



**New Course**

GOVT 435

**Catalog Course Title:** Political Violence and Civil Wars

**Name and contact information for future correspondence:**

Adrienne LeBas Lebas@american.edu; Saul Newman snewman@american.edu

**Academic Unit - School/College:**

- CAS
- KSB
- SOC
- SIS
- SPA
- SPEXS
- Other:

**Teaching Unit - Department or Program:** Government

**Date effective:** Fall 2016

Required Signatures	Name	Signature	Date
Teaching Unit Chair or Director	Saul Newman		4/3/16
EPC Chair	Susan Gloner		4/7/16
Primary Academic Unit Assoc. Dean	Jessica Walters		4/8/16
Second Academic Unit Assoc. Dean			
Faculty Senate Chair			
Provost's Designee (VPUG or VPGR)			

**Date sent to the Office of the University Registrar:**

## **New Course Proposal for GOVT435: Political Violence and Civil Wars**

### **I. Identifying Information**

- a. Proposed effective date      Fall 2016
- b. Academic Unit                      SPA
- c. Teaching Unit                      Government
- d. Course Title                      Political Violence and Civil Wars
- e. Course Number                      GOVT435
- f. Credits                                  3
- g. Prerequisites                      None
- h. Course description for University Catalog

This course provides an introduction to the study of political violence and intra-state conflict. Rather than focusing exclusively on civil wars, which dominates the study of violence in political science, the course focuses primarily on lower-level violence, ranging from communal riots to extortion rackets to electoral violence.

- i. Grade type                              A/F
- j. Expected frequency of offering      Alternate falls
- k. Check all that apply:                  None

### **II. Rationale**

- a. Please explain the main purpose of the new course, including whether it will be a requirement for an existing or proposed program or an elective, and how the new course relates to the existing courses in the program and department.

This course serves will introduce students to theories and cases of intra-state violence, which includes communal riots, electoral violence, terrorism, and civil wars. By the end of the course, students will have an understanding of both structural approaches to understanding violence (i.e., how large historical processes or particular institutions make violence more likely) and more “micro-level” approaches (i.e., why individuals decide to participate in violence). Students will also be able to discuss the causes and outcomes of important cases of intra-state violence.

The course will serve as a comparative politics elective for the GOVT department and for students in SPA’s JLC department. It is open to students in SIS. The course also contributes to the undergraduate training mission of SPA’s Political Violence Lab, and it is offered in the fall for students who are interested in applying to become Lab fellows for the rest of the academic year. The course also expands the department’s offerings in upper-level comparative politics courses, which have been undersupplied at points in the past.

- b. Will the course require students to pay a special fee? No
- c. Has the course previously been offered under a rotating topics course or an experimental course number? Yes.
  - i. Semesters/year offered. Fall 2014; fall 2012; fall 2011.

- ii. Course number. It was offered three times as a special topics course under the number GOVT 396.
- iii. Instructor. Adrienne LeBas
- iv. Enrollment. It had an enrollment of 24 in the fall of 2014, the last time it was offered.
- v. What observations and conclusions were derived from the previous offering(s) that now lead to proposing this course as a permanent part of the curriculum? The reading list for the course was revised, new topics were (or will be) introduced, and the structure of classroom discussion was slightly changed. The student evaluations for the Fall 2014 were extremely positive, despite the course's challenging requirements, so this would seem to be a good course to add to SPA's permanent offerings.

d. Please indicate other units that offer courses or programs related to the proposed course and provide documentation of consultations with those units.

SIS identified Cathy Schneider as teaching a similar course in SIS. Correspondence with Schneider in April 2014 confirmed a lack of overlap between the course proposed here and courses taught in SIS. Schneider suggested that her course and the proposed course could be seen as complements, with the GOVT course serving as a "theories" course and the SIS course as offering a more "case studies" approach. If the Registrar wishes, course titles could be revised to reflect this division of labor, but LeBas feels this is unnecessary at this stage.

e. Estimated enrollment per semester. 25

f. Does your teaching unit's classroom space allotment support the addition of this course? Yes

g. Are present university facilities (library, technology) adequate for the proposed course? Yes

h. The proposed course will be taught by full-time faculty. Yes.

i. Will offering the new course involve any substantial changes to the scheduling of existing courses? No.

j. What are the learning outcomes including the competencies that students are expected to demonstrate for the course and how are those outcomes assessed?

