from the readings, and avoid obvious criticisms if possible. You will be evaluated solely on your ability to think and write clearly, creatively, and originally.

Essays will be given a grade of 1 to 5: (5) inspired, (4) clever and interesting, (3) meets expectations, (2) needs improvement, and (1) poor. I anticipate that most essays will receive a 2, 3 or 4, with 1's and 5's the exception. If fewer than 8 essays are submitted, missing essays will receive a zero.

You should bring as many copies of the essays to the class as there are students. The first fifteen minutes of the class will be spent individually reading the essays and critical comments brought by your classmates, followed by a discussion.

End of Semester Assignment:

Use the tools, theories, and ideas presented in the course to understand the causes of conflict and violence (or its absence) in a country of your choosing. One option is to take a macro-level perspective, critically examining the theories presented in class in the context of the history, politics and economics of the country. A second option is to tackle the structure of organization

of an armed group: insurgent, government, or terrorist. Comment on the usefulness of the theory and evidence encountered in class for understanding the armed organization. If you feel existing theories or evidence are wrong or incomplete, specify new hypotheses.

Your critical essays should be well-researched. Expect to locate, read and critique new material. Your argument should demonstrate original research and thinking, and independent research and reading beyond the materials in the syllabus.

Undergraduates: You should aim to write 12 to 20 double spaced pages.

Graduate students: You should aim to write 20 to 30 double spaced pages.

The end-of-semester critical essay is due **December 11 before midnight**. Essays should be e-mailed to your instructor as a PDF. Late assignments will be penalized by a grade level for every day late.

A topic summary and bibliography is due on **November 13**. The topic summary should reflect some preliminary reading and a sketch of the intended argument.

A 2 to 3 page summary of your critical essay, including the subject and thrust of the argument, is due **November 30**. Essays should be posted on the blog as a PDF. You will be asked to review two of your classmates' submissions and be able to provide comments in class on December 3. The quality of the critique will figure in your participation grade.

Writing resources

I cannot recommend enough the following guides to writing. Whether you want to go on in life to write fiction, journalism, or academic journal articles, these are the universal, indispensable guides to crisp and elegant prose. I would recommend them in the following order:

William I. Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, "[The Elements of Style](#)"

William Zinsser, "[On Writing Well](#)"

Deirdre N. McCloskey, "[Economical Writing](#)"

Keith Hjortshoj, "[The Transition to College Writing](#)"

Readings:

We read nearly all of the following books:

- Reno, W. 1998. [Warlord Politics and African States](#).
- Cramer, C. 2007. [Violence in Developing Countries](#).
- Weinstein, J. M. 2007. [Inside Rebellion](#).

All books are available in the Yale Bookstore, and are less than \$25 each. I recommend you purchase them, but a reserve copy should be available at the Social Science Library.

Links are provided. You may need to login via Yale to follow the links. Book chapters will be available on electronic reserve at the Social Science Library.

1. September 3: Introduction

- Human Security Report Project, [Human Security Brief 2007](#)
- Kalyvas, S. N. (2007). [Civil Wars](#). The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics. Boix and Stokes: 416-434.
- Blattman, C. and E. Miguel (forthcoming). "[Civil War](#)." Journal of Economic Literature.
- Cramer. Introduction and Chapter 1

2. September 10: What is civil war and has its nature changed?

- Cramer. Chapter 2.
- Sambanis, N. (2004). "[What is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition](#)." Journal of Conflict Resolution 48(6): 814-858.
- Kaplan, R. D. (1994). [The Coming Anarchy](#). Atlantic Monthly: 44-76.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. (2001). "[New and Old Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?](#)" World Politics 54.

3. September 17: Can economics explain civil war?

- Grossman, H. I. (1991). [A General Equilibrium Model of Insurrections](#). The American Economic Review 81(4): 912-921.
- Collier, P. and A. Hoeffler (2004). [Greed and Grievance in Civil War](#). Oxford Economic Papers 56(4): 563-595.
- Ross, Michael L. (2006). "[A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War](#)." Annual Review of Political Science 9: 265-300.
- Cramer, C. (2007) Violence in Developing Countries. Chapter 3

4. September 24: What are the causes of civil war in Colombia?

Guest instructor: Abbey Steele

- LeGrand, Catherine (2003). "[The Colombian crisis in historical perspective](#)." Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies 28(55-56): 165-209.
- Karl, Robert. 2009. "[Counter-Insurgency and the Birth of the Contemporary Conflict: from the Republicas Independientes to the FARC, 1962-1966](#)." State Formation, Violence, and Cold War in Colombia, 1957-1966. Unpublished Dissertation, Harvard University.
- Romero, Mauricio. 2000. "[Changing Identities and Contested Settings: Regional Elites and the Paramilitaries in Colombia](#)." International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society. Vol 14, No. 1. (51-69).
- Gutiérrez Sanín, Francisco (2008). "[Telling the Difference: Guerrillas and Paramilitaries in the Colombian War](#)." Politics & Society 36(1): 3-34.

