

# PLTC 281 - Civil War, Insurgency, and Terrorism

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Class Meetings	Contact Information
Fall Semester, 2023 Monday, Wednesday, 1:10 - 2:30PM Room 204, Dana Hall	Instructor: Chris Price (cprice@bates.edu) Office: 163, Pettengill Hall Student Hours: Weds, 3-5PM, Thurs 3-5PM

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## Course Description:

Intra-state conflict, whether described as civil wars, insurgencies, or terrorism, has been the dominant form of political violence since 1945. While the number of violent conflicts has fallen since the end of the cold war, they caused more than 15 million deaths since 1945, and in the words of a World Bank overview, represent “development in reverse”. Beyond their enormous human cost, these conflicts are important in understanding state building, political institutions, and the ordering of political power. This course focuses on the causes, dynamics, prospects for peace, and lasting legacies of political violence in a variety of cases, through a mix of reading, lecture, discussion, writing, and presentation.

This course is organized around five critical questions for scholarship and policy: What are the causes of political violence? Why do individuals join armed organizations? What explains the variation in targets, methods and frequency of violence used by states and armed challengers within and across conflicts? What are some of the challenges and prospects for ending these violent conflicts? Lastly, what are some of the enduring legacies of political violence?

We will examine these questions in order, using a mix of readings, lecture, discussion, presentations, and writing assignments. This course is a step up from introductory lecture courses, and will build your ability to critically evaluate readings from peer-reviewed publications, rather than an assigned textbook. This class will provide you an overview of mainstream scholarship on civil conflict, improve your abilities to synthesize and evaluate arguments, and give you a better sense of how social scientists conduct research. The expectation is that this course is comprised of three hours of in-class instruction and six hours of outside class work per week.

## **Learning Objectives:**

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

- Describe main theories on the causes, conduct, and consequences of intra-state conflict
- Identify different research methods in the social sciences, including experiments, statistics, historical narrative, and ethnography.
- Critically evaluate arguments in the social sciences, both orally and in writing

**Course Materials:**

All course materials will be posted on the course site, to minimize the cost to students. I may end up changing readings or topics due to unforeseen circumstances. If this happens, I will notify the class via email and update the syllabus on the Lyceum site.

**Brief Course Calendar:**

Week	Topics	Assignments
1	Why Take this course?	
2	The Puzzle of Armed Conflict	
3	Why Fight? The State and Economic Resources	
4	Why Fight? Identities and Ideas	
5	Organizing Rebellion	Analytic Essay 2, due 10/6
6	Strategies of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Civil War	
7	Explaining Armed Group Violence	
8	Civilian Victimization	Analytic Essay 2, due 10/27
9	Competing for Political Loyalty	
10	Ending Internal Armed Conflict	
11	Maintaining Peace or Recurring Conflict	Analytic Essay 3, due 11/17
12	Thanksgiving Break - No Class	
13	Political and Social Legacies of Internal Armed Conflict	
14	Individual Legacies of Internal Armed Conflict	
15	Reading Period – Final Project	Final Paper, due 6PM, 12/15 Final Reflection, due 6PM 12/17

## **Class Structure**

This class meets for two eighty-minute sessions each week.

The first meeting each week will consist of a mix of lecture and large group discussion, focused on the week's readings. I will post lecture slides before class, but you should attend this session having read the required reading and prepared to ask questions from the reading. Lecture will include additional cases, descriptions, and theories in addition to the assigned readings.

The second meeting each week will cover any outstanding questions on the topic for that week, and then shift to a workshop format. In this session, you will work in small groups to learn more about the nuts and bolts of how political scientists do research, as well as applying theories to cases. I will provide group assignments and materials for this session the week before.

## **Assessments and Grades**

Grading is based on a model of work either meeting, partially meeting, or not meeting expectations. For graded assessments, I will evaluate your performance against a rubric laying out these expectations, which I will provide to you in advance.

