

POLS 631 Conflict Studies

Fall 2026

Professor	Ilayda B. Onder, Assistant Professor of Political Science
Lecture Date, Time, & Room	Thursday 9:00-11:50 AM, ALLN 3125
Office Hours & Office	Thursday 2:00-4:00 PM, ALLN 3046
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Course Description

This seminar surveys major theoretical and empirical research on international and civil conflict. The course introduces students to the core analytical frameworks used in the study of war, beginning with foundational debates about why wars occur. Early weeks focus on rationalist approaches to conflict, including bargaining theory, information problems, and commitment problems, which have become central to modern research on international security. Students engage with classic works that establish the logic of strategic interaction in international politics and examine how these frameworks have shaped subsequent scholarship.

The course then examines how domestic politics shapes the outbreak and conduct of international conflict. Readings explore the role of political institutions, leader incentives, and audience costs in influencing signaling, credibility, and crisis escalation. These discussions lead into an examination of the democratic peace literature, where students evaluate competing explanations for the relationship between democracy and conflict as well as major critiques of the argument. The course then turns to strategic interaction among states, including alliances, deterrence, and signaling in international crises, before concluding with recent advances in the study of interstate conflict that incorporate insights from psychology, leader level decision making, and new empirical approaches.

The second half of the course examines intrastate violence. Students examine major explanations for the onset of civil war, including ethnic conflict, political exclusion, economic incentives, and state capacity. The readings introduce influential theoretical debates about the sources of rebellion and insurgency and evaluate how different political, social, and institutional conditions shape the likelihood of civil war. The course also considers how civil wars unfold after they begin, with particular attention to the organization of armed groups, internal cohesion, alliance formation, and patterns of mobilization within insurgent movements.

Later weeks examine the behavior of armed actors during civil war and the political orders that emerge in contested territories. Students first engage with research on civilian victimization and terrorism, and then how rebel groups govern populations under their control, including the creation of institutions, systems of taxation and justice, and the regulation of civilian life. The final weeks consider state responses to insurgency and terrorism, including counterinsurgency strategies, repression, and leadership targeting, before concluding with recent work on the long term political and social legacies of civil war and rebel rule.

Course Prerequisites

Prerequisite/Corequisite(s): Graduate seminar.

Special Course Designation

Graduate seminar.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the learner will be able to:

- Identify and explain major theoretical frameworks used to study international and civil conflict and evaluate classic and contemporary research on the causes, dynamics, and consequences of war.
- Compare competing explanations for key phenomena in conflict studies, such as deterrence, democratic peace, civil war onset, and patterns of political violence.
- Analyze how political institutions, leaders, and domestic political dynamics shape the behavior of states and nonstate actors in conflict.
- Assess the strategic behavior and organizational dynamics of armed groups, including rebel governance, civilian victimization, and terrorism.
- Develop and communicate original research questions that engage with the scholarly literature on international and intrastate conflict.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

There are no required textbooks for this course. All readings will consist of scholarly journal articles and book chapters, which will be posted on Canvas. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before class and are encouraged to download or annotate them digitally to facilitate active engagement during discussions.

Additional Instructional Materials

Technology and Software

No specific software or technical tools are required for this course. All readings, assignments, and announcements will be posted on Canvas. Students are expected to have regular access to Canvas and to check it frequently for updates.

Other Resources

Additional resources will be made available on Canvas throughout the semester, if needed. Students are encouraged to make use of university resources such as the Writing Center and the Library's research databases for assistance with their review and research papers.

Grading Policy

Students are expected to participate actively in all discussions and to complete readings and assignments prior to each class. Late work will not be accepted and incompletes will not be given except in extreme, unanticipated, and unpredictable situations. Your final grade will be based on four components: Participation/Attendance (10%), Weekly Reaction Papers (30%), Class Discussant (20%), Final Paper (40%).

Participation/Attendance (10%)

Because this is a seminar course, participation is essential to the success of the class and attendance is therefore mandatory. Please notify me in advance if you are unable to attend a class session. Students are permitted one absence without penalty; any additional absences will be addressed on an individual basis. Participation will be evaluated based on the student's ability to demonstrate a clear understanding of the readings and to engage with the theories and methods presented by each author.

Weekly Reaction Papers (30%)

Each week students will write a **one page** reaction paper on the week's reading. Reaction papers longer than one page will not be accepted. Reaction papers must be emailed to me **no later than 5 PM** on the day before class (Wednesday). Students may miss one reaction paper without penalty. Each reaction paper must include **two discussion questions** that can be used for group discussion during class.