At the end of the course, students will be able to (1) describe several causal explanations of why violence occurs; (2) evaluate the strength of other scholars' arguments, methodological approaches, and the quality of data; (3) demonstrate the ability to conduct original research linking theory and empirics. Satisfaction of learning outcomes (1) and (2) will be assessed through reading response memos, which will require students to summarize the "kernel arguments" in weekly readings and to make an argument about which readings (from that week or earlier weeks) are more convincing and offer stronger evidentiary support for their arguments. These skills will be further demonstrated in student responses to essay questions posed on the course midterm. Satisfaction of learning objective (3) will be assessed via the original research project completed by the student as a final term paper. As part of the grade for this paper, students are required to write a data quality memo that discusses the evidence and data used in the secondary literature they cite in their papers.

k. Please attach a draft syllabus

Syllabus attached.

Catalog Copy:

**GOVT-435 Political Violence and Civil Wars (3)** This course provides an introduction to the study of political violence and intra-state conflict. Rather than focusing exclusively on civil wars, which dominates the study of violence in political science, the course focuses primarily on lower-level violence, ranging from communal riots to extortion rackets to electoral violence.

## Political Violence and Civil Wars

Professor Adrienne LeBas  
Office: Ward Circle 228  
Office hours: T 1:30-4:30, W 11-1  
Office Phone: 202-885-6229  
Email: lebas@american.edu

GOVT 435  
Fall 2017  
Class: Wed 2:35-5:15  
Room: Ward 202

Students who are interested in international relations may have taken a “theories of war” course: this course is intended to fill in those aspects of political violence that an IR-oriented course would neglect. Thus, we’ll look at violence that exists within the boundaries of a country (this is the realm of the sub-field of “comparative politics”), as well as political violence that often has trans-national dimensions (e.g., terrorism, civil wars).

The goals of this course are two-fold. On the one hand, this course serves as an introduction to theories of political violence. We will look at structural approaches to conflict (i.e., big historical processes or lead to war) as well as more “micro-level” approaches (e.g., why individual soldiers fight). Secondly, the course is intended to teach you skills that will help you in your life after academic political science. These include: strong argumentative / persuasive writing, the ability to boil down complex or dense writing to its most basic points, and a facility with evaluating evidence (i.e., is it “good”, is it sufficient to support an argument, etc). In order to further these goals, students will find that the course is both reading and writing-intensive. Some weeks (on weeks we’re reading books, for example), there may be well over a hundred pages of reading; other weeks, there will be substantially less reading, but individual pieces will be considerably more dense.

### READING

Most of the required reading for the course is available online: starred articles are available on the Blackboard system; all non-starred articles are from electronic journals available through the AU library website (familiarize yourself with the E-resources links, and then ask library staff for assistance if you cannot locate a particular article). Readings can be changed or replaced at any time, so contact me if you miss class.

In addition to articles, we will be reading all or almost all of the following three books. These are available for sale at the AU bookstore, and they are on reserve at the library.

Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: the Collapse of Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011).

Sudhir Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day: a Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets* (New York: Penguin, 2008).

Severine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

The bulk of assigned readings are academic articles. Lectures will place these articles in context and present the broader outlines of a topic. The responsibility for obtaining class notes in the event of absence rests with the student.

