

PS 3090: The Scientific Study of Civil War

Instructor: Rob Williams
 Department of Political Science
 Washington University in St. Louis
 Spring 2020

Meetings: Monday, Wednesday 10:00-11:30, Seigle Hall 004

Contact Information

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Office Hours

Monday 2:00-3:30, Tuesday 2:00-3:30
 And by appointment

1 Course Description

Civil wars have become the most prevalent form of violent conflict in contemporary times. What conditions are sufficiently dire – or inspiring – to make someone take up arms and risk their life as part of a rebel group? Throughout the semester we will discuss, analyze, and critique a variety of arguments about the onset, duration, and termination of intrastate wars. This course will provide you with extensive exposure to tools used to study of civil wars around the world, including statistical analyses and bargaining models. The course will push you to not only assess the arguments being made, but also require you to understand and evaluate the methods through which theories are tested. By the end of the course, you will be able to understand the scientific method of theory building, be familiar with various forms of empirical analysis, and be able to both understand and challenge existing theories of war and peace. While this course is focused on large- N cross-national quantitative studies of civil wars, we will frequently use current and historical examples to supplement our analysis of theories of conflict.

1.1 Changes to the Syllabus

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any point in the semester. I will inform you in class and via email and an updated syllabus will be posted on Canvas.

2 Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade for the course will be determined by performance in four areas: class participation, response memo, midterm exam, and research project.

2.1 Grades

Final grades for the course will be based on the following scale. I reserve the right to make adjustments to individual grades based on overall performance in the course and/or extenuating circumstances. There will be *no* extra credit provided.

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|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| • A: 93-100 | • B: 83-86 | • C: 73-76 | • D: 63-66 |
| • A-: 90-92 | • B-: 80-82 | • C-: 70-72 | • D-: 60-62 |
| • B+: 87-89 | • C+: 77-79 | • D+: 67-69 | • F: 59 or below |

2.2 Class Participation (10%)

The majority of the class will be devoted to discussions of scholarly readings. The class will proceed in a seminar format, with as little lecturing as possible. You are expected to have read the assigned material when we discuss it in class. I (and you) will ask questions, and the class will be responsible for providing the answers. Students should feel free to ask questions and debate the topics at hand. There are no wrong questions, and you are strongly encouraged to participate even if you found the readings difficult or problematic. Part of what I want you to practice is the art of deciphering analytical work, so I do not expect you to understand everything you will read on the syllabus. The participation grade evaluation will be based on the quantity *and quality* of comments and questions and demonstration of knowledge of the course material. Attendance *per se* will not be evaluated, but if you are not in class you cannot participate. We will also break into active learning sessions several times throughout the semester to apply the skills you are acquiring to the study of a particular puzzle in international conflict management or resolution. Your enthusiasm and attention in these sessions directly impacts your participation grade.

2.3 Response Memo (10%)

At some point during the semester, you will write one 500 word (minimum) response memo on the readings for a given class meeting. This memo should (briefly) summarize the readings, before spending the majority of its space evaluating their content. Are the arguments in each article persuasive? Why or why not? How do the articles connect to broader themes within the course? Examples can be found on Canvas under the Files tab. **The memo may be written for any class meeting that has multiple readings and is due via Canvas before the start of that class.**

2.4 Midterm Exam (20%)

The midterm exam will require you to step back and process the material in the course beyond the individual contributions of each reading. Mere demonstration of knowledge of the material will be regarded as an average performance. To excel on the exam you will have to demonstrate an ability to synthesize and analyze the material relevant to the questions on the test.

2.5 Research Project (60%)

During the semester you will be responsible for writing a 2,500 word research paper that explains the onset, evolution, and (potentially) resolution of a civil war. This will be a semester-long project, so choose carefully, as you'll be researching and writing about this conflict for the next several months. To minimize the natural tendency to procrastinate and provide you ample opportunities to incorporate feedback, we will break up this project into several components.

2.5.1 Project Proposal (5%)

Choose the conflict you will focus on, provide a brief background on the conflict, and discuss why this conflict is interesting to you. **Proposals are due by 5pm, Friday, January 31.**

2.5.2 Annotated Bibliography (5%)

Identify five academic sources that you plan to use for your paper. They do not have to be works of political science; disciplines such as history, anthropology, and sociology can provide valuable information for improving our understanding of conflict as political scientists. For each source, write a paragraph summarizing the source and explain how you will use it to support your argument. **Annotated bibliographies are due by 5pm, Friday, February 14.**

