

# PLTC 344 - Ethnicity and Conflict

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**Class Meetings**

Fall Semester, 2021  
Mondays, 1:05 - 4:00 PM  
Room 162, Pettengill Hall

**Contact Information**

Instructor: Chris Price (cprice@bates.edu)  
Office: Room 163, Pettengill Hall  
Student Hours: Tu, 9AM - 11AM; Th, 1-3PM

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**Course Description**

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**Summary:**

News reports frequently focus on the importance of ethnicity in explaining conflict. This narrative is used to explain conflict in both rich and poor nations, around the world as well as here in the United States. The importance that most people attach to their identities make these explanations intuitive, but miss important counterpoints: That in most countries, multiple ethnic groups co-exist peacefully, and in many cases of conflict, those carrying out violence do so against neighbors they knew before the conflict.

In this course, we will look critically at how, why, and when ethnic groups cooperate and when they fall into conflict, through five main questions: What is ethnic identity, and how do we measure it? What mechanisms link ethnic identity to conflict, and how do institutions and agents exacerbate or mitigate conflicts between groups? Do ethnic conflicts have different dynamics of violence than non-ethnic ones? What can be done to resolve conflict based on ethnic lines? What are the lasting legacies of ethnic conflict for the future?

Throughout the course, you will engage in critical readings, discussion in a seminar format, and build presentation, research, and writing skills through work in small groups. The capstone project is an original research paper, which through a structured process, will prepare you for writing a senior thesis.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Recall and classify major arguments about what explains ethnic conflict and cooperation
- Evaluate theories using counter-factual reasoning and evidence
- Author research in a structured environment

**Course Materials:**

There are no required textbooks for the course, and required texts consist of academic articles and book chapters. All readings will be posted on Lyceum, and I will have books placed on reserve in the library for those who prefer to read them in hard copy.

## **Class Structure**

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This class meets for a single three-hour session each week, which will be broken into three fifty-minute periods with a ten-minute break between each period.

The first period will focus on large group discussion of the main works assigned for the week, examining a major theoretical debate. As a seminar, this will largely be free-flowing discussion, where you and your peers will evaluate the main work and how it applies to the main questions for the week. I will serve as a moderator for this discussion, but its value will largely come from your interaction and engagement with the assigned texts.

The second period will be focused on applying the theoretical debate to cases in the real world. The goal of this session is to provide structured examples for you to compare against theories we read in class, as well as to provide insight into individual cases. Again, we will largely engage with these points in the seminar format via discussion, but will also include small presentations on occasion to improve your presentation skills.

The third period is set aside for writing groups, a small group of peers you will work with throughout the semester on your writing project, starting in week 4. This part of class is meant to reinforce the importance of thinking about research regularly, gives you a chance to receive more feedback, and helps provide a support structure for the challenges that inevitably occur when carrying out research.

## **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.

### **Seminar Participation (20%):**

During each class period, we will engage in a class discussion of the assigned readings for that week. While participation grades can be a source of anxiety to shy students, my expectations are that each week you will be prepared by having done the readings, and that you interact respectfully with your peers during discussion.

### **Brief Reading Reactions (10%):**

Five times during the semester, by 5 PM the day before class, you should email me a reaction you had on one or more of the assigned readings.

These do not have to be long (< 250 words, approximately 1 double-spaced page of type), and can be any of the following:

- 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 their scope conditions.
- Normative concerns you have about the author's research methods

### **Final Writing Project - 70%**

The final project for this course is a paper, between 4,000 and 6,000 words long, in which you either apply theories from class readings to a specific case, synthesize or propose a new theory to explain conflict and cooperation, or critically replicate the findings of an existing work. The goal is to introduce you to the practice of research in a structured manner, and build your skills for either a senior thesis or the capstone project in a research methods course.

As part of this project, the final third of the class period starting in week 4 will be set-aside for writing groups where you will talk through challenges you are facing in research, discuss revisions, and provide constructive criticism to your peers on their research project. These will be permanent groups, and I will assign the members based on research topic.

