

Theories of Violence and War

SIS 610-003

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Office Hours: M 10-11:30, R 2:30-5pm
Other hours by appointment



Photo Credit: BBC



REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

1. *Conflict after the Cold War: Arguments on Causes of War and Peace* by Richard K. Betts. 2008. Pearson Longman
2. *Violence: A Reader*. Edited by Catherine Besteman. 2002. New York University Press.
3. *After the Peace: Loyalist Paramilitaries in Post-accord Northern Ireland* by Carolyn Gallaher. 2007. Cornell University Press.
4. Blackboard Reader: Other readings for this class will be posted on the blackboard site.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces students to the main theoretical frameworks through which we explain the outbreak of war and conflict. These theories are pitched at a variety of scales—the global, national, local, and individual levels—and come from a variety of disciplines, including political science, anthropology, geography, and sociology, among others. In this class we will unpack these theories and apply them to specific case studies. As such, while the focus of the class is theoretical, you will be given an opportunity to apply the theories discussed in class in actual wars/conflicts.

This course is divided into 3 parts. In the first part of the class we will overview the key terminology used by academics and practitioners studying/working in conflict zones and discuss the difficulty of collecting usable data from them. Many of you may go onto to jobs that require you to collect conflict data, so understanding the limitations of data collection in conflict zones is important. In the second and largest part of the class, we will discuss the main theoretical approaches used to explain violence and war. In particular we will review the following schools of thought:

- Clausewitzian approaches
- Marxism
- New war theory
- Environmental scarcity
- Greed hypothesis
- Psychological and Biological explanations
- Identity theory

In the third part of the class we will cover topical issues including wartime rape, post-conflict violence, Genocide, Terrorism, and alternative/against the grain views of war.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this course students will:

1. Be **conversant in a variety of theoretical explanations** for violence and war
2. Be able to **apply the theories** we cover in this class to conflicts not discussed in it
3. Be **familiar with the different scales of analysis** used to study conflict.
4. Be able to **identify benefits and shortcoming of the theoretical models** discussed in this class
5. **Respect the different disciplinary traditions** that study violence and war.
6. Learn to **analyze and write about violence/war** in the style common to the conflict tracking/management field.

EVALUATION:

Assignments:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----|
| 1. Midterm | 22% |
| 2. Analysis Paper 1 | 22% |
| 3. Analysis Paper 2 | 22% |
| 4. Final Exam | 22% |
| 5. Participation | 12% |



Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor. Photo Credit: Us Archives

Exams: The midterm exam will be a take home exam with 2 to 3 essay questions. You will be given one week to complete the exam. The final exam will follow a similar structure but you will take it during the final exam time listed for this class.

Analysis Papers: Students will be asked to interpret actual conflicts through the theoretical lens discussed in class. More details will be provided in an assignment guideline, handed out in class two weeks prior to the due date.

Participation: Your participation grade will be based on attendance, participation in class, and group presentation work. I will put students into small groups on the 2nd day of class. Each group will be responsible for analyzing a case conflict using one of the theoretical perspectives discussed in class and presenting their results to the class.

Grading Scale:

A	95-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	60-69	F	< 59
A-	90-94	B	83-86	C	73-76				
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72				

A=excellent work, B=good work, C=satisfactory work, D=unsatisfactory work, F=inadequate work

CLASSROOM RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **Be On Time:** Coming to class late is disruptive to me and your peers.
- **Cell Phones Off:** Turn off cell phones in class. This means no texting during class.
- **No Outside Laptops:** Using a laptop to take notes has its benefits. Most people can type faster than they can write. However, laptops on a wired campus provide too many distractions in class (IM, email, surfing, bargain hunting, etc.). Even the most attentive students can get distracted by all of this. No laptops allowed in class except students with a documented learning disability.
- **Proper Notification:** Students are entitled to miss exams and assignment due dates for the reasons listed below. In each case, students must provide proper documentation. All other cases will result in zero credit for a missed assignment/exam.

