When and why do some states devolve into violent conflict? What role does violence play in the political development process within states? Why do rebellions take up arms to fight against their governments and how do they do it? Why do armed groups target civilians with violence? What can the international community do to help while violence is ongoing? What are the medium and long term consequences of conflict and violence for states, civilians, and the international community? How do we systematically collect and analyze the data to (try to) answer these questions? What are the limitations of those strategies?

In this class, we will review the academic literature in political science (with some additional readings in sociology, history, and economics) on these questions. We will also gain a deeper understanding of the role that political violence plays in the political process through case studies of specific historical and contemporary political violence. The geographic scope of the research and theories we will review is global, but because of my own expertise and ignorance, the readings will be unbalanced: most of the examples are going to draw on Africa and the Middle East.

We will also actively step into policymakers shoes and consider the options that the international community has when trying to end or lessen the burden of violence. One of my main aims in this class is for you think critically enough to recognize that there are no right answers or ready made solutions to these questions, but there are definitely wrong ones. That said, there are some principles to finding better answers (or at least recognizing and avoiding bad options) in the right situation.

**Remote Learning Specifics:** Due to COVID-19, the content of the course will be delivered remotely. I recognize this shift presents a challenge for everyone and want to be as accommodating as possible while maintaining the integrity of the class. The content of the course will not change, only the method of delivery will. Because it is a discussion intensive class, we will meet from 2:00pm to 4:00pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Classes will occur via Zoom.

**Canvas:** Our class will have a Canvas site, which I will use to communicate with you regularly. It is your responsibility to keep up with these updates. Canvas will be especially important with remote learning.

**Attendance:** Attendance in class is mandatory. In order to effectively participate, you must be in class. You are responsible for any material you missed due to an unexcused absence; office hours do not replace sections missed due to unexcused absences. A note from a doctor or some other person of authority (documenting a family emergency or medical attention for an illness) is required for an excused absence. Students with family responsibilities, athletic commitments, or religious conflicts should discuss those with me as soon as possible. You
have two excused class absences. Any further absences will result in points being taken off of your attendance grade.

**Participation:** One of the best ways to build your understanding of new material is to actively discuss and work out the answers yourselves. I expect (insist, really) everyone to contribute to discussion on a regular basis. If you feel that you cannot actively participate, see me as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements (which means additional written work and frequent office hour chats).

**Office Hours:** The best way to get in touch with me is via office hours. My office hours will be through Zoom; you can sign up for an appointment [here]. If you cannot make office hours due to a class conflict or another unavoidable circumstance, contact me about setting up an appointment. I'll do my best to accommodate.

**Email:** If you cannot come to office hours, email is the best way to contact me with *quick* questions. I will do my best to respond to your emails within 24 hours, from 9-5 Monday through Friday. If I have not responded within 24 hours, please send a follow up. An email sent to me at 5:01 pm on Friday can expect a response by 5:00 pm Monday. All emails should begin the subject line with “PS389”.

**Letter Grade Distribution:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;= 93.00</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>73.00 - 76.99 C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.00 - 92.99</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>70.00 - 72.99 C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87.00 - 89.99</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>67.00 - 69.99 D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83.00 - 86.99</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>63.00 - 66.99 D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.00 - 82.99</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>60.00 - 62.99 D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.00 - 79.99</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>&lt;= 59.99 F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grade:** The distribution of your course grade is in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Profile</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>July 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Note</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>July 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy White Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Week relevant reading is done by Thursday 2pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>August 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special Accommodations:** If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.
Academic Honesty: I take academic honestly seriously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please review the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts’ official policy.

Grade Grievances: If you believe a grade you have received is unfair or in error, you will need to do the following:

1. Wait 24 hours after receiving the grade before approaching me.
2. Provide an explanation in writing for why the grade you received was unfair or in error. Attach a clean, unmarked version of your assignment to your appeal memo.
3. I will then review your appeal and re-grade your paper. This grade will be final.

