

POLITSC 3240: Political Violence

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Office Hours: We 4 - 6 PM and by appointment Class Hours: We/Fr 9:35 - 10:55 AM
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Course Description

Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and act without asking questions, like Eichmann.

Primo Levi

As the quotation above suggests, an underlying assumption of this course is that ordinary people can, under certain circumstances, act in exceptionally violent and abhorrent ways. Indeed, violence deployed for political purposes is as old as humankind itself and its threat remains eerily relevant in our own era. How and to what end is violence practiced? Why are some societies plagued by recurrent violence while others appear to be mostly free of it? What explains who participates in violence and why? What are the consequences of violence for society? In answering these questions, we will visit examples from multiple continents and time periods, seeking to grasp the mechanisms at play and gaining an understanding of ongoing policy debates. Crucially, we will leave the classroom with a deeper appreciation of how difficult these questions are to answer. At the same time, we will lean on empirical evidence in order to evaluate competing theories that offer plausible answers.

Course Goals and Objectives

Political Science Program Goals

- Students gain in-depth knowledge of the scholarly literature in a field or thematic specialization.
- Students develop analytic and critical thinking skills that will enable them to rigorously evaluate competing arguments and to appraise value-based claims.

Course-Specific Goals

- Students gain knowledge of major theoretical debates about political violence.
- Students gain knowledge about broad empirical patterns of political violence, including intrastate conflict, government repression, mass killing, terrorism, and communal violence post-WWII. Students will become familiar with approaches to the empirical measurement of political violence.
- Students gain familiarity with the methods and evidentiary standards in academic literature on political violence.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

- have a good understanding of the conceptual differences between different types of political violence (civil wars, government repression, mass killing, terrorism, and so on).
- be familiar with empirical measurement of political violence.
- know broad patterns of political violence for the post-WWII period.
- know major theoretical debates and arguments about the determinants of political violence.
- have practiced assessing the strengths and weaknesses of strategies of causal inference in the literature on political violence.
- have practiced critical writing that links theoretical knowledge from class to empirical cases of political violence.

My Teaching Philosophy

When teaching in the undergraduate classroom, I proceed with three overarching goals in mind. The first and most fundamental one is to cultivate a life-long passion for learning in my students. My philosophy is that a great teacher lights a spark of curiosity that is innate to all human beings. The second objective of my approach to undergraduate teaching is to give students the tools and cognitive habits that allow them to critically evaluate arguments and consider alternative explanations to claims they encounter. Finally, I seek to equip students with an ability to articulate their own ideas in clear language, whether spoken or written. Together, these principles coalesce to prepare my students for a life of curiosity, respectful yet critical appraisal of differing views, and a measure of comfort with sharing and defending their own ideas.

Course Materials

I will make many of the course materials available to students on the course website. Students are required to use university libraries to obtain the rest. There are no required texts to purchase. Students should download the Top Hat app as it will be used for interactive tasks during class time.

Assignments and Grading

Reading Quizzes (10%)

Before every class, students will complete an online reading quiz on the course website. The quiz will pose several rudimentary questions that will be closely related to the readings assigned for a given class session. The questions will probe students' understanding of the main arguments, facts, and conclusions encountered in the materials. Most students should find the questions easy as long as they complete the assigned readings on time. The goal of these quizzes is to ensure that students read attentively. Questions will become available at the end of previous class and close five minutes before the class session for which readings were assigned. Students will have ten minutes to complete a quiz in one attempt but they can finish it at any point between two class sessions. The three lowest quiz scores will be dropped and students' overall quiz grade will be an average of the remaining quizzes. Because the three lowest scores will be dropped, there will be no make-ups for missed quizzes, even for excused absences.

Midterm Exam (35%)

Students will complete one in-class midterm exam on March 4. The exam will draw from the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions through week 7. The exam will be a mixture of multiple-choice questions (four answer options, one correct answer), short-answer questions, and a short essay. Students will have the entire class period to write the exam.

Final Paper Outline (10%)

To lay the groundwork for the final paper, students will prepare and submit an outline that will be one page in length. In the outline, students will identify the overarching topic of their essay, its main thesis, division of topics with topic sentences, and the key pieces of evidence that students will use to support their argument. I will provide additional explanation of what each of these terms means in class. I encourage students not to underestimate this assignment because if done well, the outline will be crucial to the success of the final paper. I am happy to meet with students during office hours and discuss specific paper ideas.