The evaluation of this assignment is broken up across five formative and one summative assessment:

- **10% Initial Proposal**

At the end of week 4, I will be expecting a short (<500 word) proposal from you, which outlines your choice of a topic, where you will find information for either replicating or doing research on the topic, and any questions or worries you have about the process. I will use these to provide you feedback and suggestions about next steps, to include possible sources or references. I will provide the rubric and examples of topics at the start of week 3, and we will talk about it during our initial introductory meetings which will take place before the end of week 2.

- **10% Annotated Bibliography**

At the end of week 6, I will be expecting an Annotated bibliography, providing an initial list of sources you have found for your paper, as well as your assessment of what value they provide your wider project. The purpose of this assignment is to sharpen your skills in finding and evaluating works important to your research question.

- **10% Outline**

At the end of week 8, I will be expecting an outline for the full project, not to exceed three pages. The purpose of this assignment is to push you to clarify your argument and how best to organize it, as well as to provide a structure for your writing.

- **10% Initial Draft**

At the end of week 10, I will be expecting a partial draft of the project, between 2,000 - 4,000 words. The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with feedback from others and identify challenges that will need to be overcome well in advance of the final deadline.

- **10% Peer feedback**

At the end of week 11, I will expect you to provide me with written comments on one of the partial drafts from your writing group, which you will give to the author in week 13. The purpose of this assignment is to help you provide critical yet constructive comments, as well as to learn from your peers' efforts in writing.

- **20% Final Report:**

The final paper will be due at the end of the finals time slot assigned to this course. I will post the rubric in advance, and provide written feedback on your final project.

## **Class Policies**

**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 one unexcused absence throughout the semester, and I will allow further excused absences for reasons identified by the [Office of Student Affairs](#).

Regular attendance is important for a productive seminar format and a good predictor of positive learning outcomes. As such, if you miss class, please make arrangements to talk with me so that I know you are caught up on the material for that week.

**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. Students with disabilities 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 contact and 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 other cases, late assignments will be penalized by 5% (approximately the plus or minus of a grade) for every twelve hours 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 be talking about religion, ethnicity, gender, class, and violence. Any of these topics alone is 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 stand behind the University's statement on [Diversity](#):

Everyone is different; at Bates, we embrace and learn from that difference.

At Bates, we acknowledge and celebrate the plurality of identities, social positions, cultural perspectives and individual abilities that contribute to human difference. We believe in the emancipating potential of education to help all members of our community promote, respect and embrace diversity – broadly defined – and to preserve and advocate for human dignity. As we avow in the Bates mission statement, “With ardor and devotion — Amore ac Studio — we engage the transformative power of our differences, cultivating intellectual discovery and informed civic action” to prepare leaders who are “sustained by a love of learning and a commitment to responsible stewardship of the wider world.”

**Electronic Devices:** Electronic devices are now ubiquitous, and there will be particular times in class that will take advantage of them. However, they are often designed in ways that will take your attention away from what is going on around you, particularly in class. 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. You are encouraged 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 Tuesday morning (9 - 11) and Thursday afternoon (1-3) for student hours, which are the best times to meet with me. 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 as listed in the [Bates College Student Handbook](#).

# Detailed Course Schedule

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## Week 1 - Introduction, What is ethnicity?

Monday, September 6<sup>th</sup>

### Class Readings:

- Syllabus
- Chandra, Kanchan. 2006. "What Is Ethnic Identity And Does It Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9(1): 397–424.

### Guiding Questions

- How do political scientists define ethnic identity? What elements of this definition are important for thinking about its role in conflict? How does ethnicity differ from other important social identities?

### Small-Group Discussion Readings:

I will assign you to a group in class, given that the add/drop period is still in progress, and thus enrollment is in flux. The readings will be short, and there is time in class to do both the reading and the small group discussion.

