Political Violence

Professor Scott Straus
Political Science 948
Fall 2016
422 North Hall, Ogg Room, Fridays 10am-12pm

Office: 110 North Hall
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Course Description
Although violence is an ancient social phenomenon, the study of violence is increasingly common in political science and related disciplines. Within the past 15 years, an exciting field of study has emerged, bringing together experienced and newer scholars alike and researchers with diverse regional interests and methodological approaches. This course is designed to introduce students to core debates and to cutting edge research in the emerging field. The central questions asked during the course include: What is violence? Are different types of violence—such as civil war, terrorism, ethnic violence, and genocide—meaningfully studied together? What are the key research questions that have been identified in the emerging area of study and what questions deserve more attention? What are the differences in terms of methodological approach, theoretical arguments, and empirical findings when violence is studied at the macro-level versus the micro-level? What are the relative roles that core variables such as states, economies, ethnicity, and ideology should play in explaining the phenomenon of political violence? Is political violence inherently dynamic and an endogenous process? Are there any cumulative empirical findings emerging from this field? And how should researchers evaluate competing hypotheses? Research design and the problem of linking theory to evidence will be of particular concern. The course should appeal to students in both the comparative politics and international relations subfields as well as to students in other disciplines and/or with regional interests in Africa, Europe, Latin America, and South Asia.
Course Requirements

Final Papers
Each student will be required to write a final paper, which should be an original research article (25-30 double-spaced pages in length). The subject of the paper must relate in some fashion to the subject of violence. I would accept a review essay but prefer a research paper that could be developed into a publication.

Gaps-in-Literature Papers
During the course of the semester, each student must write two short papers that revolve around some subset of the reading assignments. I call these “gaps in literature” papers in that each paper should identify a hole or problem in the existing literature. By that, I mean that students should isolate some unaddressed question, some blindspot, some unmeasured or undemonstrated assumption, some significant contradiction, or some methodological flaw in the existing literature. Students are encouraged to present their findings in tabular form or in some other systematic fashion that illustrates similarities and differences across texts. The papers should be about 2000 words in length.

Weekly Questions
Instead of weekly reaction papers, each week students should isolate at least two questions or concerns that they would to discuss during the weekly seminar. Students should send the list of questions and concerns to the classlist by 5 pm Thursday, the day before the seminar meets.

Seminar Participation
Each student is expected to attend and participate in every seminar.

Grading
Final paper: 40%
Seminar Participation: 40%
Gaps-in-Literature Papers: 20%
REQUIRED BOOKS


Please purchase the books at your bookseller of choice. All articles and book chapters other than the books listed above will be available at the course website on learn@UW.
**September 9: Course Introduction and Concepts of Violence**


**RECOMMENDED:**


**September 16: Logics of Violence**


**September 23: Dynamics of Violence**


**September 30: Macro-Level Determinants of Violence I: States, Economies, and Tactics**

**Professor Bhavnani will visit for 30 minutes**

Rikhil Bhavnani and Bethany Lacina, “The Effects of Weather-Induced Migration on Sons of the Soil Riots in India,” *World Politics* August 2015.


**October 7: Macro-Level Determinants (and Dynamics) of Violence II: Ethnicity, Exclusion, and Ideology**


**October 14: Micro-and Meso-Level Determinants (and Dynamics) of Violence: Localities, Groups, and Individuals**


RECOMMENDED


**October 21: Civil War Dynamics in Greece**


**October 27: NO CLASS, WORK ON PAPERS**

***FIRST GAP IN LITERATURE PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN 10/27***

**November 4 [Will Likely Need to Reschedule]: Civil War Dynamics in Afghanistan and Bosnia**


**November 11: Insurgent Dynamics in Asia and Africa**


**November 18: Insurgent Dynamics in Latin America and Africa**


**November 25: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving break**

***SECOND GAP IN LITERATURE PAPER DUE SOMETIME BEFORE 12/2***

**December 2: Genocide in Rwanda [Will Schedule at My House]**


**December 9: Research Consultations**

If interest, we can schedule this session


**December 19, 12 pm: Final Papers Due**