The reaction paper is a reflection on your own thoughts about the reading. Reaction papers should (1) provide a summary of the author's argument and evidence, (2) evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the argument, and (3) discuss the effectiveness of the methods used. You may consider questions such as: What causal mechanisms are at work? Does the work primarily generate ideas, test causal hypotheses, develop theory, or some combination of these? What evidence is presented to support or challenge the argument? Can you propose a better or additional way to evaluate the author's claims? How does this reading advance our broader understanding of conflict?

Class Discussant (20%)

Each week one student will be assigned as the discussant for that week's readings. The discussant will be responsible for leading the discussion and preparing a brief outline for each reading. Students serving as discussant **do not** need to submit a reaction paper for that week. Each student will serve as the class discussant **once during the semester**.

The reading outline should include (1) the research question, (2) the main argument (that is, the author's answer to the research question), (3) the key variables of interest, and (4) the methodology used in the study for each reading. When possible, the causal argument should be presented in a diagram. The full outline should be no longer than one page. Students are responsible for preparing copies of the outline for all members of the class, and these should be distributed at the beginning of the class session.

While leading the discussion, the discussant should highlight key themes and questions raised by the readings and work to connect them to topics covered earlier in the course. The discussant should come to class prepared with at least **three discussion questions for each reading**. If you have questions about your assigned readings, you should schedule a meeting with me at least 24 hours before class, rather than on the day of the session.

Final Paper (40%)

Each student will complete a final paper on a topic of their choice that is directly related to the course material. The paper should seek to extend the existing literature covered in the course or pursue a new direction in the research, such as examining previously unexplored arguments. Replication studies are not permitted.

Paper topics are due on **October 9**. On that date, students should submit a **three page** summary that includes the research question or puzzle, proposed hypotheses, a proposed research design, and a minimum of five sources that are independent of the course readings and will be used for the literature review. Topics must be approved in advance. Students should schedule an appointment with me before the due date so that we can discuss the proposed topic. I strongly discourage submitting a topic proposal without discussing it with me beforehand.

The final writing assignment should represent as complete a piece of scholarship as possible. It should resemble an article length paper and include the puzzle, research question, literature review, theoretical contribution, hypotheses, research design, and preliminary analysis. The assignment will be evaluated based on creativity, mastery of the existing literature, and overall research merit. The paper should not exceed **35 double spaced pages**, excluding notes, tables, and references. Each student will present their paper in class on **November 19** before submitting the final version. Students are expected to incorporate the feedback received from me and from their peers during that session into the final paper. The final paper is due on **December 7**.

Grading Scale

A	90 to 100%
B	80 to 89.99%
C	70 to 79.99%
D	60 to 69.99%
F	below 59.99%

Note that the decimal points here are meaningful. An 89.98% is a B; it does not automatically round up to an A. I recognize that cutoffs are arbitrary, but I have to set them nonetheless, and they apply to everyone.

Late Work Policy

Work submitted by a student as makeup work for an excused absence is not considered late work and is exempt from the late work policy ([Student Rule 7](#)).

Due Dates

All assignments are **due by 5 PM** on the assigned due date unless stated otherwise.

Assignment Submissions

All assignments are to be emailed to me.

Late Assignments and Extensions

Assignments not submitted by the designated due date/time are late. Late work will not be accepted and incompletes will not be given except in extreme, unanticipated, and unpredictable situations. All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Extensions will be granted in severe circumstances. If you feel you need an extension, please contact me at least 24 hours before the due date.

Long-term Absences

If you need to be away from class for an extended period due to an illness or family matter, contact me.

Course Schedule

Below you will find a detailed list of class meetings, the topics we will cover, and the assignments for each session. The readings are listed in alphabetical order to give you a sense of how the study of the topic has evolved over time. Readings marked with red color are required for class discussions. The remaining readings are recommended, though you are strongly encouraged to read them as well.

PART I. Foundations (Inter-State Conflict)

Week 1. Introduction to the Study of International Conflict

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 1985. Toward a Scientific Understanding of International Conflict. *International Studies Quarterly* 29: 121–136.

Fearon, James D. 1995. “Rationalist Explanations for War.” *International Organization* 49(3): 379–414.

Van Evera, Stephen. 1998. Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War. *International Security* 22: 5–43.

Powell, Robert. 2006. War as a Commitment Problem. *International Organization* 60: 169–203.

Week 2. Rational Choice

[Please note that I may need to merge this week with the earlier week depending on my APSA schedule.]

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 1988. "The Contribution of Expected Utility Theory to the Study of International Conflict." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18: 629–652.

Gartzke, Erik. 1999. "War Is in the Error Term." *International Organization* 53(3): 567–587.

Martin, Lisa. 1999. "The Contributions of Rational Choice: A Defense of Pluralism." *International Security* 24: 74–83.

Wagner, R. Harrison. 2000. "Bargaining and War." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3): 469–484.

Powell, Robert. 2002. "Bargaining Theory and International Conflict." *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 1–30.

