

GOV 360R: Civil Wars and Ethnic Violence, 37500, Spring 2024

Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin

1 Instructor Information

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Office hours signup: [\[Link here\]](#)Zoom link: [\[Link here\]](#)

Class Location: PAR 1

TA: Kylie Smith

TA Office Hours: T 9:30-12:30 (make appt.)

2 Course Overview, Format, and Objectives

Civil wars pose one of the greatest threats to international peace and security today. Recent conflicts in contexts as diverse as Israel/Gaza, Yemen, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Syria, Colombia and Somalia demonstrate the devastating consequences of violent civil conflict. Indicative of this broader trend in the outbreak and continuation of civil violence is the fact that over 90% of UN peacekeeping operations since 1989 have been deployed to disputes that have a significant internal conflict component. Despite the threat posed by such conflicts, recent advances toward peace in areas such as Colombia offer encouragement about the prospects for averting or resolving long-standing civil conflicts.

This course is structured to consider various theoretical approaches in the study of civil wars and their management. Throughout, we will sample from numerous cases of civil war and violence paying close attention to the conflicts in Colombia, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Israel/Gaza, Afghanistan, Uganda, and the former Yugoslavia. The first segment of the course explores the origins and development of ethnic and political identities and how they structure the parameters of conflict. Core questions include: What do we mean by “ethnicity”? Is a given identity inherent in individuals, or is it subject to change? If manipulable, do “instrumental” elites use ethnicity to their advantage? Is there an ethnic dimension to all civil violence? How are other identities salient?

The second section of the course is devoted to the process by which conflict among individuals and groups turns violent. Key questions include: What political incentives do leaders have to drum up support through violence? How do economic factors such as natural resources affect a group’s opportunity or willingness to engage in violence? What causes internal violence to “spill over” into other countries or regions?

The third section addresses strategies of conflict management and resolution. We consider some of the following questions: Does a feasible set of preventive solutions to civil wars exist? What is successful conflict management? Which strategies employed by international actors are most successful, and why? What are the obstacles to implementing conflict resolution measures?

The course will enable students to develop an understanding of: the nature of various identities, how identity contributes (or not) to civil war, what other dimensions shape the onset and dynamics of civil wars, and how such wars are resolved. In addition to considering various theoretical approaches, examining many contemporary and historical cases, by writing the research paper you will carry out research on civil wars of interest to you. These activities and assignments will help you (1) gain a knowledge of countries and wars, theoretically and factually, (2) write professional research papers, (3) give oral presentations, and (4) think critically,

analytically, and synthetically.

I hope that our sessions will be engaging, informative, and participatory. We will engage in a variety of activities including lectures, personal writing exercises, partner and group work, class discussions, video clips, demonstrations, problem-solving activities, and other critical thinking exercises. I value and will solicit your input on class activities both at the beginning of the semester as well as around midterm. I will make every reasonable effort to incorporate these ideas in the classroom.

3 Requirements

3.1 Required Readings

One book is required for purchase, but other articles will be placed on Canvas and you will also be responsible for them.

Gourevitch, Philip. 1999. *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories From Rwanda*. New York: Picador. (ISBN-13: 978-0312243357)

3.2 Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation are worth 10% of your grade. I expect all students to attend class regularly. I will have regular quizzes and writing assignments to go along with attendance in class. I also encourage you to ask questions and make germane comments *at any time* during class. Furthermore, please finish the assigned readings *by the date* they appear in the syllabus. Read critically and be prepared to comment on the readings in class.

3.3 Writing Assignments

Students are required to complete two writing assignments. You will analyze some broad trends in civil wars and ethnic violence and, because many of you have specific interests in a certain country or region of the world, you will be able to focus your writing on some particular conflicts of interest. Assignments 1 and 2 are worth 15% and 20% of your final grade respectively.

Below I describe the assignments that you will need to complete for this course. Note that these may change somewhat, but I will give you advance notice. Before you work on each assignment, I will hand out any updates to clarify things that might be unclear in this version. The purpose of providing this now is so that you get a good sense of where we are going. All papers need to be turned in by the beginning of class on the date they are due. I do not care what citation style you use, just be complete, consistent, and accurate. You need to upload each paper and assignment to Canvas.

I am happy to provide initial feedback on the direction of your assignments if you get them to me far enough in advance. Please note that if you are considering using any part of a paper/exam from a previous (or concurrent) class, you must talk with me *prior to beginning the assignment*. In some limited cases, this will be acceptable, but only if you can document that substantial new work will be carried out and completed in this course.