### Due:

- Schedule a 15-minute meeting with the professor anytime between the 1<sup>st</sup> of September and Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Read the Syllabus

## Week 2 - Measuring Ethnicity

Monday, September 13<sup>th</sup>

### Class Readings:

- Adams, Laura. 2009. Techniques for Measuring Identity in Ethnographic Research. In R. Abdelal, Y. Herrera, A. Johnston, & R. McDermott (Eds.), *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists* (pp. 316-342). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read 332-341, skim the rest.
- Posner, Daniel N. 2004. Measuring Ethnic Fractionalization in Africa. *American Journal of Political Science* 48(4): 849-863.

### Application:

- In the second period of class, we will look at some of the existing datasets on conflict - Minorities at Risk ([MAR](#)), Ethnic Power Relations ([EPR](#)), and a few others mentioned in this week's articles. Before class, identify a conflict you believe is ethnic, and we will see how it looks in each of these major datasets.

### Guiding Questions

- How do political scientists measure ethnicity? Do these measures align with the theories we discussed last class? How might different measures affect authors' findings? What are the strengths and limitations of different methods for understanding ethnic conflict?

Due:

- Completed 15 Minute meeting with professor during student hours by end of day Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Week 3 - Ethnic conflict and Cooperation at the micro-level**

Monday, September 20<sup>th</sup>

Class Readings:

- Habyarimana, James Paul, ed. 2009. *Coethnicity: Diversity and the Dilemmas of Collective Action*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. Chapters 3-4, 68-104.
- Petersen, Roger. 2002. *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2, pp. 17-39.

Guiding Questions

- What are some of the mechanisms that link ethnic identity and conflict? What are conditions that determine whether people of different ethnicities?

Application:

I will post a few transcripts discussing ethnicity and conflict from hearings by the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Committee and the International Criminal Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia. Looking at these, we will see how these mechanisms apply in cases of conflict, one largely regarded as non-ethnic, the other ethnic.

Due:

- Initial Topic due, 5 PM, Friday October 1st

**Week 4 - Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation: The Security Dilemma**

Monday, September 27<sup>th</sup>

Class Readings:

- Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 75–90.
- Posen, Barry R. 1993. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict." *Survival* 35(1): 27–47.

Guiding Questions

- How does state strength alter the odds of ethnic cooperation and conflict? How do these mechanisms align with those we discussed last week? What types of solutions do these theories hint at for ending ethnic conflict?



### Application:

- We will watch a portion of Tone Bringas's film, *We Are All Neighbours*, and look at documents gathered about the Anfal campaign in Iraq, and see how arguments relating to the security dilemma apply in each case.

## **Week 5 - Macro-Level Explanations: Party Systems and Outbidding**

Monday, October 4<sup>th</sup>

### Class Readings:

- Posner, Daniel N. 2005. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Devotta, Neil. 2005. From Ethnic Outbidding to Ethnic Conflict. *Nations and Nationalism* 11(1): 141-159.

### Guiding Questions

- What role do electoral incentives play in determining ethnic cooperation or conflict? What links the behavior of individuals to elites in these theories? Under what conditions do elites use extreme appeals to ethnic identity?

### Application

- I will post brief excerpts looking at elections and religiously motivated violence in India to compare against arguments on ethnic outbidding.

## **Week 6 - Macro-level Explanations: Persistent Inequalities**

Monday, October 11<sup>th</sup>

### Class Readings:

- Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 4, 141-184.
- Cederman, Lars Erik, Kristian S. Gleditsch, and Halvard Buhaug. 2013. *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.

### Guiding Questions

- How do inequalities based on ethnic identity increase the odds of conflict? What are the limits to these theories' explanatory power?

### Application:

- I will post news article excerpts relating to ethnic riots against Chinese minorities in Indonesia and Malaya, and we will examine how these cases fit with theories of persistent inequality and violence.

Due: Annotated Bibliography, 5PM, Thursday October 14<sup>th</sup>

## **Week 7 - Dynamics of Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Civil Wars**

Monday, October 18<sup>th</sup>

### Class Readings:

- Christia, Fotini. 2012. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N., and Matthew Adam Kocher. 2007. "Ethnic Cleavages and Irregular War: Iraq and Vietnam." *Politics & Society* 35(2): 183–223.

