

POLS-257: POLITICS OF VIOLENCE

Fall 2020

Prof.: Dr. Hernán Flom

Course description

This survey course in comparative political analysis will examine how state and non-state actors use violence to assert (or challenge) authority, impose order or ignite conflict -or both at the same time. The course will focus on how and why violence emerges, examining phenomena such as civil wars, revolutions, contentious politics and criminal governance. This course is methodologically focused and is part of the two-course foundational sequence in comparative politics. Students may choose to take one or both courses in the comparative politics sequence and in whichever order.

Class structure

We will meet twice each week, unless otherwise specified. On Moodle you will be able to find a brief (1-2 page) overview highlighting each week's main themes, some discussion questions, and connections with the previous sessions. I will also occasionally post short online lectures to go over the main concepts and arguments.

I expect you to come prepared for each session. That means doing the readings, watching the lecture video, going over the overview, and preparing questions and comments. Our meeting is intended to be a discussion, not a lecture. Please note I will call upon you to go over what you wrote in the forum or to get your take on a given matter.

Course schedule

Wednesday and Friday, 10-11:40. This class will be taught remotely.

Office hours: Wednesday 3 – 5pm and by appointment

POLICY

Many of our discussions will touch sensitive topics, either directly or indirectly. We are bound to think differently on these topics. No one in this class has a monopoly on opinion or reason; that includes the professor. Everyone should be respectful and considerate of others' opinions and points of view. That means letting people express themselves without interrupting or responding in an offensive or derogatory manner. Please do let me know, either in session or in a private discussion, if you sense that I (or any other student) violate this agreement.

Assignments and grading

- Attendance and class participation (20%): Participation is a vital component of the class. You are expected to attend all class meetings and engage in class discussions. Informed, active class participation is a requirement of the course. Read carefully; take notes; come prepared to discuss and participate. You will be graded on both the quality and quantity of your contributions. Listen and respond to others with respect. If you disagree with something someone has said, reply respectfully, and with evidence, to

support your counterargument. I will call on students to answer questions so make sure you come prepared.

- Two research proposals (25%): working in groups of up to three students, you will have to choose two topics and prepare a research proposal that:
 - Identifies how the assigned texts and broader literature discuss a given topic (what are the research questions posed, arguments made, methodologies adopted, evidence used, etc.)
 - Propose an alternative research question to study these topics in a different context
 - Present a research design that could potentially answer these questions
 - Identify potential data sources and how you could collect/access such data
 - NOTE: I will topics randomly at the beginning of the semester. Students will have to send their research designs via mail before the last day when we discuss the topic and should be ready to present their research proposal in class that day.
- Mid-term (25%)
 - Will include everything we have seen in class up to that point. All material in the syllabus is fair game, even if we had not extensively discussed it in the sessions.
- Final exam (30%)
 - Students will be evaluated on the entirety of the course, with a focus on the topics we have seen after the mid-term.

Work outside class

Students are expected to spend 11 to 13 hours per week working on this course outside the classroom.

Late policy

Barring an extraordinary excuse, late written assignments will be marked down one third of a grade (e.g., A to A-) per day.

Grading Standards

Grading Scale: A= 95-100% A-= 90-94% B+= 85-89% B= 80-84% B-= 75-79%
 C+= 70-74% C= 65-69% C-= 60-64% D= 55-59% D-= 50-54% F= < 50%

To get...	
A	Exceptional work. Demonstrates superb understanding of the course material <i>and</i> outstanding critical thinking and analytic rigor. Goes beyond simply answering the prompt to craft a creative and insightful analysis. Communicates information in a clear and concise manner.
B	Good work. Demonstrates a strong grasp of course material and good analytic rigor, but with some errors (e.g. faulty assumptions in logic or some incorrect descriptions of an author's argument). Solid work, but not the most original or insightful analysis.