Filson, Darren, and Suzanne Werner. 2002. "A Bargaining Model of War and Peace: Anticipating the Onset, Duration, and Outcome of War." *American Journal of Political Science* 46(4): 819–838.

Slantchev, Branislav L. 2003. "The Principle of Convergence in Wartime Negotiations." *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 621–632.

Reiter, Dan. 2003. "Exploring the Bargaining Model of War." *Perspectives on Politics* 1(1): 27–43.

Smith, Alastair, and Allan C. Stam. 2004. "Bargaining and the Nature of War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6): 783–813.

PART II. Inter-State Conflict

Week 3. Domestic Politics and War

Putnam, Robert D. 1988. "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games." *International Organization* 42: 427–460.

Fearon, James D. 1994. "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes." *American Political Science Review* 88: 577–592.

Schultz, Kenneth A. 1998. "Domestic Opposition and Signaling in International Crises." *American Political Science Review* 92: 829–844.

Leeds, Brett Ashley. 1999. "Domestic Political Institutions, Credible Commitments, and International Cooperation." *American Journal of Political Science* 43: 979–1002.

Colaresi, Michael. 2004. "When Doves Cry: International Rivalry, Unreciprocated Cooperation, and Leadership Turnover." *American Journal of Political Science* 48: 555–570.

Schultz, Kenneth A. 2005. "The Politics of Risking Peace: Do Hawks or Doves Deliver the Olive Branch?" *International Organization* 59: 1–38.

Arena, Philip, and Glenn Palmer. 2009. "Is It Politics or the Economy? Domestic Correlates of Dispute Involvement in Parliamentary Systems." *International Studies Quarterly* 53: 955–975.

Weeks, Jessica L. 2008. "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve." *International Organization* 62: 35–64.

Weeks, Jessica L. 2012. "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict." *American Political Science Review* 106: 326–347.

Carter, Jeff, and Timothy Nordstrom. 2017. "Term Limits, Leader Preferences, and Interstate Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly* 61: 721–735.

McManus, Roseanne W., and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2017. "The Logic of 'Offstage' Signaling: Domestic Politics, Regime Type, and Major Power–Protégé Relations." *International Organization* 71: 701–733.

Week 4. The Democratic Peace

Maoz, Zeev, and Bruce Russett. 1993. "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986." *American Political Science Review* 87: 624–638.

Oneal, John R., and Bruce Russett. 1997. "The Classical Liberals Were Right: Democracy, Interdependence, and Conflict, 1950–1985." *International Studies Quarterly* 41: 267–293.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith. 1999. "An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace." *American Political Science Review* 93: 791–807.

Hegre, Håvard. 2000. "Development and the Liberal Peace: What Does It Take to Be a Trading State?" *Journal of Peace Research* 37: 5–30.

Schultz, Kenneth A. 2001. "Looking for Audience Costs." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45: 32–60.

Rosato, Sebastian. 2003. "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory." *American Political Science Review* 97: 585–602.

Lemke, Douglas. 2003. "African Lessons for International Relations Research." *World Politics* 56: 114–138.

Kinsella, David. 2005. "No Rest for the Democratic Peace." *American Political Science Review* 99: 453–457.

Gartzke, Erik. 2007. "The Capitalist Peace." *American Journal of Political Science* 51: 166–191.

Dafoe, Allan. 2011. "Statistical Critiques of the Democratic Peace: Caveat Emptor." *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 247–262.

Dafoe, Allan, John R. Oneal, and Bruce Russett. 2013. "The Democratic Peace: Weighing the Evidence and Cautious Inference." *International Studies Quarterly* 57: 201–214.

Henderson, Errol A., and Reşat Bayer. 2013. "Wallets, Ballots, or Bullets: Does Wealth, Democracy, or Military Capabilities Determine War Outcomes?" *International Studies Quarterly* 57: 303–317.

Week 5. Alliances and Deterrence

Huth, Paul K., and Bruce Russett. 1993. "General Deterrence Between Enduring Rivals: Testing Three Competing Models." *American Political Science Review* 87: 61–73.

Huth, Paul K., and Bruce Russett. 1988. "Deterrence Failure and Crisis Escalation." *International Studies Quarterly* 32: 29–45.

Leeds, Brett Ashley. 2003. "Do Alliances Deter Aggression? The Influence of Military Alliances on the Initiation of Militarized Interstate Disputes." *American Journal of Political Science* 47: 427–439.

Signorino, Curtis S., and Ahmer Tarar. 2006. "A Unified Theory and Test of Extended Immediate Deterrence." *American Journal of Political Science* 50: 586–605.

Fuhrmann, Matthew, and Todd S. Sechser. 2014. "Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand-Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Deterrence." *American Journal of Political Science* 58: 919–935.

