Course Overview

This course provides a general overview on the origins, dynamics, and outcomes of civil war and counterinsurgency. It aims to provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding these forms of conflict, the logic of their violence, and the determinants of their duration and outcomes. An additional objective of the course is to consider questions of definition, empirical strategy, and methodology relevant to conducting rigorous research on these topics.

The course is organized in three parts. The first reviews the general concept of civil war and provides an overview of various theoretical approaches to understanding it. We will consider arguments concerning identity and ethnic conflict, the political economy of violence, and rationalist explanations for war. The second part of the course examines the dynamics of insurgency and counterinsurgency, including recruitment and rebel alliances, combatant strategies, third-party intervention, and other international dimensions. The final section considers the outcomes and aftermaths of civil war, including the determinants of conflict duration and the challenges of post-conflict peacekeeping and statebuilding.

Prerequisites

This course is open to graduate and advanced undergraduate students with previous training in international relations, security studies, and/or comparative politics. Familiarity with quantitative methods is strongly recommended, as many of the assigned readings employ statistics, formal methods, or other quantitative approaches.

Assessment

The course will be run as a seminar and students will be expected to have completed all required readings prior to class. Assessment in the course will be based on the following criteria:

Participation in class discussion (20%): student-led discussion is critical to the success of a seminar course. To those ends, students will be assessed on their attendance (5%), their level of participation (5%), and their degree of preparation for class discussions (5%). Students will also serve as leading discussants for those weeks in which they write critical response papers, providing a brief (10-15 minute) overview of the week’s key themes, concepts, and arguments, as well as generating questions to lead class discussions (5%).

Critical response papers based on assigned readings (15% x 2 = 30%): two 5-page, double-spaced papers that critically engage with the required readings. Note that these papers should not
be summaries of the week’s assigned readings; rather, they should develop theoretical, empirical, or methodological critiques of one or more articles and/or highlight new directions for future research on the week’s topic. Students will be assigned weeks during the first class, with the expectation that they will review one week during Part 1 of the course, and one week during Part 2 of the course. Papers must be submitted via email before midnight the day prior to class for each week that is reviewed.

**Major research paper (50%)**: a maximum 25 page, double-spaced paper that addresses a major question in the study of civil war or counterinsurgency. The paper should be written in the form of a first draft of a paper intended for publication, meaning it should include a brief literature review, a theoretical argument, and an empirical test of the theory. Paper topics must be approved in advance; a one-page proposal will be due prior to class on Week 6 (13 February). The final papers will be due in hard copy before the beginning of class on Week 12 (3 April).

**Policies**

**Late or missed papers**: Late papers will be penalized 10% per calendar day, excepting only extraordinary personal emergencies. If you find yourself in such a situation, please email me as soon as possible to inform me. Substantiating documentation will be required and must be submitted within one week of the missed due date. Note that assignments or tests from other courses scheduled for the same day do not constitute acceptable reasons—please plan accordingly. In the absence of substantiating documentation, late or missed assignments will receive a mark of zero.

**Academic Honesty**: Plagiarism is a major academic offense and will be treated accordingly. Students are required to familiarize themselves with and conform to the University of Toronto’s policies on Academic Honesty, available at [http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/newstudents/transition/academic/plagiarism](http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/newstudents/transition/academic/plagiarism). In addition, students should consult Margaret Proctor’s guide on “How Not to Plagiarize,” available at [http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize](http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize).

**Accessibility**: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accessibility accommodations of any kind, please contact Accessibility Services at accessibility.services@utoronto.ca as soon as possible.

**Readings**

Quercus will be used to manage the course and readings. To access Quercus you must have an active University of Toronto email address. All readings and other course information can be accessed at the following link: [https://q.utoronto.ca/](https://q.utoronto.ca/)

**PART I: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

**Week 1 (9 January): Organizational Session and Preview of the Course**

*No readings.*
**Week 2 (16 January): Concepts and Overview**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**Week 3 (23 January): Identity and Ethnic Conflict**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**Week 4 (30 January): The Political Economy of Violence**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**Week 5 (6 February): The Bargaining Model of War**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**PART II: DYNAMICS OF INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY**

**Week 6 (13 February): Recruitment, Support, and Rebel Alliances**


Additional Recommended Readings


Week 7 (27 February): Insurgent Violence


Additional Recommended Readings


Week 8 (6 March): Counterinsurgent Strategies


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**Week 9 (13 March): Third-Party Intervention**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**Week 10 (20 March): Spillovers and Other International Dimensions**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**PART III: OUTCOMES AND AFTERMATHS**

**Week 11 (27 March): Duration and Outcomes**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**Week 12 (3 April): The Challenges of Peacekeeping and State Building**


**Additional Recommended Readings**

