Civil Wars: From Frontline Combat to Backroom Diplomacy
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

IGA-228, Spring 2017
M/W 8:45-10:00 a.m., Littauer 130

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Course Description

This course explores major debates about civil wars, including insurgency/counter-insurgency and the operations of terrorist groups. We will focus on three clusters of topics: underlying causes and the path to the onset of hostilities; conduct of civil war – including the recruitment of fighters, violence against civilians, military engagements between armed rivals, and foreign intervention; and termination of conflict and the transition to a post-war political system. Students will become familiar with the methodological approaches and findings of established and emerging new social scientific research on conflict, as well as policy studies. Pairing this research with case studies of the trajectories of specific armed groups and conflicts – from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during the Second World War to Jebhat al-Nusra in Syria today – students will develop the analytical skills necessary to answer complex questions about civil wars in a policy setting. For each of the course’s three topic clusters, we will identify common policy-making assumptions and assess their evidentiary basis. By the end of the course, students will be able to effectively communicate and present policy recommendations, on both trans-national issue areas and individual civil wars.

Course Requirements

Grades will be determined on the basis of:

1. In-class participation (20%): Attendance at every class meeting, for the full length of the class, is required and expected. Class participation is not an attendance grade, but instead reflects active participation during class, including asking questions and grappling with arguments, concepts and evidence.

The course assistant will keep a record of participation for each class session, according to the following rubric: 2 points for participation that is active and thoughtful (i.e., makes an original comment or ask a pertinent question about the course material); 1 point for brief participation (i.e.,
answers a short question); 0 points for no participation or if absent. In order to receive full credit for participation, students need to earn at least 24 points, which is the equivalent of earning 2 participation points approximately every other class session. If you were unable to participate in the discussion and would like to pose a question or make a comment, please do so within 24 hours of the end of the class in the “Discussions” section of the course website; comments and questions posted there within the specified time frame will be counted in the calculation of your class participation grade as well.

Active participation necessitates completion of the required reading prior to the class meeting. If you are not present in class, you are unable participate and, as a result, will receive no participation credit for that class. I will drop your two lowest class participation grades in the calculation of your final grade in the course.

2. **Group presentation** (20%): Students will be divided into small groups at the beginning of the semester (approximately 2-3 people per group, depending on class size). Starting on February 1, each class meeting (with the exception of days with guest speakers) will begin with one group giving a presentation on the topic of the day. The presentation should feature three important points or questions to help generate discussion. These presentations are not a summary of the readings; highlighting questions or critiques that cut across themes in several readings, or that relate the readings to other relevant course concepts are strongly encouraged. In addition, the presentation and discussion questions should address some of the policy implications of the readings.

The presentation can include a short exploration of a relevant case. The use of multimedia material is strongly encouraged. For example, groups may wish to distribute a news article or to screen a brief video that might inspire a debate in the class. Students will be responsible for presenting a number of times (probably about twice, depending on class size) throughout the semester. Presentation dates will be assigned at the beginning of the course. In addition to the oral presentation, each group should prepare a Powerpoint slide summarizing each of the lecture’s readings. Within 24 hours of your presentation, please email your reading slides to Melissa Kappotis so that they can be posted on the course website as a resource for all students in the course. The presentation slides are due to me by at least 24 hours prior to the day of the presentation. Each student’s grade on the presentations will be based in part on evaluations by the other members of the group.

3. **Short policy memo assignment** (20%): A short policy memo (5 pp.*) on a civil war with which the student is unfamiliar. The assignment and instructions about submission of the memo will be distributed by February 8 (one month in advance). In accordance with HKS policy, consultation and collaboration with other students are both strictly prohibited, and all rules of attribution apply, including but not limited to providing complete and correct citations to others’ work.
4. **Long policy memo assignment (40%)**: A long policy memo (10 pp.*) and supporting annotated bibliography on the civil war that the student selected at the beginning of the semester. The assignment and instructions about submission of the memo will be distributed by March 20. In accordance with HKS policy, consultation and collaboration with other students are both strictly prohibited, and all rules of attribution apply, including but not limited to providing complete and correct citations to others’ work.

* Both memos must be double-spaced in 12 pt Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance**
This course requires that you manage your time well, keep track of the assigned readings and, most importantly, attend and participate actively in every class session. Plan your schedule around the class meeting, including avoidable conflicts, such as doctor’s appointments or interviews. There are no “excused absences” per se; however, as noted above, your lowest two participation grades will be dropped. If you will be absent for a total of two full weeks or more over the course of the semester due to non-emergency and/or avoidable reasons (including vacations, travel or training), you may be ineligible to take this course. Please let me know in the first week of the course if you have planned an extended absence.

**Late/missed assignments**
Deadlines listed in the syllabus are firm, in the interest of fairness to all students. Extensions for assignments and/or makeup exams will not be granted except in cases of serious illness, family emergency or religious observance (see below). Papers will lose one third of a letter grade for each 24 hours or portion thereof that they are handed in late (i.e. an A– becomes a B+, etc.).