2.5.3 Introduction and Thesis Statement (10%)

The introduction to your paper is important because it tells the reader what you will be arguing, why they should believe your argument, and why they should care about it. Writing a captivating yet succinct thesis statement is an essential skill for all writers to develop. Your introduction should provide a short background on the conflict that you are studying and what we can learn from it before leading into your argument. **Introductions are due by 5pm, Friday, February 21.**

2.5.4 Rough Draft (10%)

All papers or books you will read in this class underwent multiple drafts and edits before publication. Learning to implement feedback you receive on your work is an important skill. I do not expect your papers to be finished at this point, but outlines are insufficient. A good goal is to have 3/4 of your paper written. **Rough drafts are due by 5pm, Friday, March 20.**

2.5.5 Final Paper (30%)

Your final paper should explain how the conflict began, why it unfolded the way it did, and why it has or has not ended. Your discussion of why the conflict evolved the way it did should touch on topics from the course including whether there was widespread violence against civilians and if so, what forms it took and which actors committed it, if the conflict witnessed third-party military intervention, whether rebels attempted to establish institutions to regulate interactions with the civilian population, and what strategies each actor employed. Feel free to focus on one or two of these aspects if they are more dominant in the conflict. **Final papers are due by 5pm, Friday, May 1.**

3 Expectations and Resources

3.1 Late Assignment Policy

There will be no late work accepted without prior approval. This requirement *may* be waived in extraordinary circumstances.

3.2 Communication, Office Hours, Questions About Grades

I am very happy to meet with students outside of class time. Whether it be to discuss concerns about the course or questions about the material, please feel free to stop by Seigle Hall 251 during my office hours (Monday 2:00-3:30, Tuesday 2:00-3:30). If you are unable to meet during my office hours, please email me to set up a time to talk. Email is the best way to reach me. Please note that

email is only for brief communications. If you have longer questions, come to my office hours or schedule a meeting with me.

If you disagree with the grade you earned on an assignment, you must submit a memo (electronically, via email) outlining the specific reasons why you believe the grade should be changed. I will then re-grade the assignment. Your grade may go up, stay the same, or even go down, so please consider whether you truly think the original grade was unreasonable. **I will not answer any questions about grades until 48 hours after I have returned a graded assignment.**

3.3 Technology Policy

We will often engage in group activities where being able to conduct research in class will be beneficial to you. Occasionally we will also work on elements of the research project in class. As such, **please bring your laptop or tablet with you every class.** If you do not have a device, please contact me as soon as possible.

3.4 Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (1) contact [Disability Resources](#) and (2) send an email to me indicating the need for accommodation and what type during the first week of class.

3.5 Academic Integrity

According to Washington University's [Undergraduate Student Academic Integrity Policy](#), "In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged, and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original." I treat all suspected instances of academic dishonesty very seriously.

3.6 Mental Health Services

Life at WashU can be complicated and challenging. You might feel overwhelmed with work, experience anxiety or depression, or struggle with relationships or family responsibilities. [Mental Health Services](#) provides *confidential* support for students who are struggling with mental health and emotional challenges. Please do not hesitate to contact MHS for assistance — getting help is a smart and good thing to do.

4 Course Materials

All readings are available electronically via library e-journals and e-resources databases.

5 Schedule

All readings are due the day of class listed. In-class activities are denoted **in bold**.

5.1 The Basics

Week 1: Introduction

- 1/13
 - Introduction
- 1/15
 - The Fog of War

Week 2: The Bargaining Model of War

- 1/22
 - Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(03): 379-414.
 - Wagner, R. Harrison. 2000. "Bargaining and War." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3): 469-484.

Week 3: Civil War Onset

- 1/27
 - 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. 2004. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56(4): 563-595.
- 1/29
 - Sambanis, Nicholas. 2004. "What is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6): 814-858.

5.2 Causes of Civil War

Week 4: Ethnic Conflict

- 2/3
 - Sambanis, Nicholas. 2001. "Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45(3): 259-282.
- 2/5
 - Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. 2010. "Why do ethnic groups rebel? New data and analysis." *World Politics* 62(1): 87-119.

Week 5: Relational Explanations

- 2/10
 - Stewart, Frances. 2008. "Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: An Introduction and Some Hypotheses." In *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies, Conflict, Inequality and Ethnicity*, ed. Frances Stewart. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 3-24.
 - Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils B. Weidmann, and Nils-Christian Bormann. 2015. "Triangulating Horizontal Inequality: Toward Improved Conflict Analysis." *Journal of Peace Research* 52(6): 806-821.
- 2/12
 - Walter, Barbara F. 2006. "Building Reputation: Why Governments Fight Some Separatists but not Others." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2): 313-330.

- Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher. 2013. “Actor Fragmentation and Civil War Bargaining: How Internal Divisions Generate Civil Conflict.” *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3): 659-672.