I do not use a curve in grading, as using a curve can potentially create perverse incentives for students to undermine their peers. My expectations are that each of you is capable of achieving an A in this course, and throughout the assessment process I will let you know how your work can be improved if you are not meeting expectations.

Your final grade will be assigned based on your achievement on the full set of assessments listed below.

### **Class Participation - 21% (21 x 1%)**

This class is designed to have a strong workshop component, where you engage with your peers to critically discuss readings, work through the steps of the social science research process, and present to your peers. As such, your participation is a key part of the learning process, and will help you through some of the dryer or more troubling course materials. This is based on attending 21 out of the 24 sessions, and more information on absences can be found in class policies below.

While participation grades can be a source of anxiety for shyer students, I am basing the participation grade on you attending class, on-time, prepared, and interacting respectfully with your peers and instructor. Participation is **not** graded on how often you speak in class, or the types of questions you ask.

### **Reading Reactions - 12% (4 x 3%)**

Four weeks during the semester (you can only submit one a week), by 6 PM the day before class, you should e-mail me a short (<200 word) reaction you had on the session's readings. These do not have to be long, and can cover any of the following points:

- Shortcomings in empirics or issues of logic you identify in the paper
- Questions you have but cannot answer about the authors empirics

- A case you know about which is not explained by the author's theory despite meeting scope conditions.
- Normative concerns you have about the implications of the author's analysis

I will use these points to help develop discussion questions for class, and these also help you work on communicating key points briefly to an audience. I will post a rubric and examples of these to the course Lyceum page.

### **Analytic Essays – 42% (3 x 14%)**

Three times during the semester, in weeks 5, 8, and 11, I am expecting you to write a 750 - 1,500-word short essay, based on a prompt and guidance. You will have a choice between multiple prompts, and I am only expecting you to write on one of them. This is not meant to be a research project, but an opportunity to show your ability to synthesize the material covered in class and build your writing skills. I will provide resources and a rubric with the prompt, as well as guidance on this assignment in class.

I will post the prompts by 9AM Monday in Weeks 5, 8, and 11, and the essay is due by 6PM the Friday of that week.

### **Final Project – 20% (1 x 20%)**

For the final project, you will write a short paper based on prompts and case materials I will provide on Lyceum. The paper will be between 2,000 and 3,000 words, and should include a discussion of how the articles we read in class would explain the case, and judge this against the available evidence. You will have a choice between multiple prompts, and I will provide you with resources and a rubric along with the prompts, as well as guidance on this assignment in class.

### **Final Reflection - 5% (1 x 5%)**

The final reflection is a short (1-3 page) document, where you as an individual look back and critically assess what you learned over the course of the final project. While I will provide a more detailed rubric in week 14, this assignment is your chance to engage with what we covered during the term, and to provide your own conclusions to the term.

### **Additional Credit**

#### **Outside Connection Emails – 3% (3 x 1%)**

For extra credit, you can submit up to 3 short response emails describing some source you have read/seen/heard outside of class, and how you think it relates to this class. These outside sources can reference a current event, such as a news article or op-ed, references to historical events such as a book, film, or podcast, or an event or speaker hosted by Bates.

These are a way to provide credit with engaging with material outside of class, to help provide a cushion if you're being ground down in another class, or to make up for an assignment where you didn't do as well as you could have. These **do not count** towards the grade of A+.

**Grading Standards:**

Above	Below or Equal To	Letter Grade
98	100	A+
92	98	A
90	92	A-
88	90	B+
82	88	B
80	82	B-
78	80	C+
72	78	C
70	72	C-
50	70	D
0	50	F

## Class Policies

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**Absences:** I understand that like in any professional workplace, there may be occasions where you find you have a schedule conflict or are unable to attend class. As such, you all have four unexcused absences throughout the semester, and I will allow further excused absences for reasons identified by the [Office of Student Affairs](#).