Tools for Understanding the Research: In this class, we’ll review research from a number of methodological perspectives. We will also spend a good amount of time discussing how the researchers who write these articles collect and analyze the data they use to support their arguments. In these discussions, we will always acknowledge that no piece of research is perfect, but we will also aim to be constructive, not destructive. For each paper, we’ll ask (at minimum) a number of questions: 1) what is the argument? 2) what context does the argument apply to? 3) how does the author collect the data that supports their argument? 4) how does the author analyze that data and what limitations do those strategies present? 5) how could we, in an ideal world, improve on those research strategies?

While the research we will read often employs advanced research designs and uses complicated jargon to explain it, you do not need to be an expert to analyze their research designs and contribute to discussions about the quality of the work. That said, although course work in statistics and game theory is not required, you should have a basic understanding of the most commonly used research designs. Consider reading the following primers to help you understand the basics:

Analyzing Quantitative Data & Regression

- [How to Read a Regression Table](#)
- [10 Things to Know About Hypothesis Testing](#)
- [10 Things to Know About Causal Inference](#)
- [10 Things to Know about Statistical Power](#)
- [Casual Inference for Policy Analysis](#)

Game Theory

- [The Basics of Game Theory](#)
Readings

Please come to class having carefully read the readings beforehand. We will discuss the author’s arguments and research design together in class and you should be prepared to contribute to these discussions. The readings will be available to you on the Canvas site.

Introduction: Political Order and its Absence

July 2: Introduction

What is this class about? How will we approach the topic? What’s at stake?

Review Syllabus


July 6: Origins of Political Order

What is political order? Where does it come from? What sustains it? What is conflict a violation of?


July 7: Breakdown in Political Order: Definitions

Why does political order break down? How do we know when it has? How do we define it?


Why Does Political Order Collapse? Or Why Do Wars Happen?

July 9: Rationalist Explanations for War

Does going to war make sense? Why would actors use violence to advance their position?


**July 13: Ethnicity, Diversity, and War**

What role does diversity play in violence? What does it mean to exclude ethnic groups? Why would specific ethnic groups rebel against the state?


**July 14: The Economic Origins of War**

Is violence caused by poverty or does violence cause poverty? What role do “conflict minerals” play in causing violence?


**July 16: Poverty as a Root Cause of Rebellion**

What is the relationship between violence and household economics? How do we isolate the effect of economics on the likelihood of conflict?


**July 20: Ethnicity and War 2.0**

If ethnicity matters, what is the mechanism? What does it mean to rebel?


July 21: State Weakness as a Cause of War

Rebels fight against the state. What is the role of the state in causing violence?


How Are Civil Wars Fought and Who Fights?

July 23: Inside the Rebellion

Who takes up arms? What are the incentives to join a rebellion? How do rebels sustain themselves in their fight?


July 27: Caught in-between: Civilians in War

What role do civilians play in war? Why do armed groups target civilians?


July 28: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

What do we know about the character of violence? Why does the stronger side (militarily) not always win the war?


July 30: One-sided Violence: Genocides and Mass Killing

Why do the state and armed groups use different strategies of violence? When, where, and why do we see extreme violence such as genocide?


August 3, The Rwandan Genocide
What can the Rwandan genocide teach us about how and why conflict occurs?


How Do Civil Wars End?
August 4: The Difficulty of Ending Wars
How is order restored? Why is it so hard to end civil conflicts?


August 6: Why Wars Recur
Why do some wars start back up after they have “ended,” but others do not? How durable is the restoration of order?


August 10: Promise and Pitfalls of Peacekeeping
What role can the international community play in bringing order? Do the strategies employed by the international community work? How do civilians view peacekeepers?


Re-establishing “Order” and The Consequences of Violence

August 11: The Effect of Violence

What are the longer-term consequences of exposure to violence? Are there any positive side effects of violence? How should we view these positive windfalls? Is violence necessary? How do we treat violence as an independent variable instead of a dependent variable?


August 13: Re-creating Order from Violence

How does order come about? What are the consequences of the way in which the violence ends? How does violence continue to shape society after violence? Is DR Congo a useful case or an outlier?


August 18: The Big Picture: Order, Disorder, and the Politics of Violence

What did we learn? What do we know? What don’t we know? How can you help? How can’t you help? Is there hope?