5.3 Conflict Dynamics

Week 6: Duration and Recurrence

- 2/17
 - Walter, Barbara F. 1997. “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement.” *International Organization* 51(3): 335-364.
- 2/19
 - Walter, Barbara F. 2004. “Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Recurring Civil War.” *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 371-388.
 - Daly, Sarah Zukerman. 2012. “Organizational Legacies of Violence Conditions Favoring Insurgency Onset in Colombia.” *Journal of Peace Research* 49(3): 473-491.

Week 7: Severity and Intensity

- 2/24
 - Lacina, Bethany. 2006. “Explaining the Severity of Civil Wars.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50(2): 276-289.
 - Zaryab, Iqbal. 2006. “Health and Human Security: The Public Health Impact of Violent Conflict.” *International Studies Quarterly* 50(3): 631-649.
- 2/26
 - Valentino, Benjamin, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay. 2004. “Draining the Sea: Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare.” *International Organization* 58(2): 375-407.
 - Schwartz, Rachel A. and Scott Straus. 2018. “What Drives Violence against Civilians in Civil War? Evidence from Guatemala’s Conflict Archives.” *Journal of Peace Research* 55(2): 222-235.

Week 8: Terrorism and Civil War

- 3/2
 - Thomas, Jakana. 2014. “Rewarding bad behavior: How governments respond to terrorism in civil war.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 804-818.
 - Fortna, Virginia Page. 2015. “Do Terrorists Win? Rebels’ Use of Terrorism and Civil War Outcomes.” *International Organization* 69(3): 519-556.
- 3/4
 - Exam

5.4 International Dimensions of Civil War

Week 10: Diffusion and Mediation

- 3/16
 - Buhaug, Halvard, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2008. “Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space.” *International Studies Quarterly* 52(2): 215-233.
 - Idean Salehyan. 2008. “No Shelter Here: Rebel Sanctuaries and International Conflict.” *Journal of Politics* 70(1): 54- 66.

- 3/18
 - Svensson, Isaac. 2009. “Who Brings which Peace?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53(3): 446-469.
 - Clayton, Govinda 2009. “SRelative rebel strength and the onset and outcome of civil war mediation.” *Journal of Peace Research* 50(5): 609-622.

Week 11: Foreign Intervention

- 3/23
 - David Cunningham. 2010. “Blocking resolution: How external states can prolong civil wars.” *Journal of Peace Research* 47(2): 115-127.
- 3/25
 - Koch, Michael T. and Patricia Sullivan. 2010. “Should I Stay or Should I Go Now? Partisanship, Approval, and the Duration of Major Power Democratic Military Interventions.” *The Journal of Politics* 72(3): 616-629.

5.5 Rebel Groups as Organizations

Week 12: Recruitment and Internal Structure

- 3/30
 - Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2005. “Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(4): 598-624.
 - Thomas, Jakana L., and Reed M. Wood. 2018. “The social origins of female combatants.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 35(3): 215-232.
- 4/1
 - Sanín, Francisco Gutiérrez and Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2014. “Ideology in Civil War: Instrumental Adoption and Beyond.” *Journal of Peace Research* 51(2): 213-226.
 - Hoover Green, Amelia. 2016. “The commander’s dilemma: Creating and controlling armed group violence.” *Journal of Peace Research* 53(5): 619–632

Week 13: Civilian Targeting

- 4/6
 - **No class meeting**
- 4/8
 - Eck, Kristine, and Lisa Hultman. 2007. “One-Sided Violence Against Civilians in War: Insights from New Fatality Data.” *Journal of Peace Research* 44(2): 233-246.
 - Balcells, Laia. 2010. “Rivalry and Revenge: Violence against Civilians in Conventional Civil Wars.” *International Studies Quarterly* 54(2): 291-313.

Week 14: Rebel-Civilian Interactions

- 4/13
 - Cohen, Dara Kay. 2013. “Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980-2009).” *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 461-477.
 - Chu, Tiffany S. and Jessica Maves Braithwaite. 2018. “The Effect of Sexual Violence on Negotiated Outcomes in Civil Conflicts.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 35(3): 233-247.
- 4/15

- Arjona, Ana. 2014. "Wartime Institutions: A Research Agenda." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58(8): 1360-1389
- Stewart, Megan. "Civil War as State-Making: Strategic Governance in Civil War." *International Organization* 2018. 72. 205-226.

Week 15: Rebel Legitimacy

- 4/20
 - Heger, Lindsay L., and Danielle F. Jung. 2017. "Negotiating with rebels: The effect of rebel service provision on conflict negotiations." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(6): 1203-1229.
- 4/22
 - **Simulation**