Final Paper (35%)

Students will finish the course by writing an original essay that will engage the ideas and examples introduced in class. Specifically, students will select an instance of political violence (the Liberian civil war, the Rwandan genocide, etc.) and try to explain why it took place with the help of one of the theories that students will encounter in this class. In the course of the essay,

students will also have to address alternative explanations (some of the other theories students did not choose to make sense of political violence) and indicate why they fall short of providing satisfactory explanation. Students may choose examples of political violence that were not mentioned in class as long as they can discuss the examples by engaging with the theories they did encounter in this course. The paper cannot be shorter than five double-spaced pages and it cannot be longer than six double-spaced pages. The paper should use 1-inch margins or less, the font should not be larger than 12. All sources should be properly cited using in-text citations or footnotes. A list of references at the end of the essay is also required and does not count towards the page limit. I will circulate a short rubric detailing how the papers will be graded well ahead of time.

Participation (10%)

Active participation in class and regular engagement with the presented material is crucial for effective learning. Because different people prefer different forms of participation, there will be several opportunities that students can choose to participate. Contributing to classroom conversation (in person), commenting on assigned readings in Canvas discussions (online), attending office hours, as well as presenting current news related to political violence at the beginning of class all count as forms of participation. I will make regular notes regarding each student's participation throughout the semester. Participation will be graded on a simple scale: excellent, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory. Excellent participation is achieved by participating at least once a week in any of the forms mentioned above. Satisfactory participation is achieved by participating at least once every two weeks. Students that earn the unsatisfactory participation grade participate only a few times during the entire semester or never. It goes without saying that students that fail to attend class regularly will find it difficult to earn a satisfactory participation grade.

Extra Credit

Students who wish to receive extra credit may prepare a short, five-minute presentation about an instance of political violence of their choice. The presentation should, similarly to the final paper, critically apply a theoretical perspective discussed in class to the selected case. The presentation should be accompanied by a few slides and it should explain why the chosen theoretical perspective is uniquely suited for explaining the chosen case. The presentation will be graded pass/fail and it will, if deemed satisfactory, raise students' final grade by 2%. Students may present on the case they choose to explore in their final paper.

Letter grades for student performance will be assigned based on the following percentages:

A: 93-100	B-: 80-82	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-92	C+: 77-79	D: 60-66
B+: 87-89	C: 73-76	E: 0-60
B: 83-86	C-: 70-72	

Important Dates

1. **Midterm Exam:** March 4
2. **Final Paper Outline due date:** April 17
3. **Final Paper due date:** May 1

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

While I will not formally record whether or not students are in class, attendance is both expected and absolutely crucial for student success in this course. Many of the assignments (particularly the midterm exam) will be partially based on lectures and in-class discussions and students will miss important information if they choose not to attend regularly. It will be hard for students who do not come to class to pass the course. Students can expect me to be prepared, deliver lectures, and answer questions. In turn, I expect students to have read *all* of the assigned readings and to come with questions and requests for clarification.

During Class

I understand that the electronic recording of notes and using of the Top Hat app will be important for class and so computers will be allowed in class. Students should refrain from using computers for anything but activities related to the class. Phones are prohibited unless they are used for recording of responses to questions posed via the Top Hat app. Eating and drinking are allowed in class but students are asked to ensure that it does not interfere with their learning or the class in general. Students should try not to eat their lunch in class as classes are typically active and require full attention.

Re-grading

I will do my best to grade papers and exams fairly, accurately, and quickly. However, mistakes can occur. If students have a concern about their grade, they can write a description of the mistake as they see it and send it to me within one week of receiving their grade. Please note that the entire exam or paper will be re-graded, and it is thus possible that students' final grade will go up or down.

Make-Up Exams and Late Assignments

The midterm exam must be taken when scheduled except for the following reasons:

- documented attendance at a university-sanctioned event
- documented death in the family
- observation of a religious holiday

- documented illness or injury

If an exam is missed due to an *excused* absence, a make-up exam will be scheduled in consultation with me. It is the student's responsibility to initiate this process and to provide the necessary documentation. Exams missed due to an *unexcused* absence will receive a grade of 0 and cannot be made up. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized by a full letter grade for each 24-hour period by which the assignment is late.