### Reading Questions

- How different are ethnic and non-ethnic civil wars? What role does ethnicity play in the conduct of violence by armed organizations?

### Application:

I will post excerpts discussing violence in Peru, Sri Lanka, and Northern Ireland, to examine the role that ethnicity plays in the dynamics of violence, as well as how it compares to a case largely regarded as non-ethnic (Peru).

## **Week 8 - Ethnic Cleansing, Mass Killing, and Genocide**

Monday, October 25<sup>th</sup>

### Class Readings:

- Browning, Christopher R. 1998. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York, NY: HarperPerennial. Chapter 18, pp.159 - 191.
- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2011. *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda*. [Electronic resource]. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapters 1 and 6 (pp. 1-22, 154-180).

### Guiding Questions

- Does ethnic difference lead to genocide? How and when do ethnic conflicts escalate to this level of violence?

### Application:

- Pick one of the empirical chapters (5-9) in Scott Straus' 2015 book, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa*, (Available as an electronic resource via the Bates library). We will have brief presentations by each student on what they learned from the chapter, and how these findings fit with the Browning and Fujii works.

Due: Outline - 5 PM, Friday, October 29<sup>th</sup>

## **Week 9 - Solutions to Ethnic Conflict: Peacekeeping**

Monday, November 1<sup>st</sup>

### Class Readings:

- Fortna, Virginia Page. 2008. *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices after Civil War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press. Chapter 6.
- Petersen, Roger D. 2011. *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

### Guiding Questions

- How might peacekeeping resolve ethnic conflicts? What challenges are there to using outside force to maintain order between ethnic groups?

### Application:

- I will post a short selection of documents from UN peacekeeping in Croatia, Lebanon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for discussion.

### **Week 10 - Solutions to Ethnic Conflict: Institutional Design**

Monday, November 8<sup>th</sup>

### Class Readings:

- Lijphart, Arend D. 'Self-Determination versus Pre-Determination of Ethnic Minorities in Power-Sharing Systems' in *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, Will Kymlicka, ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 275-287.
- Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 15, pp.601-652.

### Guiding Questions

- What institutional approaches are available to reduce ethnic conflict? Under what conditions do they work best? Under what conditions are they likely to fail?

### Application

- We will look at the Lebanese Constitution and three short news articles about Lebanon after the Taif accords.

Due: Initial Draft - 5PM, Friday November 12<sup>th</sup>

### **Week 11 - Solutions to Ethnic Conflict: Partition**

Monday, November 15<sup>th</sup>

### Class Readings:

- Kaufmann, Chaim. 1996. "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars." *International Security* 20(4): 136–75.
- Sambanis, Nicholas. 2000. "Partition as a Solution to Ethnic War: An Empirical Critique of the Theoretical Literature." *World Politics* 52(4): 437–83.

### Guiding Questions:

How might partition resolve ethnic conflict? Under what conditions has partition worked in the past? What are potential long-term effects of endorsing partition as a solution to ethnic conflict?

### Application:

I will post three short newspaper/newsmagazine articles covering the partition of Bangladesh from Pakistan, the Czech and Slovak republics from Czechoslovakia, and South Sudan from Sudan.

Due: Comments on classmate's draft - 5PM, Friday November 20<sup>th</sup>

**Week 12 - Thanksgiving Break**

Monday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>

- Enjoy your break!

**Week 13 - Legacies of Ethnic Conflict**

Monday, November 29<sup>th</sup>

Class Readings:

- Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2000. "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity." *International Organization* 54(4): 845–77.
- Bauer, Michal et al. 2016. "Can War Foster Cooperation?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30(3): 249–74.

Guiding Questions:

What are some of the longer-term consequences of ethnic conflict? What policies might exacerbate or resolve historical wrongs in the present?

Application:

I will post excerpts from work looking at the legacies of civil wars in Tajikistan and Sierra Leone.

**Finals Week**

Friday, December 10

- DUE: Final Paper Due, Friday December 10<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM.