INTERNAL WAR AND THE STATE

Political Science 490, Fall 2004
Thursdays, 9 am to 11:50 am in Scott 212

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Overview: This course focuses on the vast majority of wars since the end of the Second World War that occurred within countries rather than between them. It took the end of US-Soviet competition brought this trend clearly into view. More recent events have highlighted the problems of failed states, civil wars, and ethnic strife throughout parts of what used to be called the developing world. This course will provide students with the analytical tools for understanding and evaluating different explanations of the causes of these conflicts.

Are ethnic tensions, recent changes in great power strategies, religious extremism, colonialism, class warfare, resource competition, ideology or state failure to blame for these conflicts? Why and how do such wars end? What is the impact of international efforts to mediate these conflicts? The course will consider the impact of the nature of states and the international system in shaping these conflicts. We also will review current controversies regarding policies for preventing and resolving these conflicts. This course will be especially useful for those who are interested in the politics of ethnic conflict, war and the international system, and correlates of war, among others.

This course is divided into three sections. The first provides a brief overview and covers two recent cases of internal war in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. These cases are important because they have weighed heavily in shaping scholarly discussions of the causes and nature of internal wars after the end of the cold war. This analytical and empirical background lays the groundwork for the second and third sections. The second section surveys contemporary debates about causes of internal wars. The last section provides an overview of controversies surrounding policies for preventing and resolving these conflicts. In this section our interest will focus on how interventions and other policies shape the international context in which these conflicts occur, and how outsiders’ policies become (or fail to become) components of the strategies of combatants.

Course requirements: There are two primary requirements for this class. The first is a paper due at the end of the term and the second consists of several opportunities to provide critical commentary on course material and fellow students’ analyses. This component of the course will contribute 60 percent to the calculation of the final grade.
The Paper: This paper will be approximately 20 double spaced pages. A rough draft will be due in class on the 18th of November. The final version of the paper will be due on Monday, the 6th of December. First year graduate students may want to use this paper as a vehicle for trying out ideas for their second year papers or explore topics that they believe may be relevant to their dissertations. They also may want to consider using this paper as a basis for a review essay or an article for eventual submission to a scholarly journal for publication. Second year and other advanced students may want to use the paper as a way to develop a dissertation proposal, a grant proposal, or a chapter of a dissertation.

“What should I write about?” There are several answers to that question. The list below provides suggestions and is not exhaustive.

1. An analytical paper will identify a significant problem related to the politics of internal wars. This can take either a comparative politics perspective, focusing on the dynamics among groups directly engaged in one or several conflicts, or it can consider the international dimension of internal conflicts or a combination of these approaches. The emphasis of this type of paper will be on constructing a model or a theory to explain a problem. It will not test the model or theory against a particular set of data. To do so would be to write:

2. An empirical paper will identify a significant problem related to internal wars, evaluate an existing set of policies designed to address this problem, propose a new way of approaching the problem that takes the reader beyond existing research, and use data to demonstrate the plausibility of this new argument. This type of paper can focus on a single case or it can examine a set of cases. Historical texts, ethnographic information, and statistical analyses of cross-national data all are appropriate sources of data. The author should justify the choice of data and evaluate its reliability.

3. A review essay would survey a body of work related to one aspect of internal wars. An essay of this type focuses on a coherent debate (or identifies one that ought to take place) and identifies avenues for future research. Several of the readings in this syllabus provide good examples of review essays.

4. A research proposal for a grant application or dissertation proposal would identify a significant problem related to internal wars. It would evaluate current approaches to addressing this problem and justify the need for additional research. It then develops a research design to address this absence.

Critical commentary consists of two response papers (20 percent of total grade—10 percent each), a commentary of a fellow student’s rough draft of the class paper assignment (10 percent of the total grade), and class participation (10 percent of the total grade).
Response papers should be about three pages long. These papers will help students formulate an interpretation of the readings, and will give students a sense of how to approach prelim exam preparation. The reading for that week should be summarized, but this part of the exercise should not be at the expense of interpretation. The emphasis here is on the response. What do you consider to be unanswered questions in the reading? Draw connections between the readings; their methods, data and conclusions. These essays may include all the readings for one week or a subset of them. They do not need to include footnotes or a bibliography (except for references to works that are not included on the syllabus). Students will choose the weeks for their responses after the first class. These essays should be sent to me by 5pm on the day before the class.

The commentary on student papers will provide fellow students with constructive criticism and suggestions for their papers. Paper writers will provide a copy of their rough draft to fellow student commentators when submitting the rough drafts of papers to me on the 18th of November. Commentaries will be due to me after the Thanksgiving holiday (Monday the 29th of November). By this time commentary writers will have provided a copy of their comments to their paper writer. These commentaries can be as long or as short as one wants. Above all, they should be constructive.

Class participation requires reading assignments prior to class in preparation to arrive at seminars with the ability to discuss them.

Readings: required readings will be contained in a reading packet. I have a master copy which can be borrowed to be reproduced on demand at Copycat on Sherman Avenue. We will visit Copycat immediately after the first class meeting on the 23rd of September. Students also may borrow the reading packet from me to make their own copies before that date. The following books are recommended for purchase.


I will hand out primary source materials throughout the course. These are materials that I have collected from among armed groups in Africa and the former Soviet Union.

**CLASS CALENDAR**

**Overview & Empirical Evidence: the Two Significant Cases**

23 September: Overview of the course and the Record of Recent Conflict


30 September: Yugoslavia

Laura Silber & Allan Little (1997) *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin. *Text that you purchased*

Mary Kaldor (2001) “Bosnia-Herzegovina: A case Study of a New War,” in her *New & Old Wars*. Stanford, 31-68. *In the text that you purchased*


7 October: Rwanda

**Text that you purchased**

## II: A Variety of Explanations of Internal Wars

14 October: Rational Actors and Explanations of Conflict: Individual and Group Security Dilemmas and Other Responses to Threats


28 October: Big Structures and Causes of Conflict: International System of States, Legacies of Colonialism and Decolonization

Mary Kaldor (2001) read all but “Bosnia-Herzegovina” in her *New and Old Wars*. Stanford. *In the text that you purchased*


4 November: Environment: resources and Local Social Structures


11 November: Geography

III: Evaluating Policies for Preventing and Resolving Conflicts

18 November: International Fixes


Chaim Kaufman (1997) “Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars,” in Brown, ed., *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, 265-304. The same argument can be found in his “When All Else Fails” chapter in the recommended Walter & Snyder text, 221-60.


25 November: Do Some Conflicts Fix Themselves?