Kenwick, Michael R., John A. Vasquez, and Matthew A. Powers. 2015. "Do Alliances Really Deter?" *Journal of Politics* 77: 943–954.

Leeds, Brett Ashley, and Jesse C. Johnson. 2017. "Theory, Data, and Deterrence: A Response to Kenwick, Vasquez, and Powers." *Journal of Politics* 79: 335–340.

Kenwick, Michael R., and John A. Vasquez. 2017. "Defense Pacts and Deterrence: Caveat Emptor." *Journal of Politics* 79: 329–334.

McManus, Roseanne W. 2018. "Making It Personal: The Role of Leader-Specific Signals in Extended Deterrence." *Journal of Politics* 80: 982–995.

Week 6. Latest Advancements in the Study of Inter-State Conflict

McManus, Roseanne. 2014. "Fighting Words: The Effectiveness of Statements of Resolve in International Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 51: 726–740.

Weisiger, Alex, and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2015. "Revisiting Reputation: How Past Actions Matter in International Politics." *International Organization* 69: 473–495.

Quek, Kai. 2016. "Are Costly Signals More Credible? Evidence of Sender-Receiver Gaps." *Journal of Politics* 78(3): 925–940.

Yarhi-Milo, Keren. 2018. *Who Fights for Reputation: The Psychology of Leaders in International Conflict*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Renshon, Jonathan, Alan Dafoe, and Paul Huth. 2018. "Leader Influence and Reputation Formation in World Politics." *American Journal of Political Science* 62(2): 325–339.

Wu, Cathy Xuanxuan, and Scott Wolford. 2018. "Leaders, States, and Reputations." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(10): 2087–2117.

Yarhi-Milo, Keren, Joshua D. Kertzer, and Jonathan Renshon. 2018. "Tying Hands, Sinking Costs, and Leader Attributes." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(10): 2150–2179.

Katagiri, Azusa, and Eric Min. 2019. "The Effectiveness of Public and Private Signals: A Document-Based Approach." *American Political Science Review* 113(1): 156–172.

Kertzer, Joshua D., Brian C. Rathbun, and Nina Srinivasan Rathbun. 2020. "The Price of Peace: Motivated Reasoning and Costly Signaling in International Relations." *International Organization* 74(1): 95–118.

Joseph, Michael F. 2021. "A Little Bit of Cheap Talk Is a Dangerous Thing: States Can Communicate Intentions Persuasively and Raise the Risk of War." *Journal of Politics* 83: 166–181.

Kim, James D. 2024. "The Long-Run Impact of Childhood Wartime Violence on Preferences for Nuclear Proliferation." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 68: 108–137.

PART III. Foundations (Intra-State Conflict)

Week 7. Civil War (Onset and Causes)

Fearon, James D. 1995. "Ethnic War as a Commitment Problem." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Lake, David A., and Donald Rothchild. 1996. "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict." *International Security* 21: 41–75.

Hegre, Håvard, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates, and Nils Petter Gleditsch. 2001. "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace: Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992." *American Political Science Review* 95: 33–48.

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97: 75–90.

Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56: 563–595.

Sambanis, Nicholas. 2004. "What Is Civil War?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48: 814–858.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. 2009. "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis." *World Politics* 62: 87–119.

Eck, Kristine. 2009. "From Armed Conflict to War: Ethnic Mobilization and Conflict Intensification." *International Studies Quarterly* 53: 369–388.

Kalyvas, Stathis N., and Laia Balcells. 2010. "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict." *American Political Science Review* 104: 415–429.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2011. "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison." *American Political Science Review* 105: 478–495.

Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher. 2013. "Actor Fragmentation and Civil War Bargaining: How Internal Divisions Generate Civil Conflict." *American Journal of Political Science* 57: 659–672.

Lane, Matthew. 2016. "The Intrastate Contagion of Ethnic Civil War." *Journal of Politics* 78: 396–410.

Lewis, Janet I. 2017. "How Does Ethnic Rebellion Start?" *Comparative Political Studies* 50: 1420–1450.

Walter, Barbara F. 2022. *How Civil Wars Start and How to Stop Them*. New York: Penguin Random House. Chapters 1 and 2.

Week 8. Civil War (Actors and Organizations)

Weinstein, Jeremy. 2007. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1.

Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2008. "Ethnic Defection in Civil War." *Comparative Political Studies* 41: 1043–1068.

Lyall, Jason. 2010. "Are Co-ethnics More Effective Counterinsurgents? Evidence from the Second Chechen War." *American Political Science Review* 104: 1–20.

Horowitz, Michael C. 2010. "Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations: The Case of Suicide Terrorism." *International Organization* 64: 33–64.

Christia, Fotini. 2012. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War." *American Political Science Review* 107: 418–432.

