Political Violence

Professor Scott Straus
Political Science 948
Fall 2014
422 North Hall, Ogg Room, Mondays 3:30-5:30 pm

Office: 224 North Hall
Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-3:30 and by appointment
Email: sstraus@wisc.edu
Phone: 263-2036

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 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 hidden 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 8 am Monday, the day that 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


All books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore. All articles and book chapters other than the six books listed above will be available at the course website on learn@UW.
September 8: Course Introduction and Concepts of Violence


RECOMMENDED:


September 15: Logics of Violence


September 22: Dynamics of Violence


**September 29: Macro-Level Determinants of Violence I: States and Economies**


**October 6: (will need to reschedule): Macro-Level Determinants (and Dynamics) of Violence II: Ethnicity and Exclusion**

October 13: Micro-Level Determinants (and Dynamics) of Violence: Localities, Groups, and Individuals


October 20: Civil War Dynamics in Greece

**October 27: Civil War Dynamics in Afghanistan and Bosnia**


**November 3: Insurgent Dynamics in Asia and Africa**


**November 10: Insurgent Dynamics in Latin America and Africa**


**November 17: Electoral Violence and Riots in India**


**November 24: Genocide in Rwanda**


December 1: Research Consultations

December 18, 12 pm: Final Papers Due