If you miss class, please talk with me so that I know you are caught up on the material for that session. The COVID pandemic has deeply affected how people treat illness and the idea of taking time off. If you are sick or injured, I'd rather you rest, and not try to gut through a class remotely. There will be time to cover what you have missed afterwards, and the course is optimized for an in-class format.

**Academic Integrity:** Both the College and myself take academic integrity quite seriously. Throughout this course, the expectation is that in written work you will recognize the sources you used, and that unless an assignment is explicitly stated as a collaborative one, your work is yours and yours alone.

If you have questions about how to cite the works of others, please see the [Writing Center website](#), where you can find information about citation methods and formats.

The University's full policy on academic integrity can be found [here](#), and applies to this course.

**Accessibility:** It is my goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate any issues related to the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please meet with me outside of class so we can explore potential options. You may also wish to work with the Office of Accessible Education and Student Support to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in this course, including official accommodations. Please visit their [website](#) for additional information. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the Office of Accessible Education, please meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together.

**Deadlines and Extensions:** The assignment due dates are set well in advance and are meant to provide you flexibility to budget your time. If something comes up which meets the requirements for an excused absence, please let me know as soon as possible so we can arrange an extension.

For all cases where you haven't talked with me, late assignments will be penalized by 5% (approximately the plus or minus of a grade) for every day past the due date. There are two reasons for this: (1) to make sure that I have them and can provide feedback in a timely manner, and (2) fairness to your peers, who may also have done better if they had additional time to work, but may have felt unable to put off a deadline.

**Equity, Inclusion, and Respect for Others:** During the semester, we will look at examples which include discussion of religion, ethnicity, gender, class, and violence. Any of these topics are likely to raise strong responses, and even with the best of intentions, it's not unlikely someone will make an ill-considered remark when talking about them at length. I ask that we all do our best to be respectful of others, and that you please let me know if there are any issues which come out of class discussion which you believe need to be resolved. If you are uncomfortable talking to me, please use any of the resources available at the [College's Office of Equity and Inclusion](#).

I share the University's [values](#) on equity and inclusion

**Electronic Devices:** Electronic devices are ubiquitous, and are necessary for our class work. However, they are often designed in ways that will take your attention away from what is going on around you. I thus reserve the right at any point in the course to ask you to put away your devices, and would ask that you put phones on airplane mode during class to avoid being distracted by notifications.

**Grading Disputes:** I will make every effort to be transparent and to be accurate in grading your assignments. However, in cases where you believe there is an error in grading, I will carry out re-grading by the following process:

- No earlier than 24 hours after you received the grade and no later than one week after, please send an email to me detailing which portion of the assignment you believe was incorrectly graded, as well as your reasoning for why, citing the rubric.
- I will then regrade the item with the rubric, and will adjust the grade accordingly. If there was an error, I will adjust the grade up; If there was no error, I will explain why the item was graded the way it was; and if it appears that there are additional issues with your answer, I may downgrade and will explain why

**Student Hours:** What are student hours? They are a time for you to talk with me about any concerns or issues you have with the class, as well as to ask other questions about topics relating to the study of politics which may not be germane to the whole class. I encourage you to take advantage of these, as they can help head off problems, lessen concerns, and give me a better sense for how you are doing in the course and at Bates.

I have set aside Wednesday from 3-5PM and Thursday from 3-5PM for student hours. I will do my best to honor appointments outside of these hours, and to respond to emails promptly, but realize that it will be slower replies in the evening and weekends. If you make an appointment for a set time, I will honor that over students who have not.

**Student Resources:** Even in the best of times, students often face challenges that they will need help with outside of class; these are not the best of times. Bates College has a [number of resources](#) available to support you, covering physical and mental health, academic and peer support, and conflict resolution. Please take advantage of them.

**Other Unforeseen Issues:** For all other policies not enumerated here, my default will be College policy, usually listed in the [Bates College Student Handbook](#).