Religious holidays
Surgery

Illness requiring a doctor's visit
Death in the family

Car Wreck

- **Open Dialogue:** During the semester unexpected problems may affect your performance in this class. I am willing to work with you to overcome any such difficulties. I can only do so, however, if you let me know WHILE something is affecting you. Please feel free to keep me abreast of issues as they occur rather than coming to me at the end of the semester with an explanation for poor performance. At that point it is usually too late for me to do anything to help you.
- **Academic Integrity:** Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you acknowledge your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course. I also encourage you to familiarize yourself with the AIC code found at <http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm>.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** In the event of an emergency, AU will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of an emergency, students should refer to the AU Student Portal, the AU Web site (www.prepared.American.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.



Sculpture by Carl Fredrick Reuterswärd, photo by Luis Bastardo.

CLASS CALENDAR:

PART 1: TERMINOLOGY AND MECHANIS OF STUDYING VIOLENCE

August 29

Introductions

Review of Syllabus and overview of Key Terminology

September 5

Labor Day—No Class

September 12

Studying War—‘This Ain’t No Cakewalk!’

Part 1: Analytic Issues

- Blackboard 1—Stathis Kalyvas. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge. Chapter 2 (Pathologies)

Part 2: Methodological Issues

- Blackboard 2—Carolyn Gallaher. 2009. “Researching Repellent Groups: Some Methodological Considerations on how to represent Militants, Radicals, and other Belligerents.” In (Sriram et al Eds) *Surviving Field Research: Working in Violent and Difficult Situations*. Routledge.
- Blackboard 3—Lee Ann Fuji. 2009. “Interpreting Truth and Lies in Stories of Conflict and Violence.” In (Sriram et al Eds) *Surviving Field Research: Working in Violent and Difficult Situations*. Routledge.
- Blackboard 4—Amy Ross. 2009. “Impact on Research of Security-seeking Behavior.” In (Sriram et al eds) *Surviving Field Research: Working in Violent and Difficult Situations*. Routledge.

PART 2: MAJOR THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON VIOLENCE AND WAR

September 19

The State and War—Traditional views of warfare

Part 1: The State and War

- Blackboard 5—Carl von Clausewitz. 1968. *On War*. Penguin Classics. Chapter 1
- *Violence-a Reader*, Chapter 2 (Max Weber: Politics as Vocation)
- *Violence-a Reader*, Chapter 4 (Charles Tilly: War Making and State Making as Organized Crime)

September 26

The State and War Cont.—How do We Understand State Excess in War?

Part 1: Can we understand horror?

- *Violence-a Reader*, Chapter 3 (H. Arendt: Reflections on Violence)
- *Violence-a Reader*, Chapter 6 (Z. Bauman: on the Holocaust)

Part 2: A Case Study—the Battle of the Somme

- Blackboard 6—Martin Gilbert. 2007. *The Battle of the Somme*. Holt. Preface, Prelude, Chapter 3

October 3

The End of the Cold War—A Watershed Moment for War?

Part 1: Early Reactions (all over the map!)

- *Conflict After the Cold War*, Part I Introduction: Three Visions of War and Peace, pp. 1-52.

Part 2: Are Contemporary Wars Different from Earlier Wars?

- Blackboard 7—Mary Kaldor. 2001. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Stanford. Chapter 1
- Blackboard 8—Martin van Creveld. 1991. *The Transformation of War*. Free Press. Chapter 1.
- Blackboard 9—Stathis Kalyvas. 2001. 'New' and 'Old' Wars—A Valid Distinction? *World Politics*, 54(1): 99-118
- Blackboard 10—M.L.R Smith. 2003. "Guerrillas in the Mist: Reassessing Strategy and Low Intensity Warfare'." *Review of International Studies*, 29(1): 19–37.