Writing Assignment 1

The first writing assignment requires you to examine data on civil wars to understand trends over time as well as some important, but under appreciated, facts about civil wars. The *maximum* page limit for this paper is six written pages (single spaced; standard font/margins; before graphs/tables) and it is worth 15% of your grade.

To begin, you need to obtain a data set on civil wars from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program. For convenience, I have posted the data set to Canvas. But you should note its origin and codebook: ([Link here].) You should download the data and codebook and learn about the civil wars coded there. You are free to convert the data to whichever software you desire, so long as you can compute some basic statistics. (Note: answering the questions does not require any intermediate or advanced statistics knowledge.)

For the assignment, you need to obtain the following information from the data (and document the answers):

1. How is civil war defined and measured in this data set?
2. How many civil war onsets occur according to any one of the civil war onset measures?
3. Which 3 countries had the most civil war onsets?
4. Which region is the most civil-war prone?
5. Which decade had the most civil wars?

Once you obtain these specific pieces of information, then I would like you to learn about two other measures of conflict onset, how they differ from the earlier ones, and consider how any differences in trends may be explained. You should talk about each result and discuss what you thought about the trend prior to seeing the data, what your impressions are now that you have examined the trends, and why you think the trend exists. Finally, please identify three possible research questions that you could address with these data.

Given that many of you have not had extensive experience working with data, there are a number of ways to boost data literacy. On campus, there are typically many workshops through the library or otherwise. Online, there are numerous websites, including an excellent site hosted by UCLA. See the following: [Link here].

Grading Criteria:

- Accuracy of results
- Completeness of the assignment
- Writing style and clarity

Writing Assignment 2

The second writing assignment requires you to analyze the determinants of internal conflict in at least two countries that you choose. If you prefer to analyze statistically all of the civil wars in the data set from assignment 1, then I encourage you to do that. You can look at a wide range of domestic turmoil including civil wars, revolutions, terrorist acts, and riots among others, but

you should emphasize civil war. The *maximum* page limit for this paper is 10 written pages (single spaced; standard font/margins; before graphs/tables) and it is worth 20% of your grade.

This is primarily an analytical assignment. You must offer a discussion of why the internal conflicts have occurred followed by a prognosis for future conflict over the next decade or two. Whether you regard the probability of future conflict as high or low, *your analysis must include the rationale for the assessment* as a central piece of the assignment.

Based on your analysis in the first half of this assignment, offer a detailed set of suggestions on how to minimize the chances for internal conflict. If you analyze only a limited number of wars, then the suggestions should be for the government facing the civil wars. If you analyze all of the wars statistically, then make recommendations to the United Nations. These policy ideas should be plausible and described in some detail (that is, do not merely offer goals, but the policy means to achieve those goals).

Grading Criteria:

- Reasonableness of assessment
- Quality of rationale/justification
- Plausibility & innovation of proposals
- Level of specificity
- Writing style and clarity
- Supporting references/research

3.4 Oral Presentation

In addition to the two writing assignments, you will also give an eight-minute oral presentation with other members of the class. You must turn in a detailed outline/paper (3–4 pages) summarizing your presentation. *This is due at least two days prior to your presentation.* You will be graded on the paper, the presentation, and on a peer evaluation. This assignment is worth 10% of your grade.

Details: Each of you needs to give a brief team presentation on a specific conflict or conflict actor, highlighting both the descriptive background to the conflict as well as analytical insights based on the reading materials from class.

1. Presentation Dates: Sign up for presentation date throughout semester.
2. Candidate civil wars: See the UCDP conflict encyclopedia for possible conflicts and sign up with the TA.
3. Substance of the presentation:
 - Describe the background to the war (briefly!)
 - Analyze how the current class material applies to the given case.
 - Discuss other potential explanations outside of what the direct readings discuss
 - Initiate and lead a class discussion about the analytical material

4. Logistics

- Eight-minute presentation followed by class discussion
- Distribute a handout
- Turn in 3–4 page outline/paper to me ahead of time
- Email me afterwards independently (within 48 hours) with a peer evaluation of your group
- The presentation is worth 10% of your grade

3.5 Exams

The midterm and final exams account for 45% of your final grade (20% for the midterm and 25% for the final). Both exams will consist of multiple choice, identifications, and essays. Closer to the exam dates, I will discuss preparing for, and taking, the exams. *Note that you must purchase a Blue Book from the Co-op and bring it to class for each exam.*

3.6 Schedule of Important Dates

Date	Assignment	Time	% of Grade
Jan 23	Email about syllabus		Required
Jan 30	Obtain presentation assignment	In class	Required
Feb 20	Assignment 1	Beginning of class	15%
TBD	Presentation	In class	10%
Mar 5	Midterm Exam	In class	20%
Apr 16	Assignment 2	Beginning of class	20%
Apr 25	Final Exam	In class	25%
	Attendance/Participation		10%

4 Course Policies

4.1 Syllabus

Each of you needs to email the TA by January 23 to let us know that you have read through the syllabus and that you understand all that is required of you. If you have larger course questions, please ask in this email or in class. Also, readings for this course may be changed on an ad hoc basis. For the most part this will not happen, but if so, I will give as much notice as possible.

