

INTL 4455E	Violent Political Conflict	Summer 2025
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Course Description

This course examines a broad range of topics related to political violence. Its primary focus is “internal” political violence, meaning we will not read much about international conflict and war. For the most part, we will read about and discuss violent political events that take place in the context of a dispute between a country’s national government and individuals or groups who live in that country. Topics covered include state formation, civil war, mass protest and rebellion, ethnic conflict, terrorism, state violence, and genocide.

Course Objectives

One purpose of this course is to acquire knowledge of actual violent conflicts that have taken place in the past or that are still ongoing. To this end, we will read several detailed historical and journalistic accounts of particular events. However, this is not a history course. Its other purpose is to examine violent political conflict using the tools of social science. For this purpose, we will read studies that use theoretical models intended to apply to many different events, as well as studies that use statistical analysis to look for meaningful patterns (for example, to see whether certain kinds of countries are more prone to violent conflict than others). By the end of the course you will have a better understanding of what a social science approach to studying violent conflict entails, and how it can provide useful insights into real world events.

Required Reading

There will be no textbook in this class. All readings will be available on the ELC course site or through the UGA library. You are expected to read the assigned material, and it is very unlikely that you will do well in the course if you do not. Beginning June 6, there will be 1 academic article/book excerpt assigned per weekday, excluding Fridays. To provide more context and background, these readings will be accompanied by other readings and materials that are aimed at a more general audience. Some readings are more difficult than others. For more difficult or technical readings, and especially those that use theoretical models or statistical analysis, I will provide a non-technical overview and summary. To make sure everything is clear, I assume that you do not know anything about the topics we cover or the concepts and research methods used in the readings, though I am sure that is not true!

Grades

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Discussion participation (6) 10%

Weekly quizzes (4): 10%

Grade Distribution (note that I do not assign minus grades):

90 - 100: A	
86 - 89: B+	80 - 85: B
76 - 79: C+	70 - 75: C
66 - 69: D+	60 - 65: D
below 60: F	

Discussion Boards

Beginning June 9, every week there will be *at least one* discussion forum that everyone must participate in. *During the weeks of June 9 - 13 and June 23 - 27, there will be 2 forums you must participate in.* For each discussion topic a forum will appear on the course website on the start date and close at 8 p.m. on the end date. You must participate in all discussion forums before they close. The discussion schedule is as follows:

Discussion 1: June 9 - 10

Discussion 2: June 11 - 12

Discussion 3: June 16 - 18

Discussion 4: June 23 - 24

Discussion 5: June 25 - 26

Discussion 6: June 30 - July 2

Discussions will rely on course readings and other online materials I may direct you to (news reports etc), so please read those before you post anything. In every forum I will provide some context for the discussion and begin two or more threads. To receive credit for participation you must post at least two replies in an existing thread. You may begin a thread of your own but are not required to. I will participate actively in the discussion board. Your grade will be determined by the extent of your participation and the quality of your comments. Students will receive discussion board grades via email before a new week begins.

Weekly Quizzes

Beginning the week of June 9, students must complete 1 online quiz per week, with the last quiz taking place on final exam day (which is July 3 – not my choice). You will take each quiz on the ELC course site. The quiz schedule is as follows:

Quiz 1: Friday, June 13

Quiz 2: Friday, June 20

Quiz 3: Friday, June 27

Quiz 4: Friday, July 3

On each of these dates the quiz will be available beginning at 8 a.m. and will close at 8 p.m., but there are no other time restrictions. All quizzes will consist of 4-5 broad, open ended questions to which you will provide a written response (no multiple choice). You may write as much as you would like in response to each question, but there is no required length. Your responses should be thorough but concise, and should clearly demonstrate that you have read and understand the material. For those of you who hate ambiguous requirements, I would recommend writing at least 3-4 paragraphs that each consist of at least 5 sentences. Students will receive quiz grades via email before the day the next quiz takes place.

Course Website

The course website can be accessed through elc.uga.edu. You will need to use this site to access the syllabus, course readings and other materials, discussion boards, and weekly quizzes.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a plan for the course, and we may deviate from it. I will clearly communicate to students any changes that become necessary, and will do so in a timely manner.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor or designate during regular office hours or by appointment.

University Honor Code/Academic Honesty Policy

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at www.uga.edu/honesty. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

Withdrawal Policy

Students who withdraw from the class before the withdrawal deadline of June 25 will be assigned a grade based on their performance (pass/fail) in the class up the point of withdrawal. This means that students who are failing will be assigned a "WF" grade even if they withdraw before the deadline. The university automatically assigns a "WF" grade upon withdrawal to students who withdraw from a class after the withdrawal deadline.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

June 5 - 13

June 5: Syllabus review, class overview. No reading.

States as violent organizations

June 6: Callimachi, Rukmini. The ISIS Files: When Terrorists Run City Hall. New York Times, April 4, 2018. ([link](#))

June 9: Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." in Theda Skocpol (ed.) *Bringing the State Back In.*, Cambridge Press.

June 10: Gurr, T.R. 1988. "War, Revolution, and the Growth of the Coercive State." *Comparative Political Studies* 21: 45-65.

Discussion board due at 8 p.m.

Coordination and Collective Action Problems

June 11: Weingast, Barry. 1997. "The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law." *American Political Science Review* 91: 245-263.

June 12: Kuran, Timur. 1991. "Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics* 44: 7-48.

Discussion board due at 8 p.m.

June 13: Quiz 1 due at 8 p.m.

June 16 - 20

Civil War

June 16: Horne, Alistair. 2006 [1977]. A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962. Excerpts from pages 23-74.

Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97: 75-90.

June 17: Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2001. "New and Old Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" *World Politics* 54(1): 99-118.

June 18: Cederman, Lars-Erik, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Halvard Buhaug. 2013. *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 3 and 4.

Discussion board due at 8 p.m.

June 19: Juneteenth, no class

June 20: Quiz 2 due at 8 p.m.

June 23 - 27

Ethnic conflict

June 23: Mueller, John. 2000. "The Banality of Ethnic War." *International Security* 25: 42-70.

June 24: Fearon, James, and David Laitin. 2000. "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity." *International Organization* 54: 845-877.

Discussion board due at 8 p.m.

Terrorism

June 25: Horne, Alistair. 2006 [1977]. *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. Excerpts from pages 78-188.

June 26: Stohl, Michael. 1983. "Demystifying Terrorism." In Michael Stohl (ed.) *The Politics of Terrorism*. Marcel Dekker. Pages. 1-19.

Discussion board due at 8 p.m.

June 27: Quiz 3 due at 8 p.m.

June 30 - July 3

State Violence in Democracies

June 30: Horne, Alistair. 2006 [1977]. *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. Excerpts from pages 190-207.

Watch documentary "[Standard Operating Procedure](#)"

July 1: Rejali, Darius. 2007. *Torture and Democracy*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.

Genocide (and predicting large-scale violence)

July 2: Brief introduction to the Genocide Convention by William Schabbas ([link](#)).

Harff, Barbara. 2003. "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust: Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955." *American Political Science Review* 97: 57-74

Discussion board due at 8 p.m.

July 3: Quiz 4 due at 8 p.m.