GOV 388L: Political Violence, Spring 2013  
Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin

1 Instructor Information

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Office Hours: M 10–12; T 1:30–3:00 & by appt  
Class Location: BAT 5.102

2 Course Overview, Format, and Objectives

This graduate research seminar addresses the theoretical and empirical study of political violence primarily within states. It will survey leading research investigations from within political science along with discussion of innovations in other disciplines including geography, economics, and sociology. We will consider a variety of theoretical topics and empirical approaches that deal with the complexity of conflict and violence that we observe globally. Particular topics include the causes and consequences of violence, the process by which violence escalates and deescalates, and how violence differs from political behavior more generally.

3 Requirements

3.1 Required Readings

All readings will be from journal articles. Please note that I may alter the readings from time to time including adding, dropping, and reorganizing. I will give you advance notice when this is to take place. You should plan to read carefully and thoroughly each week and come prepared to discuss the readings.

3.2 Participation / Presentations

Attendance and participation are worth 25% of your grade. The grade will be based on several factors. First, each of you needs to participate actively in weekly discussions. See below for more details but as a general rule, I should not be talking in class much. We should instead have lively, engaging discussion that explore the state of knowledge on the topics as well as creative frontiers.

Second, each of you needs to prepare at least two agendas for guiding class discussions. You will begin leading the discussions in the third week. The agenda-setter should take the lead in guiding a stimulating discussion and everyone else in class should engage fully.

As you prepare for class discussion and agendas, you should think about the basic components of the articles:

1. What is the research question?
2. What is the dependent variable?
3. What is the independent variable?
4. What are the causal mechanisms?
5. What are the components of the research design?
6. What are the findings?

Additionally, and more importantly, you should evaluate each reading critically. This does not imply that you should only identify shortcomings; rather analyze what they author(s) did right, wrong, better, worse, etc. You should seek to learn how to build on the strengths of others while avoiding their weaknesses. As such, you should answer the following questions and others of your own.

1. What do you like most about the article? Least?
2. Are the stated findings in the text surprising? Interesting?
3. Do you believe the findings? Why or why not?
4. To which cases (or sets of cases) do the results apply best/worst?
5. Beyond identifying problems, what would you do to fix those problems? Be practical and concrete. What do you need to be convinced?
6. Which literatures do these findings affect most? How?

From my perspective, the most important step you can take when reading an article is to consider how you would have done the research differently. So as a final step, I encourage you to think creatively about how you could improve this research. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of socializing yourselves to follow convention where needed, but critically breaking out of traditional ways of thinking — in the right ways and at the right times. Thus, other questions to consider:

1. Which question should have been asked?
2. Which theoretical ideas should have been considered? Are the theoretical ideas stale?
3. What novel methodological approaches could have been employed?
4. Is there a better way to ensure this speaks directly to a key theoretical or policy debate?
5. How could the paper be framed better to grab readers’ attention?

### 3.3 Research Reviews

Research reviews are worth 15% of your grade. Over the course of the semester you need to turn in five reviews, which will take the form of hypotheses that both synthesize AND extend arguments from each week’s reading. A review should contain three hypotheses, each accompanied by an explanatory paragraph. Only one of the hypotheses can be purely about existing knowledge of the field. At least two of the hypotheses, need to be informed ideas that could lead to new research. Each review needs to be turned in to me by Wednesday at noon the day before class. You may begin submitting reviews in week 3 and we will sign up to space them appropriately.
3.4 Seminar Paper

The seminar paper is worth 50% of your grade and comprises the primary requirement for the course. The project will be completed jointly either with another student in the class or with the instructor. If you prefer working alone, then that’s fine but you will need to complete a full paper just like the teams.

A portion of most class periods will be devoted to discussions and decision-making about each of the projects. We will discuss the paper in stages – introduction, literature, theory, research design, empirics, conclusion, etc – and will also turn in the different parts of the paper in stages. The reading schedule below lays out the dates that each section is due.

The final product should be a co-authored paper, suitable for professional presentation or publication. A formal presentation of the paper will be required towards the end of the course and I expect to invite others from the department to attend. An example for this paper can be found in a coauthored article that came out of a course I took in my second year in grad school:


3.5 Presentation

I typically have students give presentations in class. Borrowing an idea from Macartan Humphreys, in this course you will present early in the semester on an episode of violence. This will get you learning about other conflicts quickly and will create a common frame for discussion. We will do the presentations in weeks 2–5. In addition to a 10-minute presentation, you should prepare a one-page fact sheet that you can hand out to others in class. Please choose one of the following events and be prepared to present on it. The presentation is worth 10% of your grade.

- The Tunisian Immolation (17 December 2010)
- Texas Bell Tower Sniper (1 August 1966)
- Hiroshima (6 August 1945)
- The killing of Steve Biko (August-September 1977)
- Srebrenica (July 1995)
- Naroda Patiya Massacre (2002)
- Mississippi Civil Rights Workers Murders (21–22 June 1964)
- Waterboarding of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (or others)
- Massacre of Tutsis at Mugonero Church/Mission
4 University and Course Policies

4.1 Academic Integrity

UT students should seek to be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct. Students are expected not only to be honest but also to assist other students in fulfilling their commitment to be honest.

While students should make a general commitment to proper academic conduct, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in the age of the internet, as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers.

Writing submitted for credit at UT must consist of the student’s own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student’s own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing.

The substitution of another person’s work for the student’s own or the inclusion of another person’s work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit a writing lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current Harbrace College Handbook, the MLA Handbook, and James D. Lester’s Writing Research Papers.

Please also see the University Honor Code site for more information at: http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html.

4.2 Access

The University of Texas at Austin is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, [http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddee/ssl/].

4.3 Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you
will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

4.4 Emergencies

Please also see the following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767. Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050. Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency.

5 Tentative Course and Reading Schedule

5.1 January 17: Introduction

5.2 January 24: What is Political Violence?

Research Papers: Discuss Research Questions Presentation 1 & 2

- Required:

5.3 January 31: Practice and History of Violence

Research Papers: 1-page proposal due; Discuss writing introductions Presentation 3 & 4
• Required:

5.4 February 7: Methodological Approaches to Violence

Research Papers: Full introduction due; Discuss literature reviews Presentation 5 & 6

• Required

5.5 February 14: Rationalism / Bargaining

Research Papers: Discuss questions and literature again Presentation 7 & 8

• Required


5.6 February 21: Constructivism / Identity

Research Papers: Literature review due (revise previous material); Discuss theory sections

• Required


5.7 February 28: Causes of Violence

Research Papers: Discuss theory sections again

• Required


5.8 March 7: Duration and Outcomes of Violence

*Research Papers: Theory section due (revise previous material); Discuss research design*

- **Required**

5.9 March 14: Spring Break – No Class

5.10 March 21: Management, Resolution, Internationalization

*Research Papers: Discuss research design sections again*

- **Required**

5.11 March 28: Organization and Participation

*Research Papers: Research design due (revise previous material); Discuss empirical section*

- **Required**

5.12 April 4: Counterinsurgency / State Violence;
*Research Papers: Discuss progress of empirical analysis*

• Required

5.13 April 11: Nonviolent Dissent / Cooperation
*Research Papers: Discuss progress of empirical analysis*

• Required

5.14 April 18: Noncombatants / Sexual Violence
*Research Papers: Discuss progress of empirical analysis*

• Required

5.15 April 25: Effects: Refugees, Health, Education

*Research Papers: Full preliminary draft due; revise previous sections*

- Required


5.16 May 2: Presentations

5.17 Final Paper Due May 8