## Detailed Course Schedule and Readings

### Week 1 - Syllabus and Introductions

Guiding Questions: Why should you take this course? Do you understand the expectations and assignments for this course? Is there anything that would be helpful for your professor to know to help you succeed in this course?

Assigned Readings:

- Syllabus

### Week 2 - The Puzzle of Violent Conflict

Guiding Questions: Why do Political Scientists see armed conflict as a 'Puzzle'? What other means besides violence exist for groups to make political claims?

Key Terms: Collective Action Problem; Free-Riding; Bargaining Model of Conflict; Institutional/Contentious/Armed Politics; Civil War; Insurgency; Terrorism

Monday, September 11:

- Blattman, Christopher. 2023. *Why We Fight: The Roots of War and the Paths to Peace*. New York, NY: Penguin Books. Chapter 1, Pages 21-31.
- Stephan, Maria J. and Erica Chenoweth. 2008. Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict. *International Security* 33(1): 7-44.

Wednesday, September 13 - Reading an Academic Article and Making sense of statistical tables

- Hoover Green, Amelia. 2013. *How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps*. Manuscript.

I will assign you in small groups to look at an academic article in class, using some of the techniques we discuss during this session.



### **Week 3 - Origins of Violence: The State, Resources, and Inequality**

Guiding Questions: When do we see political conflict escalate to armed conflict? How important is the state and political system in explaining violence? What role do natural resources play in explaining the onset of violence?

Key Terms: State Capacity; Political Opportunities; 'Lootable' Resources; Mobile and Immobile Capital; "Greed and Grievance"

#### Monday, September 18:

- Fearon, James and David D. Laitin. 2003. Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 75-90.
- Ross, Michael. 2004. What Do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War? *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 337-356.

#### Wednesday, September 20:

We will look at how political scientists organize data, and how this might affect their results. I will post small group assignments and instructions on Lyceum the week before class.

### **Week 4 - Origins of Violence: Ideas and Identity**

Guiding Questions: What roles do ethnic, religious, and other social identities play in explaining the onset of conflict? How important are identity and ideology, relative to economic concerns, in explaining people's choices to join armed groups?

Key Terms: Ethnicity; Sect; Identity; Ideology; Social Construction; Preference over Process; Rationality

#### Monday, September 25:

- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. 2010. "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis." *World Politics* 62(1): 87-119.
- Wood, Elisabeth J. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. New York, New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, pp.1-30.

#### Wednesday, September 27:

Together, we'll discuss some approaches to how political scientists use case studies. In small groups, you will look at a reading with a case study of conflict. I will post small group assignments and instructions on Lyceum the week before class.

## **Week 5 - Organizing Rebellion**

Guiding Questions: How are armed groups structured? How do groups mobilize support to carry out violence? What explains differences in the structure across armed groups? Is their structure important in explaining their goals or behaviors?

Key Terms: Social Capital, Social Networks, Bridging Ties, Bonding Ties, Principal-Agent Problems

### Monday, October 2:

- Parkinson, Sarah E. 2013. Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War. *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 418–432.
- Shapiro, Jacob N. 2015. *The Terrorists Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 and 4, Pages 1-25, 82-100.

### Wednesday, October 4:

Together, we'll discuss how Political Scientists use historical material, and in small groups you will look at readings focused on some of the challenges in using archival evidence. I will post small group assignments and instructions on Lyceum the week before class.

*Due:*

- Analytic Essay 1, 6 PM, Friday October 6th

## **Week 6 - Dynamics: Strategies of Violence**

Guiding Questions: Why do some internal conflicts resemble conventional war, yet others do not? Why do groups often use multiple methods of violence? What methods do States use to counter violent challengers? Are these choices deliberate, or due to other factors?

