

The Political Economy of Civil War and Terror

Fall 2008

Seminar time: 9:25am – 11:15am Fridays

Seminar location: 8 Prospect Place, Room 121

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

Web/blog: <http://www.chrisblattman.blogspot.com/>

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? What motivates terrorism? How is warfare and terror 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.

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%).

Roughly four papers and book chapters will be assigned each week, with students expected to read all 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.

At the beginning of each class, students will submit a short critical comment on what they read. Comments should be no shorter than a single-spaced half page and no longer than the front and back of a single sheet. Copies of the typed comments should be brought to class—one for

each student and the instructor. Students will be assessed on the best 8 summaries submitted over the semester. Since none is submitted on the first or the last class, you get 3 “freebies”.

Since this weekly workload is higher than average, students will not be responsible for a midterm, exam, or large final essay. At the end of the semester, however, students will be expected to submit a 12 to 20 page (double-spaced) critical 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
- 20 minutes: Introductory (or wind up) lecture and comments from instructor
- 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.

Books you might want to buy

We read nearly all of the following books:

- Reno, W. (1998). Warlord Politics and African States.
- Bates, R. (2008). When Things Fell Apart.

We read at least half of these books:

- Weinstein, J. M. (2007). Inside Rebellion.
- Cramer, C. (2007) Violence in Developing Countries.

I recommend you purchase the books, but reserve copies are also available at the Social Science Library.

Topics and readings:

Links are provided where the materials are available online. You may need to login via Yale to follow the links. Book chapters will be available on electronic and/or paper reserve at the Social Science Library.

1. September 5: 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.
- Sambanis, N. (2004). "[What is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition](#)." Journal of Conflict Resolution 48(6): 814-858.
- Blattman, C. and E. Miguel (forthcoming). "[Civil War](#)." Journal of Economic Literature.

2. September 12: Perspectives on civil war

- Cramer. Chapter 2.
- Kaplan, R. D. (1994). [The Coming Anarchy](#). Atlantic Monthly: 44–76.
- Collier, P. and A. Hoeffler (2004). [Greed and Grievance in Civil War](#). Oxford Economic Papers 56(4): 563-595.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. (2001). "[New and Old Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?](#)" World Politics 54: 99-118.
- **Optional:** Cramer. Introduction and Chapter 1

3. September 19: Economic motives for conflict

- Reno. Introduction and Chapter 1
- Cramer, C. (2007) Violence in Developing Countries. Chapter 3
- Grossman, H. I. (1991). [A General Equilibrium Model of Insurrections](#). The American Economic Review 81(4): 912-921.
- **Optional:** Reno. Chapter 2.
- **Recommended reference:** Garfinkel, M. R. and S. Skaperdas (2007). [Economics of Conflict: An Overview](#). Handbook of Defense Economics. T. Sandler and K. Hartley, Elsevier. 2: 649-709.

4. September 26: Ethnic hatreds

- 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.

- Brubaker, Rogers and David D. Laitin (1998). [Ethnic and Nationalist Violence](#). Annual Review of Sociology 24(1): 423-452.

5. October 3: 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 3 or 4
- **Review again:** Cramer. Chapters 2 and 3

6. October 10: State weakness

- Bates. Whole book.
- Reno. Chapter 7

7. October 17: Motivating rebellion

- 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.
- Peters, K. K. B. and Peter Richards (1998). ["Why We Fight": Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone](#). Africa 68(2).

8. October 24: Guerrilla organization

- Weinstein. Part 1 (Chapters 1 to 4).
- Clapham, Christopher S. (1998). African Guerrillas, Indiana University Press. Chapter 1. "Introduction: Analysing African Insurgencies"
- **Review again:** Peters, K. K. B. and Peter Richards (1998). ["Why We Fight": Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone](#). Africa 68(2).

9. October 31: Liberia and Sierra Leone

- 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.
- **Review again:** Reno, Chapter 3 & 4
- One of the following:

- Abdullah, Ibrahim and Patrick Muana (1998). The Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone: A Revolt of the Lumpenproletariat. In *African Guerrillas* by C. S. Clapham. Oxford, James Currey: 1-18.
- Ellis, Stephen (1998). Liberia's Warlord Insurgency. In *African Guerrillas*. C. S. Clapham. Oxford, James Currey: 155-171.