Phillips, Brian J. 2014. "Terrorist Group Cooperation and Longevity." *International Studies Quarterly* 58: 336–347.

Thomas, Jakana L., and Kanisha D. Bond. 2015. "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations." *American Political Science Review* 109: 488–506.

Shesterinina, Anastasia. 2016. "Collective Threat Framing and Mobilization in Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 110: 411–427.

Pischedda, Costantino. 2020. *Conflict Among Rebels: Why Insurgent Groups Fight Each Other*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Pearlman, Wendy. 2021. "Mobilizing From Scratch: Large-Scale Collective Action Without Preexisting Organization in the Syrian Uprising." *Comparative Political Studies* 54: 1786–1817.

Balcells, Laia, Chong Chen, and Costantino Pischedda. 2022. "Do Birds of a Feather Flock Together? Rebel Constituencies and Civil War Alliances." *International Studies Quarterly* 66.

Schubiger, Livia Isabella. 2023. "One for All? State Violence and Insurgent Cohesion." *International Organization* 77: 33–64.

PART IV. Intra-State Conflict

Week 9. Civilian Victimization

Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 6 and 7.

Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2006. "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 100: 429–447.

Condra, Luke N., and Jacob N. Shapiro. 2012. "Who Takes the Blame? The Strategic Effects of Collateral Damage." *American Journal of Political Science* 56: 167–187.

Cohen, Dara Kay. 2013. "Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence." *American Political Science Review* 107: 461–477.

Lyall, Jason, Graeme Blair, and Kosuke Imai. 2013. "Explaining Support for Combatants During Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan." *American Political Science Review* 107: 679–705.

Fjelde, Hanne, and Lisa Hultman. 2014. "Weakening the Enemy: A Disaggregated Study of Violence against Civilians in Africa." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58: 1230–1257.

Stewart, Megan A., and Yu-Ming Liou. 2017. "Do Good Borders Make Good Rebels? Territorial Control and Civilian Casualties." *Journal of Politics* 79: 284–301.

Balcells, Laia. 2017. *Rivalry and Revenge: The Politics of Violence during Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Horowitz, Michael C., Evan Perkoski, and Philip B. K. Potter. 2018. "Tactical Diversity in Militant Violence." *International Organization* 72: 139–171.

Hägerdal, Nils. 2019. "Ethnic Cleansing and the Politics of Restraint: Violence and Coexistence in the Lebanese Civil War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63: 59–84.

Levy, Gabriella. 2022. "Evaluations of Violence at the Polls: Civilian Victimization and Support for Perpetrators After War." *Journal of Politics* 84: 783–797.

Gilbert, Danielle. 2022. "The Logic of Kidnapping in Civil War: Evidence from Colombia." *American Political Science Review* 116(4): 1226–1241.

Aponte González, Andres F., Daniel Hirschel-Burns, and Andres Uribe. 2023. "Contestation, Governance, and the Production of Violence Against Civilians: Coercive Political Order in Rural Colombia." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 68: 616–641.

Onder, Ilayda B. 2025. "How Civilian Loyalties Shape Rebel-Led Victimization of Rebel Constituencies." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 69: 701–730.

Week 10. The Strategy and Psychology of Terrorism

Crenshaw, Martha. 2000. "The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century." *Political Psychology* 21: 405–420.

Pape, Robert. 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *American Political Science Review* 97: 343–361.

Kydd, Andrew, and Barbara Walter. 2006. "The Strategies of Terrorism." *International Security* 31: 49–80.

Abrahms, Max. 2006. "Why Terrorism Does Not Work." *International Security* 31: 42–78.

Abrahms, Max. 2008. "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorist Strategies." *International Security* 32: 78–105.

Piazza, James A. 2008. "A Supply-Side View of Suicide Terrorism: A Cross-National Study." *Journal of Politics* 70: 28–39.

Findley, Michael G., James A. Piazza, and Joseph K. Young. 2012. "Games Rivals Play: Terrorism in International Rivalries." *Journal of Politics* 74: 235–248.

Hegghammer, Thomas. 2013. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting." *American Political Science Review* 107: 1–15.

Wilson, Matthew C., and James A. Piazza. 2013. "Autocracies and Terrorism: Conditioning Effects of Authoritarian Regime Type on Terrorist Attacks." *American Journal of Political Science* 57: 941–955.

Kruglanski, Arie W., Michele J. Gelfand, Jocelyn J. Bélanger, Anna Sheveland, Malkanthi Hetiarachchi, and Rohan Gunaratna. 2014. "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism." *Political Psychology* 35: 69–93.

Polo, Sara M. T., and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2016. "Twisting Arms and Sending Messages: Terrorist Tactics in Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 53(6): 815–829.