**Academic integrity**
Plagiarism and cheating are unacceptable and will be pursued to the full extent of the University’s policies in accordance with the HKS Academic Code. Providing proper citations in your writing is necessary and expected. If you have any questions about what constitutes a correct citation, it is your responsibility to seek guidance prior to submitting the assignment. As stated in the Academic Code, *in all writing, you must put any words that are not your own between quotation marks*. You must also attribute any ideas that are not your own to the source from which you derived them. **All suspected violations will be reported to the Associate Dean of Students.** I may make use of anti-plagiarism software, both to detect and to confirm suspected plagiarized writing. For further information on academic integrity at HKS, please consult [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/degrees/registrar/procedures/integrity](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/degrees/registrar/procedures/integrity).

**Grading**
Students are encouraged to consult with me during office hours about questions on an assignment before handing it in. In the event of a low grade on an assignment, you will not be allowed to rewrite or to resubmit the assignment for an improved grade except in rare – and extraordinary – circumstances. If you have faced an extraordinary circumstance that resulted in a lower grade on
an assignment and would like the opportunity to resubmit that assignment, you must contact me within one week of receiving your assignment grade. If you believe that there was an error in the calculation of a grade, you may submit a re-grading request. All such requests must be submitted to me in writing, along with a memo explaining where you believe an error was made. If you elect to have an assignment re-graded, please be aware that this may result in a lower final grade on the assignment.

**Religious observance**
Students may ask for reasonable and timely accommodations for religious observances. Please review the syllabus closely to determine if religious obligations will present scheduling conflicts with any of the assignments. Students must inform me of any such conflicts within the first two weeks of the semester.

**Accommodations**
In compliance with Harvard University policy, I will provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Please provide your accommodations paperwork to me as soon as you have it available, within the first two weeks of the semester. For further information, please see the HKS Student Disability Coordinator.

**Laptops and other electronic devices:** Surfing the web, checking your email or social media, and sending messages during class distract you and your fellow students. If you choose to take notes on your computer during class, please disconnect your wireless access. Please also refrain from using cell phones and other mobile devices except in case of emergency. Violations of this policy may result in a reduction in your class participation grade or in a ban of laptop use in class. Note that research has found that students absorb class material better when taking notes by hand than when using a computer.

**Communication**
Email should generally be used for brief questions only. I will respond to emails within 24 hours. Should you need to contact me regarding an urgent matter, please make a note of this in the subject line and cc Melissa Kappotis. In-person discussion is far preferable to email, so you should plan to attend office hours for any questions relating to course content or assignments (see below).

**Office Hours**
I encourage you to come to my office hours with any questions or comments. I hold weekly office hours on Wednesdays from 4:00-6:00 p.m. Students must sign up for a time slot in advance online, at [https://calendly.com/schulhofer-wohl/15min](https://calendly.com/schulhofer-wohl/15min). Please be sure to cancel your reserved time if you cannot come so that it can be made available to another student.

**Course website**
Students should direct any questions or concerns about the course website and its content – including any difficulties accessing the reading – to Melissa Kappotis (melissa_kappotis@hks.harvard.edu). Cross-registered students from other universities should have full access to course readings and materials. If you are unable to access course materials, please contact Melissa Kappotis as soon as possible.
Writing in this course
As someone engaged in policy-relevant research, you will need to communicate your ideas – often in written form – to a variety of audiences, including policymakers, the public, academic researchers, NGOs and grant agencies. Being able to write effectively is essential to your success in this course and to your future career. For all course assignments, you can avail yourself of the many resources at HKS to receive help with and feedback on your writing. These resources include the HKS library reference desk and the writing consultants (http://shorensteincenter.org/students/communications-program/writing-consultants). As a policy, I will not read or provide written comments on rough drafts, but I will provide verbal feedback, during office hours, about your ideas prior to the deadline.

Extra credit
An enormous number of events relevant to this course will take place over the course of the semester, both around HKS and the University. One weekly event is the International Security Program’s Brown Bag Seminar at the Belfer Center (Thursdays, 12:15-2:00pm). In this seminar series, scholars present their ongoing research on a range of topics related to international security. To encourage you to attend, you can earn one point on your final course grade for attending a meeting of the seminar and emailing the course assistant a 250-word reaction/critique of the speaker’s talk. You may earn up to three points total by attending the seminar and submitting written reactions. If you intend to take advantage of this opportunity, please send all reactions by Monday, May 1.