4.2 Make-up Exams and Assignment

No make-up exams or quizzes will be given unless either prior consent is obtained from the instructor or a valid excuse is obtained according to university guidelines. I will consent to give makeup exams only in the case of a documented emergency or some other commensurate event.

Papers arriving late (i.e., later than 5 minutes into the class period) will be subject to a 1/3 grade reduction. For each successive late day, your grade will be reduced by 1/3 each day (i.e., an *A* will be lowered to an *A–* on the first day late, an *A–* to a *B+* on the second day late, and so on).

4.3 Assignment of Grades

Grades are assigned on the following scale: $A = 94\text{--}100$; $A- = 90\text{--}93$; $B+ = 87\text{--}89$; $B = 84\text{--}86$; $B- = 80\text{--}83$;... $F = 63$ or lower. If you have a complaint about how your exam (or paper) was graded, I am happy to take a second look. You must type a formal appeal addressing the problem and explain clearly what you originally wrote, why you wrote it, and how you think your original response correctly answered the original question. Additionally, you must turn in the original exam (or paper) along with your typed appeal.

4.4 Online Resources

The syllabus, all grades, paper topics, lecture outlines, and more will be posted on Canvas. Although the lecture outlines will be posted here, do not assume that this exempts you from taking notes in class. The outlines will facilitate your note taking, but will not provide sufficient detail from which to study for exams.

4.5 Academic Integrity

UT students should seek to be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct. Students are expected not only to be honest but also to assist other students in fulfilling their commitment to be honest.

While students should make a general commitment to proper academic conduct, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in the age of the internet, as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers.

Writing submitted for credit at UT must consist of the student's own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing.

The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit a writing lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current *Harbrace College Handbook*, the *MLA Handbook*, and James D. Lester's *Writing Research Papers*.

Please also see the University Honor Code site for more information at:
[Link here].

4.6 Classroom Civility

Regrettably, a handful of students occasionally demonstrate insensitivity to other students and to instructors by disrupting classes unnecessarily. Arriving late for class, reading newspapers in class, packing up bags prior to the end of class, and cell phone use are all disruptive activities.

Browsing the internet, checking email, and playing games on laptops are also inappropriate in class because you should be listening and participating. Certainly, taking notes on a laptop is appropriate, but do not waste your time or mine by getting distracted by other activities on the web. In calculating the attendance and participation grades I will take into account whether you spent your time engaged in the discussion/lecture or whether you were distracted with other activities.

Moreover, I will not tolerate incivility of one opinion to another. It is exciting and healthy to exchange a diversity of opinions, but in no case should anyone demean another because of his or her viewpoint. If you have any questions about what classroom civility entails, please contact me.

4.7 Sharing of Course Materials

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

4.8 Class Recordings

Occasionally, I may record class and this recording is reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes, which is protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form.

4.9 Other Policies

Access: The University of Texas at Austin is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Division of Campus and Community Engagement, Disability and Access office, 512-471-6259, [Link here].

Religious Holidays: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence as far in advance as possible so that we can make plans for assignment completion as soon after the missed class(es) as possible. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Emergencies: Please also see the following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, [Link here]. 1. Occupants of

buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. 2. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. 3. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. 4. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. 5. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. 6. Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-9999. 7. Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [Link here].

Sensitive Content: This is a course on war and violence, so the content and discussion will necessarily engage with sensitive material in each class session, all the readings, and in the assignments. Those topics may include the following: violence, kidnapping and abduction, sexual assault, abuse, racism, ethnic discrimination, religious discrimination, and sexism. Much of the material is emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with and some content may be particularly sensitive. Because I am not a mental health professional I do not understand all possible conditions that course material could affect, so if I need to be aware of any personal circumstances, please visit with me in office hours or provide an accommodations letter and I will be happy to adjust as possible. To the full extent possible, I will provide alternative readings, assignments, or discussion opportunities to adequately accommodate. More generally, I will do my best to make space for thoughtful, respectful, and meaningful discussion of difficult content each class session, while balancing the weightiness of the topics, including when possible advance notice of material that is more sensitive than usual for a course on violence. Students with concerns related to these topics may wish, and are encouraged, to consult the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center: [Link here], or another organization that provides suitable support. (Some of this material adapted from [Link here]).