C	Mediocre work. Applies some course material and themes but demonstrates considerable misunderstanding of material. Difficult to discern the student’s argument and the logic supporting this argument.
D	Poor work. May attempt to apply some course materials and themes but demonstrates very serious errors or misunderstanding of course material. The student doesn’t appear to have any argument. Shows little effort.
F	Very poor work. Assignment fails to address the prompt and guidelines. Reflects a lack of effort.

Academic integrity

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates and to share sources. You should ensure, however, that any work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research/writing and reflects your own approach to the topic. You also must cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. The College’s guidelines on academic integrity and plagiarism are detailed in the “Intellectual Honesty” section of the Student Handbook available at <https://www.trincoll.edu/SiteCollectionDocuments/StudentHandbook.pdf>. You should familiarize yourselves with these principles and understand that those found in violation of the Trinity College Student Integrity Contract are subject to a range of penalties, including suspension or expulsion. The minimum penalty for plagiarism in this class is the failure of the course. Finally, if you have received any help with your writing (feedback, etc.), you must acknowledge this assistance in a footnote at the beginning of your assignment.

Accommodations for students with disability

Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me during the first two weeks of the semester or a minimum of 10 days prior to needing your accommodations. Please be sure to meet with me privately to discuss implementation.

If you do not have approved accommodations, but have a disability requiring academic accommodations, or have questions about applying, please contact Lori Clapis, Coordinator of Accessibility Resources at 860-297-4025 or at Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu.

Virtual classroom etiquette

In these challenging times, I am committed to offer you the best learning environment possible. However, this requires your collaboration too. Out of respect to your fellow students and me, please

- Be on time.
- Dress appropriately.
- Find an appropriate place to take the meeting. You should be sitting on a desk or table, not your bed.
- Make sure your background is professional and work appropriate (if this is not possible, you may use a virtual background).
- Always leave your video on.

- Avoid interruptions during the meeting.
- Make sure everyone can see you and hear you clearly when you are speaking.
- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Leave your keyboard alone. Please, if you need to take notes during class discussions, do so on a notebook.
- Resist the urge to text or check your phone unless instructed to do so as part of the activity (students who do so will be marked absent).
- Don't eat during the meeting; drinking is allowed but please do so quietly.

Finding me: I will conduct office hours remotely and by appointment. I encourage you to come to office hours even if you don't have specific questions or concerns. Please, sign up for office hours here:

Also, feel free to email me with any questions, concerns, or feedback; I will try to return your email within 24 hours (business days).

Required readings

All readings will be available in electronic form on the course Moodle site.

Thanks for your attention! Looking forward to a great semester ☺

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1. Introduction: Are violence and the state inseparable? (September 9 & 11)

Olson, Mancur. "Dictatorship, democracy, and development." *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 567-576.

Tilly, Charles. "War making and state making as organized crime." In Evans, Peter, Dietrich Rueschmeyer and Theda Skocpol. *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Kalyvas, Stathis, Ian Shapiro and Tarek E. Masoud, Introduction: integrating the study of order, conflict and violence, in Kalyvas, Stathis N., Ian Shapiro, and Tarek E. Masoud, eds. *Order, conflict, and violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Suggested resource: Ezra Klein Podcast Episode with Ta-Nehisi Coates

PART I: STATE VIOLENCE

Week 2: Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes (September 16 & 18)

Arendt, Hannah. *The origins of totalitarianism*. Vol. 244. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1973, chapters 12 (Totalitarianism in Power) and 13 (Ideology and Terror), pp. 389-482.

Linz, Juan. *Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000, pp. 65-114, especially section on "Excursus on Terror".

Gerlach, Christian and Nicholas Werth. "State violence – violent societies," in Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds. *Beyond totalitarianism: Nazism and Stalinism compared*. Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. 133-180.

Recommended films: *First they killed my father* (Jolie, 2017); *Hannah Arendt* (von Trotta, 2012)

Week 3: Genocide and ethnic cleansing (September 23 & 25)

Mann, Michael. *The dark side of democracy: explaining ethnic cleansing*. Cambridge University Press, 1999. Chapter 4 ("Genocidal democracies in the New World", pp. 70-98).

