

Freshman Seminar: Political Violence
Monday & Wednesday 3:30 – 4:50 pm
Scott Hall 107 Burdick Room

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Office hours: Tuesdays 10:00-12:00

Course description

This seminar explores contemporary research on various forms of political violence, including civil war, ethnic conflict, terrorism, and genocide. The main goal of the course is to think critically about key questions on political violence such as the following: Why do people participate in civil wars? Why do insurgent organizations kill civilians? Why do citizens support violent political groups? Why do states kill their own citizens? Why do riots often happen before elections? By thinking about political violence students will learn how to ask questions about political phenomena, what is the role of theory, and how we rely on empirical evidence to make inferences.

By the end of the course, students will be able to differentiate normative and positive questions. By extension, they will be able to differentiate opinions from logically derived arguments. The seminar will emphasize the importance of critically examining the internal consistency of arguments as well as what can (and cannot) be inferred based on the evidence at hand.

As a freshman seminar, this course asks students to submit several writing assignments. Students are expected to dedicate a substantial amount of time to these assignments in order to improve their writing. They are also expected to do all the readings and participate in guided discussions in class.

Requirements

(1) Class presentation: Each student will present to the class a short critical assessment of the readings once in the quarter. This presentation should cover all the readings assigned for that day, providing a critical assessment of their contribution to our understanding of the topic at hand, as well as its limitations or shortcomings. This presentation should not last more than 10 minutes. I will email students a schedule of presentations on September 26.

(2) Two short papers: Students will submit two response essays to debates from class discussion and readings. Each essay should be five-pages long. You should submit a first version (graded) and then a revised final version (also graded).

Each paper should have the following:

(i) A concise summary of the readings, which should include:

- Research question
- Argument (in one paragraph: what does the author argue? What is his response to the question he asks?)
- Empirical evidence (what kind of empirical evidence does he use and what inferences does he make based on that evidence)

(ii) Critically discuss the reading:

- What are the main contributions?
- What problems do you see in the argument? Think of the assumptions, the logic of the argument, and the implications the author derives.
- What problems do you see in the empirical evidence? You can refer to the quality of the empirical evidence and/or to the inferences the author makes based on it.

Paper 1: discuss the assigned chapters from the book by Harris Mylonas on Nation-building.

- First version. You should upload to Blackboard the first version of this paper **by midnight on Monday, October 21**. Late papers will be penalized.
- Final version. You should upload to Blackboard the final version of this paper **by midnight on Wednesday, October 30**. Late papers will be penalized.

Paper 2: discuss the assigned chapters from the book by Steven Wilkinson on Electoral violence.

- First version. You should upload to Blackboard the first version of this paper **by midnight on Monday, November 11**. Late papers will be penalized.
- Final version. You should upload to Blackboard the final version of this paper **by midnight on Wednesday, November 20**. Late papers will be penalized.

(3) One final paper: Students will compose a longer analytical paper about 12 pages long. The final paper is due on December 4 by midnight. Students should upload their paper to Blackboard by the deadline. I will give additional information on this final assignment in class.

(4) Attendance and participation

Attendance and participation in the discussion are mandatory. Students are required to do *all* the readings and come prepared to discuss them in class.

Grades

Attendance and class participation	10%
Class presentation	10%
First paper (5% first version; 10% second version)	15%
Second paper (10% first version; 20% second version)	30%
Final paper	35%

Readings

All readings are available online on Blackboard.

Schedule

1. **Wednesday, September 25**
Introduction to Political Science and Seminar Overview
No assigned readings for today.
2. **Monday, September 30**
Historical patterns
 - Steven Pinker, 2011. "A foreign country". In *The Better Angels of Our Nature. Why Violence has declined*. Pp. 1-30.
3. **Wednesday, October 2.**
What is violence?
 - Tilly, Charles, 2003. "Varieties of violence." In *The Politics of Collective violence*. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 1-25.
4. **Monday, October 7**
The study of violence
 - Tilly, Charles, 2003. Chapters 2 and 3. In *The Politics of Collective violence*. Pp. 26-80.
5. **Wednesday, October 9**
Violence and the state
 - Cohen, Youssef, Brian Brown, and A.F.K. Organski, 1981. "The Paradoxical Nature of State Making: The Violent Creation of Order." *American Political Science Review* 75:4, pp. 901-910.
 - Straus, Scott, 2006. "Rwanda and Darfur: A Comparative Analysis." *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, Volume 1, Number 1, pp. 41-56.
6. **Monday, October 14**
Nation building and violence I
 - Mylonas, Harris, 2012. *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities* (Cambridge University Press). Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-49.
7. **Wednesday, October 16**
Nation building and violence II
 - Mylonas, Harris, 2012. *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities* (Cambridge University Press). Chapter 4, pp. 71-96.
8. **Monday, October 21**
Civil war: introduction
 - Stathis Kalyvas, "The Ontology of Political Violence," *Perspectives on Politics*, 2003, 1(3), pp. 475-494.

***First version of Paper 1 due today by midnight. You should upload your paper to Blackboard.

9. Wednesday, October 23

Civil war violence

- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 173-209.

10. Monday, October 28

Elections and violence

- Steven Wilkinson. 2004. *Votes and violence: Electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, pp. 1-18

11. Wednesday, October 30

Elections and violence II

- Steven Wilkinson. 2004. *Votes and violence: Electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2, pp. 19-62.

***Final version of Paper 1 due today by midnight. You should upload your paper to Blackboard.

12. Monday, November 4

Ethnic conflict I

- Rogers Brubaker and David D. Laitin, 1998. "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence." *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24, (1998), pp. 423-452.

13. Wednesday, November 6

Ethnic conflict II

- James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97:1 (2003), pp. 75-90.

14. Monday, November 11

Terrorism I

- Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security*, 2006, 31(1), pp. 49-80.
- Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review*, 2003, 97(3), pp. 1-19.

***First version of Paper 2 due today by midnight. You should upload your paper to Blackboard.

15. Wednesday, November 13

No class today. We may have a library session instead (to be confirmed).

16. Monday, November 18

Terrorism II

- Gupta, Dipak K., 2005. "Toward An Integrated Behavioral Framework for Analyzing Terrorism: Individual Motivations to Group Dynamics." *Democracy and Security*, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 5-31.

17. Wednesday, November 20

Individual participation in political violence I

- Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah, 1997. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. Vintage Books. Pp. 203-262.

***Final version of Paper 2 due today by midnight. You should upload your paper to Blackboard.

18. Monday, November 25

Individual participation in political violence II

- Stanley Milgram, 1965. "Some conditions of obedience and disobedience to authority", *Human relations*, 18 (1), pp. 57-76.

19. Wednesday, November 27

A decline in violence?

- Steven Pinker, 2011. "On Angels' Wings". In *The Better Angels of Our Nature. Why Violence has declined*. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 671-692