5. October 1: Can ethnic hatreds explain civil war?

- Fearon, J. D. and D. D. Laitin (2003). [Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War](#). American Political Science Review 97(1): 75-90.

- Fearon, J. D. (2006). [Ethnic Mobilization and Ethnic Violence](#). Oxford Handbook of Political Economy. B. R. Weingast and D. Wittman. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Chua, Amy (2004). [World on fire](#), Doubleday. Introduction and Chapter 1.
- Horowitz, Donald L. (1998). [Structure and Strategy in Ethnic Conflict](#). Paper prepared for the Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics, Washington, D.C., April 20–21, 1998.

6. October 8: Does state weakness explain civil war?

- Bates, Robert H. (2008). "[The Logic of State Failure: Learning from Late-Century Africa](#)." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25(4): 297-314.
- Collier, Paul (2009). [Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places](#). New York: Harper. Chapter 1.
- Reno. Introduction, Chapters 1, 2 and 7

7. October 15: Why do wars happen at all?

- Fearon, J. D. (1995). [Rationalist Explanations for War](#). *International Organization* 49(3): 379-414.
- Powell, R. (2006). [War as a Commitment Problem](#). *International Organization* 60: 169-203.
- Gartzke, Eric (2003). [War Is in the Error Term](#). *International Organization* 53(3): 567-587.
- Reno. Chapter 4

8. October 22: What motivates individuals to rebel?

- Wood, E. J. (2003). [Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador](#). New York, Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
- Lichbach, M. I. (1994). [What makes Rational Peasants Revolutionary? Dilemma, Paradox, and Irony in Peasant Collective Action](#). *World Politics* 46(3): 383-418.
- Gates, S. (2002). [Recruitment and Allegiance: The Microfoundations of Rebellion](#). *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(1): 111-130.
- Weinstein. Introduction and Chapter 1.

9. October 29: How do rebel groups organize, and how does this affect their behavior?

- Weinstein. Chapters 2 to 5.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. (2007). "[Book Review: Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence, by Jeremy M. Weinstein](#)." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(9): 1146-1151.

10. November 5: Who are terrorists, and how do they organize?

- Abadie, A. (2006). [Poverty, political freedom, and the roots of terrorism](#). *The American Economic Review* 96(2): 50-56.

- Krueger, A. B. and J. Maleckova (2003). [Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?](#) The Journal of Economic Perspectives 17(4): 119-144.
- Berman, E. and D. D. Laitin (2008). [Religion, Terrorism and Public Goods: Testing the Club Model.](#) NBER Working Paper 13725.
- McCormick, Gordon H. (2003). [Terrorist Decision-Making.](#) Annual Review of Political Science 6(1): 473-507.

11. November 13: Why do terror and guerrilla groups use violence against civilians?

- Weinstein. Chapter 6.
- Kalyvas S. N. 2004. [The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War.](#) *Journal of Ethics* 8:1, 97-138
- Pape, R. A. (2003). [The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.](#) *American Political Science Review* 97(03): 343-361.
- Beber, B. and C. Blattman (2008). *The Industrial Organization of Rebellion: The Logic of Forced Recruitment and Child Soldiering.*

12. November 20: What are the causes of civil war in Liberia?

Final paper topic and bibliography due in class

- Sawyer, Amos (2004). [Violent conflicts and governance challenges in West Africa: the case of the Mano River basin area](#) *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 42(03): 437-463.
- Reno, Chapter 3
- Ellis, Stephen (1998). [Liberia's Warlord Insurgency.](#) In *African Guerrillas.* C. S. Clapham. Oxford, James Currey: 155-171.
- Utas, Mats (2003). [Sweet Battlefields.](#) Unpublished dissertation. Chapter 1.
- Optional background: Economist Intelligence Unit, "[Country Profile: Liberia](#)"

13. December 3: Final essay discussion

*Submit a 2 to 3 page summary of your critical essay **by November 30** for discussion in class. Prepare to critique the essay of at least two classmates.*

- Blattman, C. and E. Miguel (forthcoming). "[Civil War.](#)" *Journal of Economic Literature.*

Final paper due on December 11 by e-mail.