Straus, Scott. "Political Science and Genocide," in *Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*.

Straus, Scott. *The order of genocide: race, power and war in Rwanda*. Chapters 5 and 6.

Suggested films: *The act of killing/A look of silence* (Oppenheimer, 2014); *Hotel Rwanda* (George, 2004)

Week 4: Structural, sexual and racial violence (September 30, October 2)

Farmer, Paul. "On suffering and structural violence: A view from below." *Daedalus* 125, no. 1 (1996): 261-283.

Wood, Elizabeth J. "Sexual violence during war: toward an understanding of variation," in Kalyvas, Stathis N., Ian Shapiro, and Tarek E. Masoud, eds. *Order, conflict, and violence*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. 321-352.

Cohen, Dara Kay. "Explaining rape during Civil War: Cross-National evidence (1980-2009)", *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 461-477. August 2013.

Week 5: State violence in democratic contexts (October 7 & 9)

Arias, Enrique D. and Daniel M. Goldstein. "Violent pluralism: understanding the new democracies of Latin America," in Arias, Enrique D., and Daniel M. Goldstein. *Violent democracies in Latin America*. Duke University Press, 2010.

Fassin, Didier. *Enforcing order: An ethnography of urban policing*. Polity, 2013. Chapters 3 and 4.

Wilkinson, Steven I. *Votes and violence: Electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. Chapters 1 and 5.

Suggested film: 13th (Documentary by Ava DuVernay, 2017)

PART II: ANTI-STATE VIOLENCE

Week 6: Civil wars (October 14 & 16)

Fearon, James and David Laitin. "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war." *American Political Science Review*, 97(1): 75-90, 2003.

Collier, Paul and Anke Hoefler. "Greed and grievance in civil war." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, 563-595, 2004.

Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The logic of violence in civil war*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. Introduction (pp. 1-14); Chapter 1 (pp. 16-23); Chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 146-209).

Week 7: Revolutions (October 21 & 23)

Goldstone, Jack. *Revolutions: a very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2014. Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Skocpol, Theda. *States and social revolutions: A comparative analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge University Press, 1979. Chapter 1 (pp. 3-43), pp. 155-157, pp. 282-283, Conclusion (pp. 284-293)

Goodwin, Jeff. *No other way out: states and revolutionary movements, 1945-1991*. Cambridge University Press, 2001. Chapter 1, Chronology of Central America (pp. 137-141) and Chapter 6.

Week 8: Terrorism and insurgence (October 28 & 30)

Shapiro, Jacob N. *The terrorist's dilemma: Managing violent covert organizations*. Princeton University Press, 2013. Introduction (pp. 3-26) and one assigned chapter (Al-Qaeda (Ch. 4), Irish Republican Army (Ch. 7) or Palestine (Ch. 8))

Weinstein, Jeremy M. *Inside rebellion: The politics of insurgent violence*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. Introduction (pp. 4-16), Chapters 1 and 6.

PART III: PARA-STATE VIOLENCE

Week 9: States, the illicit and criminal governance (November 4 & 6)

Campana, Paolo, and Federico Varese. "Organized crime in the United Kingdom: Illegal governance of markets and communities." *The British Journal of Criminology* 58, no. 6 (2018): 1381-1400.

Enrique Desmond Arias, *Criminal Enterprises and Governance in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press, 2016. Chapter 1 (pp. 19-38)

Auyero, Javier, and Katherine Sobering. *The Ambivalent State: Police-Criminal Collusion at the Urban Margins*. Oxford University Press, 2019. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. Class will be divided into two groups, with each group focusing on 2 chapters.

Suggested films: *City of God* (Salles, 2002); *Cartel Land* (Heineman, 2015)

Week 10: Epilogue (November 11 & 13)

Pinker, Steven. *The better angels of our nature: Why violence has declined*. Penguin Group USA, 2012. Chapter 9 ("Better angels").

Gray, John. "Steven Pinker is wrong about violence and war." *The Guardian*, March 13, 2015.