

POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY (POL-295-02)

Classroom: HSSC S2314

Time: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00am – 10:50pm

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Violence and politics are inextricably intertwined. From tribes to kingdoms to empires to modern nation-states, the foundations of human political order have nearly always been predicated upon the use or threat of violence. It should come as no surprise, then, that political science has focused much of its attention on episodes of violence when that political order breaks down or is created. Since the end of the Cold War, political science has looked beyond traditional inter-state warfare and great power rivalry to the study of ethnic conflict, insurgency, terrorism, genocide, and mass protest. These topics have also drawn the attention of scholars from every region of the world, every social science and humanities discipline, and various methodological and theoretical perspectives. Scholars have used increasingly innovative techniques and fieldwork to study the dynamics of such violence and mobilization. In doing so, they have made significant strides in understanding how these episodes of violence begin, their internal dynamics, and why they come to an end. This course provides an overview of the major findings and approaches from this literature.

In addition, this course will expand on two recent areas of development. First, we will spend several weeks on how political violence constitutes not merely the breakdown of political order but is instrumental in the creation and reformulation of order. In this regard, some scholars have focused on how different non-state armed groups govern territory and populations within violent contexts. We will also touch on the emerging research on organized criminal violence that has threatened the political order of some states and question the validity of established categories and some long-held assumptions in the face of changing global violence dynamics.

Course Goals

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Describe different types of political violence and their alternative conceptual understandings.
2. Analyze the behavior and evolution of armed actors within existing theoretical paradigms.
3. Write and speak intelligently and persuasively about political violence.
4. Develop in-depth knowledge about at least one episode of political violence.
5. Begin a 300-level research project.

Prerequisites

POL 101 is the only required class.

COURSE COMPONENTS AND EVALUATION

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required and participation is expected. I expect everyone to come to class having read *all* the required readings, be prepared to share their opinions, and seeking to actively engage with your fellow students. The in-class portion of the course is essential to understanding many of the more complex and nuanced arguments from the readings and is an opportunity for students to formulate and present some of their own ideas regarding the material. Also, be prepared to be involved in small group discussions as well as other active and dialogue-based learning.

A few basic ground rules:

- It is essential that the classroom remain a safe zone for all students regardless of sex, age, race, ethnic background, religion, sexual and political orientation, ability or disability.
- I expect you all to promote an active learning environment in the classroom by supporting each other intellectually, asking questions (of me and your fellow students), and by being respectful and patient.
- When you speak, remember that you are in dialogue not just with me, but with the entire class. Speak and listen to your classmates.

Attendance and participation will be 25% of your final grade. To get all 25% you must attend all meetings of the course and fully participate in discussion and group activities. The bar for participation is not high—I should observe that you are fully engaged with the material and making comments and/or questions during most of the scheduled classes.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: Each student is allowed one unexcused absence per semester. Each further unexcused absence will result in a penalty of 2% from the course grade. Any more than four unexcused absences will result in a zero participation grade. If you feel a future or ongoing absence ought to be excused, you must communicate that to me at least 24 hours before the class meets. Athletes and students with accommodations must also bring me documentation in advance of the absence. Late notification is appreciated but will not be accommodated.

Quizzes

Over the course of the semester, there will be five in-class quizzes. They will take no more than 5 minutes and will be completed at the beginning of class. If you are late to any of these classes, you will receive a 0 for that quiz. You can take the quizzes on your cell phones or your computers through PWeb. Download the *BB Student* app and have it open and ready for the first quiz. Questions will cover material from readings, lectures, or class discussions. Worth 2% each.

Quiz schedule: 2/7, 2/24, 3/9, 4/15, 5/1

Book Review

You will write a critical review of one of the non-academic books listed on PWeb. The book can be read at your leisure, as it will not be discussed in class. Your review should explain what the book teaches us about political violence and where it falls short. You should apply the concepts and theories you have learned in class. Worth 10%. 700 word limit. Due 3/30.

Debates

There are two debates. You will prepare to defend both sides, and you will be told which side you will defend at the start of class. Worth 10% (5% each).

February 17th: “War in the 21st Century is different than war in the past”

April 13th: “Terrorism is a biased term and not a useful analytical category”

Infographic

Students will pair off and create an infographic which visualizes information about an episode of political violence occurring in the 21st Century. Both members should be involved with the research, writing, and artistic process—overall, work should be split evenly. Students will employ data from the ACLED dataset to help them produce visual answers to the following questions: Where, exactly, is violence occurring? What are the types and quantities of violence? Who are the major actors involved in the conflict? How has violence evolved over the course of the conflict? What is the impact of violence on this country? Worth 10%. Due 4/20.

Research Paper

You will write a 10-12 page research paper on an episode of political violence in the 21st Century. I encourage you to use the case you selected for your infographic and your book review. This extended case study will be used to investigate one of the enduring theoretical or conceptual debates we have addressed over the course of the semester. Every student will hand in a paper proposal (250 words) that describes their research question and outlines their preliminary answer (due 4/27). At the end of the semester, each student will make a 6-8 minute presentation about the progress of their research. You will submit the final draft of your paper during finals week. 3,000 word limit. Worth 30%.

EvaluationGrade Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation	25%
Quizzes	10% (2% each)
Book Review	5%
Debates	10% (5% each)
Infographic	10%
In-Class Presentation	10%
Final Paper	30%

Grading Scale:

A=100-93; A-=93-90; B+=90-87; B=87-83; B-=83-80; C+=80-77; C=77-70; D=69-60; 59 and below=F.

CLASS POLICIES**Technology**

The use of laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices will NOT be allowed during class time *except* during quizzes. If you have an overriding reason why you need to be able to use these technologies during class, come talk to me (see also the Accommodations section below).

Communication

How should you communicate with me? The best way for me to answer your questions and provide you guidance in this course is in my OFFICE HOURS. Please come to them! You can sign up here: For administrative concerns and simple clarifying questions, you can also e-mail me. I will try to respond to any e-mails within 24 hours during the week but do not expect me to respond to e-mails over the weekend. If you are wondering how to write appropriate and professional emails, check these websites out for some guidance: [here](#) and [here](#).

Academic Integrity

You must maintain academic integrity at all times. Plagiarism and cheating are the most serious academic crimes you can commit, and I will pursue any infringements seriously and actively. I also employ anti-plagiarism software for all of the written documents you will be submitting. Please read carefully the provisions of “Academic Honesty: Scholarly Integrity, Collaboration, and the Ethical Use of Sources at Grinnell College,” available [here](#). Make certain you understand and adhere to them. Ask me to clarify any questions you have.

Accessibility and Accommodations Statement

I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom, thus I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. Please inform me early in the term if you have a documented disability, including invisible disabilities such as chronic illness, learning disabilities, and/or psychiatric disabilities to discuss appropriate accommodations with me. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman, located on the 3rd floor of the Goodnow Hall (x3089). Please feel free to speak with me after class or during office hours about these issues.

READINGS AND MATERIALS

In recent years, there has been an explosion of research in this exciting field and any course on this topic is, by necessity, incomplete. This course intends to provide advanced undergraduate students an overview of the most prominent research on this topic. The readings are primarily comprised of peer-reviewed journal articles and excerpts from academic books. The readings are both sophisticated and numerous. Students should be prepared to cover a lot of material. Moreover, we will pay particular attention to the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of these works and, by the end of the semester, students should be able to evaluate between these various approaches and identify strengths and weaknesses of each.

- There is only one required text for this course:

Pearlman, Wendy. 2018. *We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled: Voices from Syria*. New York: Custom House.

- All of the other readings are available on PWeb.
- Download [BB Student](#) for in-class quizzes on your phone. You do not need these apps if you intend to use a laptop for in-class quizzes.
- Download [Tableau](#) for the data visualization assignment. You should get a free one year license.

