PLSC 36100: Civil War
Department of Political Science
University of Chicago

Winter 2016
Time: Wednesday, 9:30 am-12:20 pm
Room: PSY-G 117
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-4:00 pm and by appt.

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Course Description

Civil war is the dominant form of political violence in the contemporary world. This graduate seminar will introduce students to cutting edge scholarly work and to the task of carrying out research on internal conflict. We will study the origins, dynamics, and termination of civil wars, as well as international interventions, post-conflict legacies, and policy responses to war. A variety of research approaches will be explored, including qualitative, quantitative, and interpretive methods, micro- and macro-level levels of analysis, and sub- and cross-national comparative designs. The emphasis throughout is on designing rigorous research that persuasively addresses important questions.

Most of this course covers standard topics in the study of civil war, but the last two weeks provide an opportunity to think beyond the conventional boundaries toward new research agendas. One caveat: research on civil war has exploded beyond our ability to cover in a quarter and I have had to exclude a lot of important work. You are responsible for deeper study of specific topics for your research paper; the required readings are, at best, a starting point.

I strongly encourage you to take this course in sequence with Ben Lessing’s “Crime, Conflict, and the State” (PLSC 48700). These two courses are near-prerequisites for anyone interested in taking PLSC 50801 in the spring (in addition to an MA or PhD thesis on political violence).

There will likely be some changes in the syllabus as the quarter goes along, and I will be sure to communicate them to you.

Course Requirements

**Participation** in class discussion is essential for a successful seminar. Students are expected to have carefully done all of the required reading and to be prepared to discuss it in detail. I realize that some weeks there is a heavy reading load, but the works assigned are important and worth your time. Participation will account for 20% of your grade.

**Two response papers** (each no more than 4 pages, doubled-spaced, 12-point font) will be assigned. In week 4 I will assign a paper due in week 5 and in week 8 I will assign a paper due in week 9. The paper topic will identify an important claim from our readings in the previous weeks and ask you to critically assess it in light of our reading and discussions. These are not opportunities for you to do a literature review or summary of readings, but instead to advance an
argument. Each paper will account for 10% of your grade. I will provide the topic at the end of class and the paper will be due in hard copy at the beginning of the next class meeting.

**Research paper** of no more than 30 pages total (doubled-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins) due at the end of the quarter. It can be emailed to me or dropped off at my office by 5 pm CST, **Thursday, March 17, 2016** (which is also my birthday, so please make the papers good). This paper should address a major question in the study of civil war with a literature review, theoretical argument, and empirical evaluation of the theory relative to its competitors. This empirical evaluation can include a case or comparative case studies, quantitative analysis, or a mix of methods. Students can use this opportunity to lay the groundwork for a publishable article, develop research for a thesis, or “try out” a possible dissertation topic. The reason for requiring this paper is to force you to experience some of the transition from being a consumer and critic of research to becoming a producer who has to grapple with a different set of challenges. Please note that this is a hard space limit: the entire paper must not be more than 30 pages. I will reduce your grade for excess.

The paper will account for 60% of your grade. You must **confirm your topic** with me, in person or over email, before our Week 7 class meeting. Late papers will not be accepted.

**Electronic Etiquette**

I request that students not use their cell phones during class for any reason. This will allow more focused discussion and intellectual exchange. Laptops should only be used if this will facilitate bringing readings to class.

I aim to be responsive to email from students. However, please do not expect an answer to your question any sooner than 48 hours after it is sent. Last-minute email questions and requests are bad for everyone involved. I prefer that students use office hours rather than email for asking substantive questions.

**Books to Purchase**


Book chapters that are not part of the required books will be posted in the Library Course Reserves section of the Chalk site and are marked with an asterisk. Journal articles can be found
through the University of Chicago library, unless the URL is specified on the syllabus. If you are having trouble accessing a reading, please let me know ASAP.

For each section below I have also included a set of recommended further readings. These can provide a starting point for your papers or other research. The required and recommended readings are intentionally eclectic, with a mix of new and old work from a wide variety of perspectives. I encourage you to read as widely as possible during this course, from economics to fiction to journalism, in order to generate new insights and puzzles. Creativity is hard to cultivate within strict disciplinary confines.

**Academic Integrity**

This is the University of Chicago’s Academic Integrity statement:

“It is contrary to justice, to academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit the statements or ideas of work of others as one's own. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously. Proper acknowledgment of another's ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes "use" should be addressed to the instructor.”

If you have questions, ask me and/or consult Charles Lipson’s *Doing Honest Work in College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

**I. January 6. Concepts and Data**


II. January 13. Onset I: The State


Reno, Warfare in Independent Africa, chapters 1 and 5.

III. January 20. Onset II: Social and Economic Forces


IV. January 27. Workshop

I will be hosting a small workshop with six outside speakers on “Ideas and Political Violence” on Wednesday the 27th. Instead of class that morning, please come to the workshop (location TBA). You are welcome to stay the entire day, meet the presenters, and offer feedback on papers.

V. February 3. Insurgent Mobilization


[Response Paper #1 will be assigned at this class meeting]

**VI. February 10. Military Dynamics**


[Response Paper #1 will be due at this class meeting]

**VII. February 17. Intra-war Politics**


Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*. Chapters 2, 3, 4.


**VIII. February 24. Patterns of Violence**


Straus, *The Order of Genocide*. All.


Balcells, Laia. 2010. Rivalry and Revenge: Violence against Civilians in Conventional Civil


[Response Paper #2 will be assigned at this class meeting]

**IX. March 2. Ending Wars**


Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo*, chapters 1-5.

[Response Paper #2 will be due at this class meeting]

**X. March 9. Elections and Conflict**


Recommendations for Further Reading

I. Concepts and Data (Recommended)

II. Onset I: The State (Recommended)


### III. Onset II: Social and Economic Forces (Recommended)


**IV. Mobilization and Recruitment (Recommended)**


**V. Military Dynamics (Recommended)**


VI. Intra-war Politics (Recommended)


**VII. Patterns of Violence (Recommended)**


**VIII. Ending Wars (Recommended)**


See special issue of *Security Studies* on Chaim Kaufmann’s partition hypothesis. Volume 13, No. 4 (July 2004).


**IX. State Power and Violence (Recommended)**


**X. Elections and Conflict (Recommended)**