Emails

The classroom is the best place to raise questions that are relevant to every student in the class. Office hours should be dedicated to discussing deeper questions related to class material as well as assignments. While I welcome student emails, students should make sure to exhaust other sources (especially the syllabus) that might help answer their questions and consider direct emails as a last resort. Students should include the title of the class in the subject line when writing an email.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term *academic misconduct* includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct: <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Disability

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may

lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Commitment to Diversity

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

Warning

Students should be aware that a course on political violence may include discussions and readings that may at times, due to the nature of the topic, be difficult. I will do my best to create an environment that is conducive to both intellectual growth and processing of occasionally challenging material.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (January 12 & 14): Introduction

WEDNESDAY: Introduction to the Course and Syllabus.

FRIDAY: Basic Concepts, Definitions, and Statistics

- Pinker, Steven. 2018. *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*. New York, NY: Penguin. **Chapters 11 and 12.**
- Chlouba, Vladimir. 2020. "A Guide to Academic Research Articles for the Casual Reader."
- Pinker, Steven. 2007. "The surprising decline in violence." **TED talk.**

Week 2 (January 19 & 21): The Puzzle of Violence

WEDNESDAY: Normative and Psychological Explanations

- Fanon, Frantz. 1965. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York, NY: Grove Press. **Only pages 83-95.**
- Harden, John P. 2021. "All the World's a Stage: US Presidential Narcissism and International Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly*, (00): 1-13.

FRIDAY: Strategic Explanations

- Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist explanations for war." *International Organization*, 49(3): 379-414.
- Jackson, Matthew O. and Massimo Morelli. 2009. "The Reasons for War - an Updated Survey." In Coyne, Chris, ed., *Handbook of the Political Economy of War*. Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Week 3 (January 26 & 28): Grievance and Civil War

WEDNESDAY: Ethnic Grievances

- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. 2010. "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis." *World Politics*, 62(1): 87-119.
- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2000. "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity." *International Organization*, 54(4): 844-877.

FRIDAY: Political and Economic Grievances

- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2011. "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison." *American Political Science Review*, 105(3): 478-495.
- Hassner, Ron E. 2003. "To Halve and to Hold: Conflict over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility." *Security Studies*, 12(4): 1-33.

Week 4 (February 2 & 4): Greed and Civil War

WEDNESDAY: The Economic Calculus of Civil Warfare

- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review*, 97(1): 75-90.
- Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 1998. "On economic causes of civil war." *Oxford Economic Papers*, 50(4): 563-573.

FRIDAY: Natural Resources and Civil War

- Ross, Michael L. 2004. "What Do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 41(3): 337-356.
- Collier, Paul. 2009. "New rules for rebuilding a broken nation." **TED talk.**

Week 5 (February 9 & 11): Civil War Case Studies

WEDNESDAY: The First Liberian Civil War

- Berkeley, Bill. 2001. *The Graves Are Not Yet Full: Race, Tribe, and Power in the Heart of Africa*. New York, NY: Basic Books. **Only chapter 1.**

FRIDAY: The First Congo War

- Stearns, Jason K. 2012. *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*. New York, NY: Public Affairs. **Only chapters 7, 8, and 9.**

Week 6 (February 16 & 18): Who Fights?

WEDNESDAY: Participation

- Humphreys, Macartan and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2008. "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War." *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(2): 436-455.
- Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2005. "Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49(4): 598-624.

FRIDAY: Rebel Behavior in Civil Wars

- Cohen, Dara Kay. 2013. "Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980-2009)." *American Political Science Review*, 107(3): 461-477.
- Fjelde, Hanne and Desirée Nilsson. 2012. "Rebels against Rebels: Explaining Violence between Rebel Groups." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 56(4): 604-628.

Week 7 (February 23 & 25): When Does Violence End?

WEDNESDAY: Conflict Duration

- Fearon, James D. 2004. "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 41(3): 275-301.
- Walter, Barbara F. 2017. "**Why Civil Wars Have Gotten Longer, Bloodier, and More Numerous.**" *Political Violence at a Glance*.

FRIDAY: Ending Civil Wars

- Walter, Barbara F. 1997. "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." *International Organization*, 51(3): 335-364.
- Morjé Howard, Lise and Alexandra Stark. 2017. "How Civil Wars End: The International System, Norms, and the Role of External Actors." *International Security*, 42(3): 127-171.