Gaibullov, Khusrav, James A. Piazza, and Todd Sandler. 2017. "Regime Types and Terrorism." *International Organization* 71(3): 491–522.

Thomas, Jakana L. 2021. "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing: Assessing the Effects of Gender Norms on the Lethality of Female Suicide Terrorism." *International Organization* 75: 769–802.

Week 11. Rebel Governance

Mampilly, Zachariah Cherian. 2012. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Arjona, Ana, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Mampilly, eds. 2015. *Rebel Governance in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Arjona, Ana. 2016. *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stewart, Megan A. 2018. "Civil War as State-Making: Strategic Governance in Civil War." *International Organization* 72: 205–226.

Gowrinathan, Nimmi, and Zachariah Mampilly. 2019. "Resistance and Repression under the Rule of Rebels: Women, Clergy, and Civilian Agency in LTTE Governed Sri Lanka." *Comparative Politics* 52: 1–20.

Revkin, Mara Redlich. 2020. "What Explains Taxation by Resource-Rich Rebels? Evidence from the Islamic State in Syria." *Journal of Politics* 82: 757–764.

Stewart, Megan A. 2021. *Governing for Revolution: Social Transformation in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mampilly, Zachariah, and Megan A. Stewart. 2021. "A Typology of Rebel Political Institutional Arrangements." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65: 15–45.

Loyle, Cyanne E. 2021. "Rebel Justice During Armed Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65: 108–134.

Revkin, Mara Redlich. 2021. "Competitive Governance and Displacement Decisions under Rebel Rule: Evidence from the Islamic State in Iraq." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65: 46–80.

Martin, Philip A., Giulia Piccolino, and Jeremy S. Speight. 2022. "The Political Legacies of Rebel Rule: Evidence from a Natural Experiment in Côte d'Ivoire." *Comparative Political Studies* 55: 1439–1470.

Loyle, Cyanne E., Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, Reyko Huang, and Danielle F. Jung. 2023. "New Directions in Rebel Governance Research." *Perspectives on Politics* 21: 264–276.

Week 12. Counterinsurgency and Other State Responses

Walter, Barbara F. 1997. "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." *International Organization* 51: 335–364.

Valentino, Benjamin, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay. 2004. "Draining the Sea: Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare." *International Organization* 58: 375–407.

Cunningham, David E. 2006. "Veto Players and Civil War Duration." *American Journal of Political Science* 50: 875–892.

Lyall, Jason. 2009. "Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks? Evidence from Chechnya." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53: 331–362.

Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher. 2011. "Divide and Conquer or Divide and Concede: How Do States Respond to Internally Divided Separatists?" *American Political Science Review* 105: 275–297.

Thomas, Jakana. 2014. "Rewarding Bad Behavior: How Governments Respond to Terrorism in Civil War." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 804–818.

Jordan, Jenna. 2014. "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive Decapitation Strikes." *International Security* 38: 7–38.

Lyall, Jason, Yuki Shiraito, and Kosuke Imai. 2015. "Coethnic Bias and Wartime Informing." *Journal of Politics* 77: 833–848.

Johnston, Patrick B., and Anoop K. Sarbahi. 2016. "The Impact of U.S. Drone Strikes on Terrorism in Pakistan." *International Studies Quarterly* 60: 203–219.

Fisk, Kerstin, Jennifer L. Merolla, and Jennifer M. Ramos. 2019. "Emotions, Terrorist Threat, and Drones: Anger Drives Support for Drone Strikes." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63: 976–1000.

Rigterink, Anouk S. 2021. "The Wane of Command: Evidence on Drone Strikes and Control within Terrorist Organizations." *American Political Science Review* 115: 31–50.

Zhukov, Yuri M. 2023. "Repression Works (Just Not in Moderation)." *Comparative Political Studies* 56: 1663–1694.

Week 13. Paper Presentations

Week 14. Latest Advancements in the Study of Intra-State Conflict

Liu, Shelley. 2024. "Coercive Legacies: From Rebel Governance to Authoritarian Control." *Journal of Politics* 86: 1129–1145.

Loyle, Cyanne E., and Ilayda B. Onder. 2024. "The Legacies of Rebel Rule in Southeast Turkey." *Comparative Political Studies* 57: 1771–1803.

Berman, Chantal, Killian Clarke, and Rima Majed. 2024. "From Victims to Dissidents: Legacies of Violence and Popular Mobilization in Iraq (2003–2018)." *American Political Science Review* 118: 213–234.

Blair, Christopher W. 2024. "The Fortification Dilemma: Border Control and Rebel Violence." *American Journal of Political Science* 68: 1366–1385.

Blair, Christopher W. 2025. "Border Fortification and Legibility: Evidence from Afghanistan." *American Journal of Political Science* 69: 1559–1580.