## REQUIREMENTS

By the end of this course, you will be able to critically assess others' arguments and construct your own arguments. In order to develop your skills at critical analysis, part of your class grade will be based on two 500-600 word response memos. In these response papers, you will be expected to: (a) unpack (describe accurately) the arguments advanced by the authors in that week's readings; (b) make one author "talk" to other authors (i.e., integrate the author's argument into a broader discussion); (c) and offer your own argument (critical analysis). For instance, you may wish to engage with empirical examples (e.g., author X's argument does not seem to explain the case of Palestine...) or with past weeks' readings (e.g., author X's point about Y reminded me of the Z reading, because ...). This may be a different mode of writing than what other professors may want, and it may take you some time to get it exactly right. *For this reason, grades at the beginning of the class tend to be lower than grades toward the end. Students will be given the opportunity to rewrite memos for **extra credit**.* A good grade on a rewrite will not replace your initial grade, but it will be taken into account when calculating the final memo average. For more general tips on writing, consult the "College Writing Program Criteria" rubric handed out on the first day of class. Also, see the further tips under "response memos" below.

You should consider response memos to be rough practice for the midterm and for the final paper. I will try to return assignments as quickly as possible, usually within one week. For memos and for essay questions on the exam, you will be evaluated on how well you advance and support an argument. This is a skill. As suggested above, it takes time and attention to develop this skill. I encourage all students to come to office hours to further discuss how to improve their writing and overall performance.

**Participation(15%).** The class is designed primarily as a lecture class, but participation and contributions to class discussion are required. Students are expected to complete all readings assigned for a particular week *before* attending class. If the class is not routinely prepared for discussion, I may institute in-class quizzes on the readings, or there may be additional assignments. If you miss a lecture, it is your responsibility to get the lecture notes from another student. Unexcused absences will count against your participation grade.

Those who have written response memos for the week will be considered "first responders." Take another look at the readings and your own memo before you come to class, as you'll be expected to open discussion.

**Midterm (20%).** There is a take-home exam, which will consist of short answers and one essay. There will be some choice regarding which questions to answer. The midterm will be held on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Response Memos (30%).** Students will be required to write two 500-600-word memos that respond to an individual week's set of readings. You will be assigned weeks via a sign-up sheet on the first day of class. Memos must be posted on Blackboard by 10pm the night before the class for which readings are assigned. Late memos will be docked, as will non-attendance of class for that day.

**Case Study (Final) Paper (30%)** Instead of a final exam, students will be expected to write an original research paper that critically examines an instance of political violence. Students may focus their attention on a civil war, a campaign or series of violent events, or a single riot. The goal is to tie your case study to a larger theoretical question or debate that we have discussed in class. You are free to choose whatever topic you like, but keep in mind that a tight focus is a necessary ingredient of a manageable, well-argued research paper. For example, rather than analyzing all causes of a single war, you may wish to consider whether the "resource curse" literature seems convincing in that particular case. Your paper will be evaluated in the same fashion as the response memos: the clarity of your argument, the degree to which you situate the argument in a broader debate, and the quality of the empirical support. You will find it much easier to narrow your topic and make a strong argument if you build up your paper around a clear question: e.g., Did transitional justice in Cambodia work? Why was there fragmentation in rebel groups during peace negotiations in Burundi? Do individuals join drug gangs in America and rebel groups in Africa for the same reasons? Notice that these examples all lead you naturally toward strong declarative sentences.

In terms of nuts and bolts, the paper should be 14-17 pages double-spaced, and it must engage with at least four theoretical sources and ten sources total (primary and theoretical mixed; newspaper articles do not count). There is a memo that gives further guidelines for research, and we will discuss this further in class.

**The final paper must be emailed to me by 2:35pm on December 15<sup>th</sup>** (the final schedule assigned to us by the administration). I cannot offer extensions of any kind. The paper must be emailed to me as a Microsoft Word document (doc or docx), and the file must be titled with your last name and 396final in the title (e.g., Smith396final.doc). Points will be deducted if papers are late or improperly titled.

**Data Quality Memo (5%).** Students will also be required to write a 400-500-word memo that analyzes the quality of data used in academic articles and public discussions of their case study. Throughout the course, we'll be asking: is this good data? Is this anecdotal? How did the author of this article / report choose her informants? What are challenges associated with collecting data or drawing conclusions about particular places? This memo is your opportunity to comment on how you feel about the data upon which you and other analysts are basing your arguments. We'll talk more about this in class.