COURSE SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS POLITICAL VIOLENCE?

Wednesday, January 22: Introduction

Friday, January 24: What is political violence? I

Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2019. "The Landscape of Political Violence." *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*.

Monday, January 27: What is political violence? II

Staniland, Paul, 2017. "Armed Politics and the Study of Intrastate Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 54: 459–67.

Wednesday, January 29: What is political violence? III

Barnes, Nicholas. 2017. "Criminal Politics: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Organized Crime, Politics, and Violence." *Perspectives on Politics* 15(4): 967–87.

Friday, January 31: Whither War?

Snyder, Timothy. 2012. "War No More." *Foreign Affairs*. January/February. [Link](#).
Fazal, Tanisha M and Paul Poast. 2019. "What Optimists Get Wrong About the Decline of War." *Foreign Affairs*. November/December. [Link](#).

Monday, February 3: In-class film

Restrepo. 2010. Dir. by Tim Hetherington and Sebastian Junger. 93 minutes.

Wednesday, February 5: In-class film

Restrepo. 2010. Dir. by Tim Hetherington and Sebastian Junger. 93 minutes.

PART I: CIVIL WAR/INSURGENCY/REBELLION

Friday, February 7: New versus Old Wars

Quiz #1

Kaldor, Mary. 2012. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Malden, MA: Polity Press: 1-30.

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

Monday, February 10: Onset I

Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 75-90.

Wednesday, February 12: Onset II

Lewis, Janet I. 2017. "How Does Ethnic Rebellion Start?" *Comparative Political Studies* 50(10): 1420–1450.

Friday, February 14: Micro-dynamics of Mobilization I

Pearlman, Wendy. 2013. "Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings." *Perspectives on Politics* 11(02): 387–409.

Monday, February 17: Debate on political violence in the 21st Century

"War in the 21st Century is different than war in the past"

Wednesday, February 19: Micro-dynamics of Mobilization II

Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War." *American Political Science Review* 107 (3): 418–432.

Friday, February 21: Wartime Sexual Violence

Cohen, Dara Kay. 2013. "Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War." *World Politics* 65(3): 383–415.

Cohen, Dara Kay, and Green, Amelia. H. 2016. "Were 75 percent of Liberian women and girls raped? No. So why is the U.N. repeating that misleading 'statistic'?" October 26. [Link](#).

Monday, February 24: Control and Collaboration I

Quiz #2

Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pgs. 87–104, 111–124, 138–153.

Wednesday, February 26: Control and Collaboration II

Kalyvas. Pgs. 173-209.

Friday, February 28: Control and Collaboration III

In-class Simulation

Monday, March 2: Rebel Governance I

Stewart, Megan A. 2018. "Civil War as State-Making: Strategic Governance in Civil War." *International Organization* 72(1): 205-226.

Wednesday, March 4: Rebel Governance II

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

Friday, March 6: Rebel Governance III

Arjona, Ana. 2016. *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War*. Cornell University Press. Pgs. 21-82 (excerpts).

Monday, March 9: Case Study of Syria I

*****Quiz #3*****

Pearlman, Wendy. 2018. *We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled: Voices from Syria*. New York: Custom House. Introduction and Parts 1-3.

Wednesday, March 11: Case Study of Syria II

Pearlman, Wendy. 2018. *We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled: Voices from Syria*. New York: Custom House. Parts 4-6.
For Sama. 2019. Dir. by Edward Watts and Waad Al-Khateab. 100 minutes.

Friday, March 13: Case Study of Syria III

Pearlman, Wendy. 2018. *We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled: Voices from Syria*. New York: Custom House. Parts 7-8.

SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 30: Visit to Burling Library

*****Book Review due*****

Wednesday, April 1: Visit to Data Analysis and Social Inquiry Lab (DASIL)

Tableau Visualization Tutorial

PART II: TERRORISM

Friday, April 3: Defining Terrorism

- Hoffman, Bruce. 2006. *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter 1.
- Phillips, Brian. 2015. "What is a Terrorist Group? Conceptual Issues and Empirical Implications." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27(2): 225-242.

Monday, April 6: Who is considered a Terrorist?

- Huff, Connor and Joshua Kertzer. 2018. "How the Public Defines Terrorism." *American Journal of Political Science* 62(1): 55–71.
- Gade, Emily Kalah. 2017. "Who Counts as Radical? Conceptions of Terrorism/Extremism as a Racial Contract." *Political Violence @ a Glance*. October. [Link](#).
- Huff, Connor and Joshua Kertzer. 2017. "If the gunman was Muslim, would we be talking about Las Vegas 'terrorism'?" *Monkey Cage*. October 4. [Link](#).

Wednesday, April 8: Who becomes a Terrorist?

- Lee, Alexander. 2011. "Who Becomes a Terrorist?: Poverty, Education, and the Origins of Political Violence." *World Politics* 63(02): 203–245.

Friday, April 10: Strategies of Terrorism

- Pape, Robert A. 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *American Political Science Review* 97(3): 343-361.

Monday, April 13: Terrorism Debate

"Terrorism is a biased term and not a useful analytical category"

PART III: GENOCIDE/EXTRA-LETHAL VIOLENCE

Wednesday, April 15: Why Genocide?

Quiz #4

- Straus, Scott. 2012. "Retreating from the Brink: Theorizing Mass Violence and the Dynamics of Restraint," *Perspectives on Politics* 10(2): 343-362.

Friday, April 17: Extra-Lethal Violence

- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2013. "The Puzzle of Extra-Lethal Violence." *Perspectives on Politics* 11(2): 410–26.

Monday, April 20: In-class Presentations of Infographics

*****Infographic Due*****

PART IV: PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEBUILDING

Wednesday, April 22: Prevention and Peacekeeping

- Autesserre, Severine. 2019. "The Crisis of Peacekeeping - Why the UN Can't End Wars," *Foreign Affairs* 98 (1):101-116. [Link](#).
- Autesserre, Severine. 2019. "War and Peacekeeping" (debate with Peter Yeo), *Foreign Affairs* 98 (3): 218-219. [Link](#).
- Autesserre, Severine. 2018. "There's Another Way to Build Peace. And It Doesn't Come From the Top Down," *The Washington Post*, October. [Link](#).

Friday, April 24: Post-conflict Peacebuilding

- My Neighbor, My Killer*. 2009. Dir. by Anne Aghion. 80 minutes.
- Berry, Marie. 2018. "Rethinking Women's Power During and After War," *Political Violence @ a Glance*. April 24. [Link](#).
- Berry, Marie and Milli Lake. 2017. "Women and Power after War," *Political Violence @ a Glance*. June 6. [Link](#).

PART V: CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS AND MILITIAS

Monday, April 27: Criminal Violence versus Political Violence

*****Paper Proposal due*****

- Lessing, Benjamin. 2015. "Logics of Violence in Criminal War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (8):1486–1516.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2015. "How Civil Wars Help Explain Organized Crime--and How They Do Not." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(8): 1517–40.
- Phillips, Brian J. 2019. "Would Trump label Mexican cartels terrorist organizations?" *Monkey Cage*. March 26. [Link](#).

Wednesday, April 29: Militias

- Bauer, Shane. 2016. "Undercover with a Border Militia" *Mother Jones*, November/December. [Link](#).
- Cartel Land*. 2015. Dir. by Matthew Heineman. 100 minutes.

Friday, May 1: In-class Work Session

*****Quiz #5*****

Monday, May 4: In-class Presentations

Wednesday, May 6: In-class Presentations

Friday, May 8: In-class Presentations

*Wednesday, May 13: ***FINAL PAPER DUE****

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