PO3720: Political Violence

Department of Political Science
Convenor: Liam Kneafsey

Michaelmas term: Tuesday 9–10am, Lloyd Building LB08; Tuesday 1–2pm, Arts 2037
Tutorials (fortnightly): Monday 11am, Tuesday 3pm, Wednesday 10am, Wednesday 11am
Office-hours: TBA
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Overview

MONSTERS EXIST, BUT THEY ARE TOO FEW IN NUMBER TO BE TRULY DANGEROUS. MORE DANGEROUS ARE THE COMMON MEN, THE FUNCTIONARIES READY TO BELIEVE AND TO ACT WITHOUT ASKING QUESTIONS, LIKE EICHMANN.

Primo Levi

If Levi’s description of the killer’s banality is accurate, it follows that ordinary people can – under certain circumstances – act in an inexplicably violent way. This evident contradiction in the nature of political violence exerted a tenacious grip on the observers of Eichmann’s trial, who raised a set of question about the general nature of political violence. How, and to what end, is violence practiced? When do political actors resort to violence over a peaceful solution to conflict? Why are some societies prone to political violence, while others are not? Why do individuals participate in collective violence? How, if at all, do the perpetrators of political violence justify their actions? And how, and under what conditions, does violence end? In the first semester, we examine the theoretical response to these questions in the scholarship on civil wars. In the second semester, we apply this theoretical framework to an empirical examination of political violence in a range of periods and settings, including Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Syria, Ireland, Sierra Leone, and others.

Course Content

The course is structured around a set of lectures (see above), and a set of tutorials that take place every fortnight (likely start Week 3; students should be automatically assigned to a group this year). The purpose of the lectures is not to provide a review of the literature of each week, but rather to invite students to think about the subject material from a variety of perspectives. It is imperative that students complete the assigned readings for each week (marked with an asterisk); the lectures are ‘participatory’, in the sense that the opinion of students is sought directly and consistently from the opening to end of the lecture.

Course Assessment

The course is examined by a combination of continuous assessment (two essays that each count for 12.5%) and an end-of-year exam (75%). One-term visiting students must complete two essays (see below for guidelines). Two-term students visiting students must fulfill the same requirements as regular students.

Essays

Students must write two essays each worth 12.5%. The first essay is due at 12pm on Friday, November 24, 2017. The second essay is due at 12pm on Friday, March 23, 2018. The cohort of ‘one term’ students – who, most commonly, are part of the Erasmus programme – must write two essays, which are due at 12pm on Friday, November 24, 2017 (Essay 1) and at 12pm on Friday, December 1 2017 (Essay 2), respectively. In Hilary term, one-term students must submit on at 12pm on Friday, March 23, 2017 (Essay

1 This course is inspired by and adapted from the previous Political Violence module developed by Dr. Shane Mac Giollabhuí. I am indebted to him for his help in putting this syllabus together.
1) and at 12pm on Friday, March 30 2017 (Essay 2). An essay should not exceed 2,000 words in length. Any standard font is acceptable. Please use the standard citation procedures. If you are unsure of these, consult the Style Manual for Political Science, revised edition (1993), or The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th edition (1993). Alternatively, examine any major Political Science journal. On other matters of style, please consult


If a student writes an essay that is more than 10% above the word limit, penalties will be applied. Please provide the word count at the beginning of each essay. All late work, unless excused in advance by the course lecturer, or justified by medical certificate or tutors note, will be penalized at a rate of five per cent per day. It is best to let the lecturer/TA know as soon as possible if there will be an issue in submitting the paper on time. It is much easier to resolve issues if they are brought up pre-submission date and often alternative arrangements can be made. Under no circumstances will work be accepted after the set work has been marked and handed back to other students, or after the end of Trinity term. Essays must be submitted through Turnitin.com.

Turnitin Submission:
Michaelmas Term, Essay 1 and 2; Class ID: 15891660; password, fosterplace.
Hilary Term, Essay 1 and 2; Class ID: 15891696; password, fosterplace.

Please also consult with Undergraduate Handbook to familiarize yourself with the marking scheme used and Trinity and what is expected to attain each grade. You might also want to look at the undergraduate handbook for advice on how to write your essay and what is expected:
http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/undergraduate/module-outlines/

Plagiarism: when you write your essay, please take care to cite appropriately the source material of your work.

- All students are required to complete an online tutorial on online plagiarism called ‘ready, steady, write’ (http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/ready-steady-write)
- All students must sign a declaration that they have completed this course when submitting their essay.
- For a comprehensive guide about the different type of plagiarism, please read the University’s plagiarism policy here (http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/levels-and-consequences)

2 These 2,000 words are inclusive of notes and appendices and exclusive of bibliography.
W1: Course Introduction

Morning:

Afternoon:

General – Good Background Texts

Week 2: Greed and Grievance in Civil War

Morning: Greed

Afternoon: Grievance

General:
Gurr, Ted. On Relative Deprivation
Week 3: Why would Ethnic Groups Rebel?

Morning: Primordialism
*Hutchinson, John and Anthony D. Smith (eds.) Ethnicity. Oxford University Press, 1996. Please read: Chapter 5 (Weber), Chapter 6 (Geertz), Chapter 12 (Barth), Chapter 7 (Eller and Coughlin) and Chapter 9 (Van den Berghe). Copies available on BlackBoard.

Afternoon: Questioning Primordialism

General:
James D. Fearon. 1999. “What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?” Unpublished, available online at the author’s personal website.
Horowitz 1985 Ethnic Groups in Conflict

Week 4: Why do Ethnic Groups Rebel?

Morning: Constructivism
* Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 1996. Explaining Interethnic Cooperation. American Political Science Review, 90, 4, 715-735. (Quite technical in the middle section but persist!)

Afternoon: Conditional Ethnic Conflict

General


**Week 5: How do Perpetrators Organize an Insurgency?**

**Morning: The Role of Civilians in Civil Conflict**


**Afternoon: The Industrial Organisation of Violence**


**General:**


**W6: The Etiology of Homicide in Civil War**

**Morning:**


**Afternoon:**


**General:**


Week 8: The Etiology of Rape in Civil War

Morning:

Afternoon:

General:


Week 9: The Psychological Foundations of Violence – How and why do participants engage in, and justify violence?

Morning:

Afternoon:

General:


**Week 10: How, and under what (structural) conditions, does violence end?**

**Morning:** Third Parties and Credible Commitments


**Afternoon:** Partition as a Solution?


**General:**


**W11: Do actors matter in the ending of violence?**

**Morning:** Cohesion and Conflict Resolution


**Afternoon:** The Spoiler Problem


**General:**


Week 12: Course Overview