Auditing
Students who are participants in HKS programs may audit this course, with prior permission only. Auditors will only be admitted to the course if there is room after HKS students and cross-registrants have completed their registration processes (generally by the end of the first week of class). Auditors are expected to be fully integrated members of the class. If you audit the class, you must attend all class sessions, complete all the reading, participate actively in class discussion, and complete the group presentation assignment. If you wish to attend one (or a few) class session(s) as a visitor rather than auditing the class, please speak to me at the beginning of the semester.
Outline of Topics

Introduction
- What is a civil war?
- Types of civil wars
- Forms of civil war

Part 1: Causes of Civil Wars and the Path to Onset
- Causes of war; Rationalist explanations of war
- Economics and Natural resources
- Ethnic hatred and nationalism
- Social and environmental conditions – Gender inequality, demographics, climate change
- Governance and failed states
- Case study 1 (April 14: Afghanistan and Politics as Competition Management)

Part 2: Conduct of Civil Wars
- The individual and violence
- The individual as group member – recruitment, participation, and management
- Armed force structures and their consequences
- Interactions between armed forces and civilians
- Violence in civil wars, pt 1: Civilians as target
- Violence in civil wars, pt 2: Warfare
- Violence in civil wars, pt 3: Effects – social polarization, public support, politics
- Alliances
- Foreign intervention
- Case study 2 (April 28: Bosnia and Ethnic Cleansing)

Part 3: Conflict Termination and the Transition to Post-War Politics (6 sessions)
- Defining peacebuilding and post-conflict peace
- Cease-fires, peace processes, treaties, and other forms of negotiation
- Peacekeeping
- Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
- Post-conflict elections and politics
- Case study 3 (May 4: Yemen and Brokers, Proxies, and War Termination)
COURSE SCHEDULE

January 20: Shopping Day (two optional sessions, separated by a break; first session is 8:45-9:15, break is 9:15-9:30; second session is 9:30-10:00).

INTRODUCTION

January 23: What is a Civil War?
Overview of the course. Defining civil war. Levels of analysis in the study of civil war.


Recommended

January 25: Types of Civil Wars

Recommended
January 30: Forms of Civil War


Recommended


Part 1: Causes of Civil War (and the Path to Onset)

February 1: Causes of War: Rationalist Explanations of War


Recommended


February 6: Economics and Natural Resources


Peruse “Blood and Gold,” a photo essay from *Foreign Policy* (2011)
Read “Is My Cell Phone Full of Rape?” (July 13, 2011) on Wronging Rights blog and skim some of the linked articles

Recommended

**February 8:** Ethnic Hatred and Nationalism

Recommended

**February 13:** Social and Environmental Conditions – Gender Inequality, Demographics, Climate Change

Listen to “How Could A Drought Spark A Civil War?” NPR story (read article and listen)
Recommended

February 15: Governance and Failed States

February 20 – President’s Day (No Class)

PART 2: THE CONDUCT OF CIVIL WAR

February 22 & February 27: The Individual and Violence
February 22: Barriers or the Siren Call?
February 27: Disinhibition, Acculturation, and Gender


Recommended
March 1: The Individual as Group Member – Recruitment, Participation, and Management


**Recommended**


March 6 Armed Force Structures and their Consequences


**Recommended:**


**March 20**: Interactions between Armed Forces and Civilians

**Recommended**

**March 22**: Violence in Civil Wars, pt. 1: Civilians as Target
* Short policy memos due in class *
* Midterm course evaluations *

**Recommended**


March 13-March 17: Spring Break (No Class)

**March 27:** Violence in Civil Wars, pt. 2: Warfare


**Recommended**


**March 29:** Violence in Civil Wars, pt. 3: Effects – Social Polarization, Public Support, Politics


**Recommended**


**March 30 (Thurs.): Midterm Review Session.** Time/Location TBD

**April 3:** Alliances


*Recommended*


**April 5:** Foreign Intervention


*Recommended:*


**PART 4: CONFLICT TERMINATION AND THE TRANSITION TO POST-WAR POLITICS**

**April 10:** Coercion and the End of Civil War

*Recommended*

**April 12:** Cease-fires, Peace Processes, Treaties, and Other Forms of Negotiation
**Recommended**


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**April 14 (Fri, 10:30-12 p.m.):** Case Study 1

“Karzai’s Palace Politics as Competition Management in Post-2001 Afghanistan.”
Professor Dipali Mukhopadhyay, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University.

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**April 17:** Peace Operations (Mediation, Peacekeeping, Peace Enforcement, etc.)


**Recommended**


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**April 19:** Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration


**Recommended**


April 24: Post-Conflict Elections and Politics  

**Recommended**

April 26: Conclusion/Course evaluations (Last regular class meeting)

April 28: Case Study 2
“The Roots of Ethnic Cleansing: Bosnia and Beyond.”
Professor Zeynep Bulutgil
Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
Tufts University

May 4 (Fri., 1:30-3 p.m.): Case Study 3
Designed to Fail? Brokers, Proxies, and Civil War in Yemen
Dr. Trevor Johnston
RAND Corporation
Washington, D.C.

Thursday, May 11: Final papers due at 9:00 a.m.