De Bruin, Erica, Gabriella Levy, Livia Schubiger, and Michael Weintraub. 2025. "Out-Competing Rivals: How Armed Group Governance Shapes Attitudes in Colombia." *American Political Science Review* 119: 1792–1805.

Edgerton, Jared F., Elizabeth L. Brannon, Dagmar Heinze, and Hollie Nyseth Nzitatira. 2025. "Unpacking Gendered Co-Participation in Political Violence: Women Perpetrators of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Krick, Benjamin, Jonathan Petkun, and Mara R. Revkin. 2025. "Civilian Harm and Military Legitimacy in War: Evidence from the Battle of Mosul." *International Organization* 79: 332–357.

Uribe, Andres, and Noah Schouela. 2026. "Opportunistic Rebel Tactics in Civil War: Evidence from Colombia." *Political Science Research and Methods* 14: 124–142.

Onder, Ilayda B. 2026. "Performative Rebel Governance and Legibility: Evidence from Rebel Recruitment in Southeast Turkey." Working paper.

Additional Course Information

Syllabus Changes Policy

This syllabus is subject to change. However, per university policy, the number of assignments, type of assignments, and the percentage each assignment contributes to the final grade will not change. Reading assignments may be adjusted, and the dates of assignments may be modified if necessary. In the event of any changes, students will be given prior written notification (via email or the learning management system).

Academic Dishonesty

Do not cheat. There are more details in the Academic Integrity section, but if you are unsure whether what you are doing is cheating, ask me. I do not tolerate academic dishonesty, and claiming ignorance about what cheating entails will not excuse you from the appropriate consequences.

Technology Support

Technology Services (IT) - Main Campus

Hours: 24/7

Phone: (979) 845-8300

Email: helpdesk@tamu.edu

Call/Chat/Email/Visit: <https://it.tamu.edu/help>

Canvas LMS Technical Support

Hours: 24/7/365

Phone: (877) 354-4821

Email: support@instructure.com

Support is available by clicking the Help button at the far left in the Canvas global navigation menu. Canvas Resources are also linked on the home page of every Canvas course.

University Policies

This section outlines the university-level policies that must be included in each course syllabus. The TAMU Faculty Senate established the wording of these policies.

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in [Student Rule 7](#), or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7](#), Section 7.4.1).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7](#), Section 7.4.2).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" (Section 20.1.2.3, [Student Rule 20](#)).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Texas A&M University is committed to providing safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and work environments for all members of the University community. The University provides equal opportunity to all employees, students, applicants for employment or admission, and the public, regardless of race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status.

Texas A&M University will promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigate and resolve all complaints of discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), complicity, and related retaliation based on a protected class in accordance with [System Regulation 08.01.01](#), [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#), [Standard Administrative Procedure \(SAP\) 08.01.01.M1.01](#), and applicable federal and state laws. In accordance with Title IX and its implementing regulations, Texas A&M does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity, including admissions and employment.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries and complaints regarding the non-discrimination policies: Jennifer M. Smith, TAMU Associate VP & Title IX Coordinator at YMCA Ste 108, College Station, TX 77843, 979-458-8407, or email civilrights@tamu.edu. For other reporting options, visit the [U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights Complaint Assessment System](#) to locate the address and phone number of the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481.

Civil Rights, Free Speech, and Title IX Policies

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit discrimination and harassment based on an individual's race, color, sex, (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other legally protected characteristic. This includes forms of sex-based violence, such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, dating/domestic violence, and stalking.

Students can report discrimination/harassment, access supportive resources, or learn more about their options for resolving complaints on the University's [Civil Rights & Title IX webpage](#).

Students should be aware that all university employees (except medical or mental health providers) are mandatory reporters, which means that if they observe, experience or become aware of an incident that they reasonably believe to be discrimination/harassment alleged to have been committed by or against a person who was a student or employee at the time of the incident, the employee must report the incident to the university.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, contact the [Disability Resources office](#) on your campus (resources listed below). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

To request academic accommodations, contact the designated ADA office based on your location:

- Texas A&M University, College of Nursing, College of Dentistry, Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy College Station, College of Medicine, School of Public Health, Institute

of Biosciences and Technology, EnMed Program, Bush School in Washington DC, Mays Business School – CityCentre, TAMU Engineering Academies, Texas A&M University Higher Education Center at McAllen and Texas A&M University at Galveston should contact Disability Resources at (979) 845-1637 or disability@tamu.edu.