Key Terms: Identification Problem; Counter-Insurgency; Control; Denunciation; Spoilers; Strategic Interaction; Barbarism; Conventional War; Counter-Terrorism; Anti-Terrorism; Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)

### Monday, October 9:

- Arreguín-Toft, Ivan. 2001. How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict. *International Security* 26(1): 93–128.
- Kydd, Andrew H., and Barbara F. Walter. 2006. The Strategies of Terrorism. *International Security* 31(1): 49–80.

### Wednesday, October 11:

In small groups, we will look at case studies of individual armed groups, and see if we can apply Monday's concepts to better understand whether an armed conflict is civil war, insurgency, or terrorism. I will post small group assignments and instructions on Lyceum the week before class.

## **Week 7 – Explaining Armed Group Violence**

Guiding Questions: How can we best describe a complex concept like ‘violence’? How does violence differ across conflicts? Why does it vary so much across groups, and within conflicts? Does it make sense to think of violence as separate from conflict?

Key Terms: Violence; Bias; Repertoire; Targeting; Selective; Indiscriminate; Technique

Monday, October 16:

- Gutiérrez-Sanín, Francisco & Elisabeth Wood. 2017. What Should We Mean by “Pattern of Political Violence”? Repertoire, Targeting, Frequency, and Technique. *Perspectives on Politics* 15(1): 20-41.
- Kalyvas, Stathis. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2, Pages 32-51.

Wednesday, October 18:

- No class - Enjoy Fall Break Weekend!

## **Week 8 - Civilian Victimization**

Guiding Questions: Why do some armed groups kill so many more people than others? Why are some armed groups restrained in their tactics, yet others break widely held human taboos? Why do some groups engage in sexual violence, yet others show restraint? If civilian support is key to armed groups, why deliberately harm them?

Key Terms: Extra-Lethal Violence; Genocide; Mass Killing; Sexual Violence; Restraint

Monday, October 23:

- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2013. The Puzzle of Extra-Lethal Violence. *Perspectives on Politics* 11(2): 410 - 426.
- Harff, Barbara. 2003. No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955. *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 57-73.

Wednesday, October 25:

- Cohen, Dara Kay, Amelia Hoover Green, and Elisabeth J. Wood. 2013. Wartime Sexual Violence: Misconceptions, Implications, and Ways Forward. *USIP Special Report 323*. Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace

We will talk about the ethical and practical challenges in understanding types of extra-lethal violence, particularly when it comes to discussing sensitive subjects such as sexual violence.

*Due:* Analytic Essay 2, 6 PM, Friday October 27th

## **Week 9 – Competing for Political Loyalty**

Guiding Questions: Why do some armed groups engage in substantial efforts to win over civilians, but others do not? Why do armed groups spend scarce time and resources to carry out ideological projects? Can local economic and social projects win over civilian loyalties? How do civilians negotiate their interests with armed groups?

Key Terms: Governance; Hearts and Minds; Institutions; Public Goods; Ideology; Extractive Capacity

Monday, October 30

- Arjona, Ana, 2016. “Institutions, Civilian Resistance and Wartime Social Order: A Process-Driven Natural Experiment in the Colombian Civil War.” *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 58(3): 99–122.
- Revkin, Mara Redlich. 2020. What Explains Taxation by Resource Rich Rebels? Evidence from the Islamic State in Syria. *The Journal of Politics* 82(2): 757-764.

Wednesday, November 1

In small groups, we will look at case studies and articles examining how armed groups interact with civilians, and try and see what patterns we can find from our discussion on Monday. I will post group assignments and readings to the Lyceum page the week prior.

## **Week 10 – The Challenges of Ending Internal Armed Conflict**

Guiding Questions: Why don't groups quit fighting when neither seems capable of winning? Why do some civil wars, insurgencies, or terrorist campaigns last so much longer than others? How can outside organizations or countries help bring groups to the bargaining table? What are some common pitfalls when outsiders become involved in an armed conflict?