**Academic Integrity Code:** By enrolling in this course, you agree to comply with American University's Academic Integrity Code. The Code covers not just plagiarism but also other violations of academic honesty, including *the submission of work completed in another course to fulfill requirements in this course*. You are expected to be aware of what practices lie outside this code. Penalties include failure in this course, as well as other disciplinary actions. Please further review the content of this code at:

<http://www1.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.htm>

Academic violations in this course will be referred to the appropriate authorities immediately. If you have any questions about the code, please consult with me *before* turning in assignments.

## **8/27 Introduction to the Course**

## **9/3 Structural Approaches to Explaining Violence**

\*\* Colin Kahl, *States, Scarcity & Civil Strife in the Developing World* (2006), Chapter 1.

Ross, Michael L. 2004. "How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from Thirteen Cases," *International Organization* 58: 1, pp. 35-67.

James Mahoney, "Nominal, Ordinal, and Narrative Appraisal in Macrocausal Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology* 104:4 (1999), pages 1154-1169 only. You can continue if you like, but you are reading this for the discussion of Skocpol & her methods.

## **9/10 Rationalist Approaches to Violence**

Stathis Kalyvas, "Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria," *Rationality and Society* 11:3 (1999), 243-285.

\*\* Rui De Figueiredo and Barry Weingast, "The Rationality of Fear: Political Opportunism and Ethnic Conflict," in *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention* (1999), 261-302.

Edward Miguel, "Poverty and Witch Killing," *Review of Economic Studies* 72 (2005).

## **9/17 Psychological Approaches to Explaining Violence**

Zoe Williams, "The Psychology of the UK Riots," *The Guardian* (August 9, 2011).

Andrew Colman, "Crowd Psychology in South African Murder Trials." *American Psychologist* 46, no. 10 (1991): 1071-79.



Kristen Renwick Monroe, "Cracking the Code of Genocide: The Moral Psychology of Rescuers, Bystanders and Nazis during the Holocaust," *Political Psychology* 29:5 (2008), 699-736.

\*\* The set of newspaper articles titled "Playing Games with People" on Blackboard.

## **9/24 Violence & States**

\*\*Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Evans et al, *Bringing the State Back In*, pages 169-191.

Charles King, "The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States," *World Politics* 53:4 (2001), 524-552.

\*\* Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements* (2001), pp on BB.

## **10/1 Organizing Violent Enterprises**

Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day*, all.

\*\* File labeled "Counterinsurgency" on Blackboard.

## **10/8 MIDTERM**

### **10/15 Democratization and Violence**

Jack Snyder & Barbara Walter, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security* 21:2 (1996).

Villarreal, Andres. 2002. Political Competition and Violence in Mexico: Hierarchical Social Control in Local Patronage Structures. *American Sociological Review* 67 (4):477-498.

Chris Blattman, "From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda," *American Political Science Review* 103:2, 231-247.

### **10/22 Ethnic Violence (I): Theory & Cases**

Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35:1 (1993), 27-47.

\*\*Michele Osborn, "Fuelling the Flames: Rumor & Politics in Kibera," *J of East African Studies* 2:2 (2008).

Additional reading TBA.

### **10/29 Ethnic Violence (II): Urban Riots in South Asia**

\*\* Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, pages on BB.

Paul Staniland, "Cities on Fire: Social Mobilization, State Policy, and Urban Insurgency," *Comparative Political Studies* 43:12, 1623-1649.

### **11/5 Civil Wars (I): Theory & Cases**

\*\* Paul Collier & Anke Hoefler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil Wars," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (2004), 563-595.

\*\* Zachariah Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*, pages on BB.

\*\* Folder labeled "Civil wars" on Blackboard.

### **11/12 Violent Organizations and Civilians**

Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy Weinstein. "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 3 (2006): 429-47.

\*\* Jeremy Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, selected pages posted on Blackboard.

### **11/19 Civil Wars (II): War in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, all.

\*\* The set of newspaper articles and blog posts in the folder titled "Advocacy" on Blackboard.

### **11/26 NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**

**12/3 “Doing” Peacekeeping & Reconstruction**

Autesserre, *Peaceland*.

\*\* File titled “Post-conflict recovery” on Blackboard.