Family: I am not aware of an official university policy on children in the classroom. The following is an attempt to insure family friendliness while also maintaining a proper learning environment. [I borrowed heavily and adapted these policies from Melissa Cheyney's syllabus. [Link here]] 1. All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary. 2. For older children and babies, unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to miss class to stay home with a child. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable. 3. I ask that all students work to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status. 4. In all cases where babies and children come to class, please sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for others' students, you may step outside until their need has been met. For my part, I will work with you should you need to step out so that you can remain caught up. 5. Finally, often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have finally gone to sleep. While I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my class regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem-solve with you in a way that helps you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance.

5 Tentative Course and Reading Schedule

5.1 Syllabus and Trends in Armed Conflict (1/16)

- Read Syllabus
- “What Science Tells Us About Good and Evil” (Canvas)
- Davies et al., 2023 (Canvas)
- Farmer, 1996 (Canvas)

What is Civil War? (1/18 – 1/23)

- Jan 23: Email TA about the syllabus
- Mueller, 2000 (Canvas)
- Kalyvas, 2003 (Canvas)
- Sambanis, 2004 (Canvas)

Identity Formation (1/25 – 1/30)

- Jan 30: Obtain presentation assignment
- Taras & Ganguly, 2006 (11–13; Canvas)
- Harris and Findley, 2023 (Canvas)

Case Study — Northern Ireland (2/1)

- Readings TBA

5.2 From Conflict to Violence

General Reading & Introduction (2/6)

- Lake and Rothchild, 1998 (3–23; Canvas)
- Ehrenreich, 1997 (Chp 1; Canvas)

Case Study: Rwanda (2/8 & 2/13)

- Watch the documentary: “Ghosts of Rwanda” prior to Feb 8 class
- Gourevitch, 1998 (all; Gourevitch book)
- Davenport and Stam, 2009 (Working Paper on Rwanda; Canvas)

Political Dimensions of Civil War (2/15 – 2/20)

- Assignment 1 due Feb 20
- Reid, 2018 (Canvas)
- Posen, 1993 (Canvas)
- Lake and Rothchild, 1998 (Canvas)
- Hegre et al, 2001 (Canvas; skim)
- Arjona, 2014, (Canvas)

Economic Dimensions of Civil War (2/22 – 2/27)

- King, 2001 (Canvas)
- Ross, 2004 (Canvas)
- Denly et al. (Canvas; skim)
- Fearon & Laitin, 2003 (75–90; Canvas)
- Findley 2018 (Canvas)

Ethnicity and Nonviolence (2/29)

- Cederman, Wimmer, Min, 2010 (Canvas)
- Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008 (Canvas)

Midterm Exam (3/5)

- In-class
- Bring a blue book to class (can be purchased at the Co-op)

5.3 From War to Resolution**Conflict Management Overview (3/7)**

- Walter, 2002 (3–18; Walter book)
- Fearon, Humphreys, and Weinstein, 2009 (Canvas)

Negotiated Settlements (3/19 – 3/21)

- Walter, 2002 (19–43, 70–91, 113–159; Walter book)
- Downes, 2006 (Canvas)

Prevention, Mediation, & Peacekeeping (3/26 – 3/28)

- Autusserre, 2015 (Canvas)
- Stedman, 1995 (Canvas)
- Doyle and Sambanis, 2006 (197–223 & 243–256; Canvas)

Challenges to Peace Processes (4/2 – 4/4)

- Stedman, 1997 (Canvas)
- Stepanova, 2006 (Canvas)
- Findley & Young, 2015 (Canvas)

Case Study: Bosnia (4/9 – 4/11)

- Woodward, 1999 (Canvas)
- Cousens, 2002 (Canvas)
- Weidmann, 2011 (Canvas)

5.4 Conclusions**Consequences and Future Directions (4/16 – 4/18)**

- Assignment 2 due on April 16
- Savun, 2021 (Canvas)
- Plümper Eric Neumayer, 2006 (Canvas)
- Wood, 2006 (Canvas)
- Whitaker et al, 2019 (Canvas)
- Cohen, 2013 (Canvas)

Review Session (4/23)

- Readings/Preparation TBA

Final Exam (Tentative): April 25

- In-class
- Bring a blue book to class (can be purchased at the Co-op)

References

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