Key Terms: Commitment Problem; Bargaining Failure; Peace Keeping; Intervention; Moral Hazard

Monday, November 6:

- Duffy Toft, Monica. 2010. Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory? *International Security* 34(4): 7-36
- Autessere, Séverine. 2014. *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Introduction, Pages 1-19.

Wednesday, November 8:

In small groups, we will look at case studies of how conflict ended, and try and see what patterns we can find from our discussion on Monday. I will post group assignments and readings to the Lyceum page the week prior.

## **Week 11 - Resolution: Dissolving Violent Organizations**

Guiding Questions: What happens to those who fought when a rebellion is over? What is required to institutionalize peace? What are some of the ways that countries and individuals return to violence?

Key Terms: Reoccurrence; Socialization; Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR); Field Methods; Research Ethics; Belmont Principles

### **Monday, November 13:**

- Bateson, Regina. 2017. The Socialization of Civilians and Militia Members: Evidence from Guatemala. *Journal of Peace Research* 54(5): 634–647
- Lake, Milli. 2017. Building the Rule of War: Post-conflict Institutions and the Micro-Dynamics of Conflict in Eastern DR Congo. *International Organization* 71(2): 281-315.

### **Wednesday, November 15:**

- Wood, Elisabeth J. 2013. Reflections on the Challenges, Dilemmas, and Rewards of Research in Conflict Zones. In D. Mazurana, K. Jacobsen, & L. Andrews Gale (Eds.), *Research Methods in Conflict Settings: A View from Below* (pp. 295-308). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

We will talk about how Political Scientists use ethnographic methods, such as interviews and oral histories, to study conflict. I will post group assignments and readings to the Lyceum page the week prior

*Due:*

- Analytic Essay 3, 6 PM, Friday November 17th

## **Week 12 - Thanksgiving Break**

No Class - enjoy your time off!

### **Week 13 – Political and Social Legacies of Internal Armed Conflict**

Guiding Questions: How do past events of armed conflict affect the size and capability of the state? Do states that face rebellion end up more democratic or autocratic afterwards? How do social identities and roles change during conflict? What are some of the challenges to understanding these relationships?

Key Terms: Regime Type; State Capacity; Social Construction; Regimes

Monday, November 27:

- Huang, Reyko. 2016. *The Wartime Origins of Democratization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Introduction, Pages 1-15.
- Wood, Elisabeth J. 2008. The Social Processes of Civil War: The Wartime Transformation of Social Networks. *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (1): 539–561

Wednesday, November 29:

Working in small groups, we will look at different works that discuss how conflict affects political and social institutions long after it is over, and see how these findings fit with what we covered on Monday. I will post group assignments and readings to the Lyceum page the week prior.

### **Week 14 – Individual Legacies of Internal Armed Conflict?**

Guiding Questions: How do individuals respond to experiences of violence? What are some reasons these might differ from country to country? How do these individual traits affect politics after violence?

Key Terms: Pro-Social Behavior; Parochialism; Altruism; Egalitarianism; Post-Traumatic Stress; Post-Traumatic Growth

Monday, December 3:

- Blattman, Christopher. 2009. From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda. *American Political Science Review* 103(2): 231-247.
- Mironova, Vera and Sam Whitt. 2016. The Evolution of Prosociality and Parochialism After Violence. *Journal of Peace Research* 53(5): 648-664.

Wednesday, December 5:

We will look at how Political Scientists carry out experiments to understand conflict, using behavioral games, and I will provide some concluding remarks for the class.

**Reading Period**

Dec 9 – Dec 11

I will be available in my office to answer any questions, 9:30AM – 6PM, Monday, December 11 to Friday December 15.

I will post prompts and guidance for the final project Monday, December 9, at 9AM.

**Finals Week**

Dec 12 – Dec 18

*Due:*

- Final Project, 6 PM, Friday December 15<sup>th</sup>
- Final Reflection, 9AM, Monday December 18<sup>th</sup>