Political violence manifests itself at all levels of social organization. “War” is today the least important contemporary manifestation of political violence, which implicates non-state armed groups, inter-communal conflicts, state violence, large-scale criminal-political violence, rebellions, localized struggles, and acts of terror. This research seminar will examine the global distribution of armed violence, and develop different inter-disciplinary approaches to explaining contemporary violence in different cases and contexts.

Introduction

The first part of the course will examine issues such as the definition of “violence,” the “new wars” debate, contemporary warlordism, communal conflicts, non-state armed groups, genocidal violence and state violence. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and in each case, a mix of conceptual and empirical material will be introduced, in order to expose students to a wide range of examples (and possible research paper topics). The last part of the course will be devoted to presentations and discussions of student's research papers, which should explore one of the themes of the course in a focused research case study.

Full participation is expected of all students in the seminar. This includes having read the required readings, and being prepared to discuss them critically. Final grades will in large part be determined by the level and quality of seminar participation, by presentations that will be scheduled according to the number of students in the seminar, and by the critique each student offers of one other student's draft research paper.

Note: in order to take this seminar you must have either taken “Contemporary Issues in Conflict and Security” or have received my permission to enrol.
Assignments

The first assignment is a short “literature review” of the readings for the first week. It is due 7 March, at the beginning of the seminar.

The main focus of this seminar is on the individual research paper, which will account for 50 percent of your final grade. A draft of the paper must be presented during the scheduled “political violence conference,” which will be scheduled for a full day (or 1.5 days if necessary) during the week of May 23-28. I will provide comments on the paper, but no grade. If you do not present a draft on the scheduled date, you will receive a zero grade on the research paper. In other words, although the draft itself receives no grade, if you do not present one in class you will fail the course. A final grade will be given to the final, revised draft, which is due on Monday, 3 June.

Each student will also be responsible for presenting and critiquing one other student’s paper; this will form part of their final grade.

The research paper must be an empirically-grounded, theoretically-informed, exploration of a particular case study or set of cases relevant to the theme of this course. It cannot be a mere review of theoretical literature, or simply a narrative account of a particular case. It must have an argument, a conceptual framework, an empirical “field” (case or cases, or data, etc.), and a coherent research strategy or method. Case studies that examine a particular theme in the context of recent or current violence and armed conflict (Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Algeria, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Nigeria, Nepal, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Guatemala, Cambodia, Colombia, Mexico, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, the Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela, Nicaragua, etc.) are particularly welcome, but the analysis is not restricted to war or post-conflict states.

Grades will be distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>literature review (first week’s readings, 5 pages, due 7 March)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seminar participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research paper (approximately 30 pages)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper critique</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students will be free to choose the topic for their research paper, although it must be determined in consultation with me.

Readings

The course readings are not introductory-level, and presume some familiarity with main approaches to violence and conflict studies. The required readings will be made available in a “kit” or polycopie that must be ordered through the ‘imprimerie minute’. Needless to say, you must do the readings every week in order to participate in (or do well in) the course. Other readings may be added as we go along.

There are a number of good journals that treat the themes in this course. Among some you might find useful would be:

Journal of Conflict Resolution
Finally, some sessions of the seminar will have to be rescheduled to accommodate some unavoidable commitments on my part. I will provide as much warning as possible for this.

Introduction: “Violence” and “The Political” (February 21)


No class 28 February

*(take this week to write a short paper on the first week’s readings. The question is: “Is political violence an essentially contested concept? Why or why not?”)*

The Ontology of Violence (March 7)


**No Class 14 March**

*(take this week to develop a short (2 page) outline of your proposed topic, research question or puzzle, and bibliography)*

**The Changing Face of War and the “New Wars” Debate** (March 21)

Stathis Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?” *World Politics*, 54 (October 2001), 99-118.

**Identity and Communal Conflicts** (March 28)


**Warlordism** (April 4)


Violence and Terror (April 11)


Adrian Guelke, The Age of Terrorism, 1-17, 143-161.


Various documents on Al-Qaeda.


Mass Killing and Genocidal Violence (April 18)


Non-state Armed Groups (May 2)


Violence and the State: Latin America (May 9)


Violence and the State: Southeast Asia (May 16)


**Weeks 11-13**

The last sessions will be devoted to presentations of the research paper drafts, and will be organized in a “conference panel format” on one full day (or 1.5 days, if necessary) during the week of May 23-28.
Suggested Readings

Introduction: “Violence” and “Political”


The Ontology of Violence

Halperin, Eran, Canetti-Nisim Daphna, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoeﬂer, ‘The central Role of group Based Hatred as an Emotional Antecedent of Political Intolerance: Case of Israel,’ *Political Psychology*, 30: 1 (2009), 93-123.


The Changing Face of War and the “New Wars” Debate


Mello, Patrick A. ‘In search of New Wars: the debate about the transformation of war,’ *European Journal of International Relations*, 16:2 (2010), 297-309.


**Identity and Communal Conflicts**


Warlordism


Violence and Terror


Mass Killing and Genocidal Violence


Ramadan Adam, 'Destroying Nahr el-Bared: Sovereignty and Urbicide in the space of exception,' *Political Geography*, 28 (2009), 153-163.


**Non-state Armed Groups**


Williams, Phil. 'From the Middle Ages to a new Dark Age: The Decline of the State and US Strategy,' Paper Prepared for the Strategic Studies Institute (2008).


**Violence and the State: Latin America**


Violence and the State: Southeast Asia


Hastings, Justin, V. ‘Illicit flows in the Hong Kong-China-Taiwan Triangle,’ Issues & Studies 45:2 (June 2009), 185-220.