- Texas A&M University School of Law should contact the Office of Student Affairs at (817) 212-4111 or law-disability@law.tamu.edu to request accommodations.
- Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy in Kingsville should contact the Disability Resource Center at Texas A&M University-Kingsville at (361) 593-3024 or drc.center@tamuk.edu to request accommodations.
- Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences in Canyon should contact the Office of Student Accessibility at West Texas A&M University – Canyon at (806) 651-2335 or osa@wtamu.edu.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your approved accommodations, contact the office responsible for approving your accommodations or the Texas A&M ADA Coordinator Julie Kuder at ADA.Coordinator@tamu.edu or (979) 458-8407.

Pregnancy Accommodations

Texas A&M provides reasonable accommodations to students due to pregnancy and/or related conditions, such as childbirth, recovery, and lactation. Students should contact the University's Pregnancy Coordinator as soon as they become aware of the need for accommodation. Depending on the circumstances, accommodations could include extended time to complete assignments or exams, changes in course sequence, or modifications to the physical classroom environment.

Texas A&M will also allow a voluntary leave of absence, ensure the availability of lactation space, and maintain grievance procedures to provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of sex discrimination. For information regarding pregnancy accommodations, email TIX.Pregnancy@tamu.edu.

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors influencing a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care practices by utilizing the resources and services available through [University Health Services](#). The [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) provides access to professional counseling in multiple languages anytime, anywhere by phone or chat, and the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) offers 24-hour emergency support at 988 or 988lifeline.org.

Texas A&M College Station

Students needing a listening ear can contact University Health Services at 979.458.4584. Call 911 or visit your nearest emergency room if you are currently experiencing a life-threatening situation or if your safety is at risk. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) or at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).

Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records, and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings.

Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items can do so within howdy.tamu.edu using the Directory Information Withholding Form. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR, or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees, honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location, and medical residence specialization.

College and Department Policies

Department Statement on Course Content

As a department, we are committed to scholarly rigor, open inquiry, and the scientific study of politics. Political science, as an academic discipline, seeks to understand the political world through systematic analysis, empirical evidence, and theoretical frameworks—not through partisan or ideological advocacy.

In our courses, you may encounter readings, data, or arguments that challenge your assumptions or present perspectives from across the political spectrum. These materials are included not as endorsements of any viewpoint, but because they help illuminate how political questions can be analyzed, debated, and understood through evidence-based inquiry.

Our goal is to help you develop the skills to evaluate claims critically, identify assumptions and limitations, and engage constructively with competing arguments. We value respectful, rigorous discussion and welcome questions about how knowledge in political science is produced, contested, and applied.

If you have concerns about course content or the framing of particular materials, we encourage you to discuss them with your professors in class or during office hours. By fostering a learning environment grounded in intellectual curiosity and academic integrity, we aim to prepare students to think analytically, argue persuasively, and engage in political debate with both openness and rigor.

Department Statement on Classroom Community and Respect

In this course, every voice in the classroom contributes valuable perspectives to our discussions. All students and the instructor are expected to:

- respect the experiences, beliefs, and values that each person brings to our learning community,
- engage in thoughtful, reasoned discussion while refraining from derogatory comments about individuals, cultures, groups, or viewpoints,
- treat each other with respect and use respectful language in all interactions,
- foster a learning and scholarly environment that is open, respectful, and welcoming to all individuals.

Free Speech and Civil Discourse

Texas A&M recognizes that the pursuit of truth through open and robust discourse is critical to academic inquiry. However, as a community of scholars, the university has an aspirational expectation that such discourse will be conducted in accordance with Aggie Core Values. In this “marketplace of ideas,” we encourage civil dialogue creating an environment that allows individuals to express their ideas and to have their ideas challenged in respectful and responsible ways. Students can learn more about Freedom of Expression and Free Speech on the [University’s website](#) about the [First Amendment](#).

AI Statement

With the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, the ways in which we define our creative processes continue to transform. AI generators are rapidly evolving from simple editing for grammatical errors and spelling mistakes (Grammarly, MS Word Spell Check) to sophisticated text production (ChatGPT, Google Bard, etc.), as well as image, computer code, and audio generation. The presence of such tools, however, does not replace our need to learn how to draft, revise, and reflect on texts, programs, drawings and how to exercise information literacy and personal responsibility in how we locate, evaluate, incorporate, and cite primary/secondary sources. For example, the Association for Writing Across the Curriculum states the following:

Writing to learn is an intellectual activity that is crucial to the cognitive and social development of learners and writers. This vital activity cannot be replaced by AI language generators (AWAC).

Engaging in the various aspects of creative pursuits (e.g., writing) is critical to education in a broad sense. While AI technologies will continue shaping how we approach these creative tasks, the critical work of creativity relies on integrity, originality, and ethical conduct in regard to appropriate representation as an author or creator. Thus, submitting work with a significant percentage of AI-generated content, unless otherwise permitted, can be considered academic misconduct under Texas A&M University Student Rule 20. Students must therefore cite the use of Generative AI tools and document what they have contributed to an assignment.