Group 1 Presentation

October 10

Environmental Explanations

Part 1: Scarcity

- *Conflict After the Cold War*. Thomas F. Homer Dixon: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict, 607-621.
- Blackboard 11—Robert Kaplan. 1994. "The Coming Anarchy." *The Atlantic Monthly*. February.
- Blackboard 12—Jared Diamond. 2005. *Collapse: How Societies Choose To Fail or Succeed*. Viking Press. Chapter 10

Part 2: Resource Curse?

- Blackboard 13—Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, 2004. Greed and Grievance in Civil War. *Oxford Economic Papers* 56: 563-595.

Analysis Paper 1 Due

Group 2 Presentation

October 17

Marxist/Critical Approaches Interpretations

Part 1: Causal Variables

- Blackboard 14—Frantz Fanon. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Chapter 1 (Concerning Violence).
- Blackboard 15—Guillermo O'Donnell. *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina 1966-1973 in Comparative Perspective*. University of California Press, Chapter 1.
- Blackboard 16—Andre Gunder Frank. 1981. *Crisis in the Third World*. Holmes & Meier Publishers. Chapter 8

Part 2: Debating the Cause of Sendero Luminoso

- Blackboard 17—Cynthia McClintock. 1984. "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso." *World Politics* 37(1): 48-84.
- Blackboard 18—David Palmer. 1986. "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso." *Comparative Politics* 18(2): 127-146

Group 3 Presentation

October 24

Identity and Ethnicity

Part 1: Situating Ethnic Conflict

- Blackboard 19—Michael Ignatieff. *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*. Introduction and Chapter 6

Part 2: Ethnicity and Democracy

- Blackboard 20—Mohameden Ould-Mey. 1996. *Global Restructuring and Peripheral States: The Carrot and the Stick in Mauritania*. Chapters 8 and 9
- Blackboard 21—Amy Chua. 2002. *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Markets and Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*. Introduction and Chapter 6.

Midterm Exam Due (Start of Class)

October 31

Individual Explanations

Part 1: Psychological Views

- *Conflict After the Cold War*. Part IV Psychology: Unconscious Sources of Conflict, pp. 169-194.

Part 2: Biological Views (and their critics)

- Blackboard 22—Michael Ghiglieri. 1999. *The Dark Side of Man: Tracing the Origins of Violence*. Persus. Chapters 1 and 6
- *Conflict After the Cold War*. Margaret Meade: Warfare is only an Invention—Not a biological Necessity, pp. 219-223.

Group 4 Presentation

PART 3: TOPIC ISSUES RELATED TO VIOLENCE AND WAR

November 7

Rape and Sexual Predation in War

- *Violence-a Reader*. Chapter 11 (Rhonda Copelon: Surfacing Gender: Reconceptualizing Crimes Against Women in Time of War).
- Blackboard 23—MB Olujic. 1998 “Embodiment of Terror: Gendered Violence in Peacetime and Wartime in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 12 (1): 31–50.
- Blackboard 24—Elisabeth Wood. 2006. “Variation in Sexual Violence During War.” *Politics and Society* 34.

November 14

Violence After War

- *After the Peace*, Chapters 1-4

November 21

Violence After War

- *After the Peace*, Chapters 5-8

Analysis Paper 2 due

November 28

Interpreting Genocide in Rwanda

- Blackboard 25—Philip Gourevitch. *We Wish to Inform you that Tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda*. Farrar Straus and Giroux. Chapter 4.
- Blackboard 26—Lee Ann Fuji. 2009. *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda*. Cornell. Intro and Chapter 6.
- Blackboard 27—Mahmood Mamdani. 2001. *When Victims Become Killers*. Princeton. Introduction and Chapter 1

Group 5 Presentation

December 5

Unpacking Terrorism and Against the Grain Perspectives

- *Conflict after the Cold War*. Part IX Strategy II: Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, pp. 463-576.
- *Conflict after the Cold War*. Part V Culture: Customs, Norms, and Learning, pp. 195-264 (minus Meade reading you've already done).

December 12

Final Exam, 2:35-5:05pm.