10. November 7: Violence and terror in civil wars

- McCormick, Gordon H. (2003). [Terrorist Decision-Making](#). *Annual Review of Political Science* 6(1): 473-507.
- Kalyvas S. N. 2004. [The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War](#). *Journal of Ethics* 8:1, 97-138
- Weinstein. Chapter 6
- Beber, B. and C. Blattman (2008). *Rebels Without a Cause: The use of coercion and children in guerrilla warfare*.

11. November 14: Terrorist recruitment and organization

- Abadie, A. (2006). [Poverty, political freedom, and the roots of terrorism](#). *The American Economic Review* 96(2): 50-56.
- Feldman, N. E. and B. J. Ruffle (2008). [Religious Terrorism: A Cross-Country Analysis](#), Unpublished working paper, Ben-Gurion University.
- 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.

12. November 21: The logic and organization of terrorism

- de Mesquita, E. B. (2005). [The Quality of Terror](#). *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 515-530.
- Goodwin, J. (2006). [A Theory of Categorical Terrorism](#). *Social Forces* 84(4): 2027-2046.
- Krueger, A. B. and D. D. Laitin (2004). ["Misunderestimating" Terrorism](#). *Foreign Affairs* 83(5): 8-13.
- Pape, R. A. (2003). [The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism](#). *American Political Science Review* 97(03): 343-361.

13. December 5: Critical essays

*There are no readings for the final class. Submit a page summary of your critical essay **by December 3**, for discussion in class. Prepare to critique the essay of at least two classmates.*

Weekly Assignments:

The seminar will meet 13 times. At least 8 of the meetings students are expected to submit a short (1/2 to 2 page) comment. No comment is submitted the first or the last meeting, so that means you should prepare a comment for at least 8 of the 11 meetings in between.

The comment should fulfill one or more of the following purposes:

- A creative comment on or critique of the readings.
- An original synthesis of the readings with other readings or another literature.
- A research idea that seeks to advance the analysis reviewed in the week's readings, including a description of the rationale, the research question and hypothesis, and the theoretical approach and any empirical strategy and data.
- A policy proposal, that seeks to apply the findings to a real world situation in an innovative and creative way.
- For the last week of class only: A short summary of your plans for the final critical essay.

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.

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.

Comments should be written in concise prose—that is, sentences not phrases or bullets. 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.

Comments will be given a grade of 1 to 4: (4) inspired, (3) clever and interesting, (2) meets expectations, and (1) needs improvement. I anticipate that most comments will receive a 2 or 3, with 1's and 4's the exception. If fewer than 10 comments are submitted, missing comments will receive a zero.

You should bring as many copies of the comment to the class as there are students and instructors. The first 15 minutes of the class will be spent individually reading the essays and critical comments brought by your classmates, followed by a discussion.

The last week of class, your essay submission will be a summary of the critical essay you plan to write. There will be no readings. You may not skip this final weekly submission. It does not count as one of your 8 submissions.

End of Semester Assignment:

The end-of-semester critical essay is due **December 15**. Essays should be e-mailed to your instructor as a PDF attachment. Late assignments will be penalized by a grade level for every day late.

A one-page summary of your critical essay, including the subject and thrust of the argument, is due **December 3**. You will be asked to review two of your classmates' submissions and be able to provide comments in class on December 5. The quality of the critique will figure in your participation grade.

You have several options for your critical essay. These include:

1. Choose a civil war episode of interest and explore (or critique existing theories of) the causes of the conflict, its spread, or its organization using the tools and concepts learned in class.
2. Write a review report of an unpublished review article on Civil War written by your instructor, as though you were asked to review the paper by a journal editor. Critiques, comments and additions should be referenced and researched.
3. Research, describe, and analyze 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.
4. Outline an original research paper on civil war or terror, including: new research question; literature review; theory; hypothesis; potential data; analytical method.
5. Write a memo to a senior state department or U.N. official (or other authority figure) describing an innovative or unconventional policy approach to curbing violence, civil war, and terror. Explain how it might work, why, and where.

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

Remember: more is not always better.

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, "[Economic Writing](#)"

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