Week 8 (March 2 & 4): Midterm Review and Exam

WEDNESDAY: Midterm Exam Review

We will review concepts introduced in the first half of the course and thus facilitate preparation for the midterm exam. Students should come with questions and requests for clarification.

FRIDAY: Midterm Exam

Week 9 (March 9 & 11): Government Repression and Protest

WEDNESDAY: Government Repression

- Nathan, Andrew J. 2019. “The New Tiananmen Papers: Inside the Secret Meeting That Changed China.” *Foreign Affairs*, 98(4).
- Kuran, Timur. 1991. “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989.” *World Politics*, 44(1): 7-48.

FRIDAY: Non-Violent Protest

- Stephan, Maria J. and Erica Chenoweth. 2008. “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict.” *International Security*, 33(1): 7-44.
- Chenoweth, Erica. 2013. “The success of nonviolent civil resistance.” [TED talk](#).

Week 10 (March 16 & 18): Spring break

Week 11 (March 23 & 25): Atrocities and Genocide

WEDNESDAY: Conceptualizing Mass Killing

- Valentino, Benjamin A. 2005. *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. **Only Introduction + chapter 1.**
- 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.

FRIDAY: The Rwandan Genocide

- Straus, Scott. 2006. *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power and War in Rwanda*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. **Only Introduction + chapter 1.**
- Hotel Rwanda (movie, available on YouTube and Amazon Prime).

Week 12 (March 30 & April 1): Terrorism

WEDNESDAY: The (Il)logic of Terrorism

- Pape, Robert A. 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *American Political Science Review*, 97(3): 343-361.
- Victoroff, Jeff. 2005. "A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49(1): 3-42.
- Ali, Mohamed. 2013. "The link between unemployment and terrorism." **TED talk**.

FRIDAY: Does Terrorism Work?

- Thomas, Jakana. 2014. "Rewarding Bad Behavior: How Governments Respond to Terrorism in Civil War." *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(4): 804-818.
- Abrahms, Max. 2006. "Why Terrorism Does Not Work." *International Security*, 31(2): 42-78.

Week 13 (April 6 & 8): Economic and Political Consequences of Conflict

WEDNESDAY: Economic Consequences

- Nunn, Nathan. 2008. "The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 123(1): 139-176.
- Chlouba, Vladimir. 2022. "Liberation Wars as Critical Junctures: Colonial Heritage and the Persistence of Inequality." *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy*, forthcoming.

FRIDAY: Political Consequences

- Nunn, Nathan and Leonard Wantchekon. 2011. "The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa." *American Political Science Review*, 101(7): 3221-3252.
- Rozenas, Arturas, Sebastian Schutte, and Yuri Zhukov. 2017. "The Political Legacy of Violence: The Long-Term Impact of Stalin's Repression in Ukraine." *Journal of Politics*, 79(4): 1147-1161.

Week 14 (April 13 & 15): Reconciliation After Violent Conflict

WEDNESDAY: The Namibian Genocide

- Wallace, Marion. 2013. *A History of Namibia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. **Only chapter 6.**
- "Namibia: Genocide and the Second Reich." **BBC documentary**.

FRIDAY: Reconciliation

- Staub, Ervin. 2006. "Reconciliation after Genocide, Mass Killing, or Intractable Conflict: Understanding the Roots of Violence, Psychological Recovery, and Steps toward a General Theory." *Political Psychology*, 27(6): 867-894.
- Evans, Joe. "Why Namibian chiefs have rejected Germany's €1bn 'apology' for colonial genocide." *The Week*, June 4, 2021.

Week 15 (April 20 & 22): Intervention and the Roots of Political Violence

WEDNESDAY: Humanitarian Intervention

- Kuperman, Alan J. 2000. "Rwanda in Retrospect." *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2000.
- Bellamy, Alex J. and Paul D. Williams. 2011. "The new politics of protection? Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, and the responsibility to protect." *International Affairs*, 87(4): 825-850.

FRIDAY: Reflecting on the Roots of Political Violence

- Hosking, Geoffrey A. 1993. *The First Socialist Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. **Only chapter 7.**
- "Real Dictators: Joseph Stalin." **Podcast. Parts 1, 2, and 3.**