

Freshman Seminar: Political Violence

Fall 2024

Instructor: Dr. Gabriella Levy (gabriella_levy@brown.edu)

Class Time: Mondays 3-5:30pm

Class Location: Sayles Hall 204

Office Hour: Wednesdays 10am-11:45pm

Office Hour Location: 25 George Street, Office 204

Course Description:

Why do civil wars begin and end? Which people join rebellions? Why do states and non-state groups hurt civilians? What are the differences between rebel groups, terrorist organizations, and organized criminal groups? The seminar-based class aims introduce students to theories about and cases of political violence. It primarily draws on research in Political Science, though it also includes work from Economics, History, and Philosophy.

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Learning Goals:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand the key arguments made in social science research publications
2. Articulate and critique the logic of theories of political violence
3. Draw from empirical cases to evaluate theoretical arguments about political violence
4. Use scholars' theoretical arguments about political violence to inform their understanding of empirical cases
5. Marshal evidence and logic to present their arguments in both written and verbal form

Course Time Allocation:

This class will meet 13 times over the course of the semester, and students will spend 2.5 hours per week in class. In total, they will spend 32.5 hours in class over the course of the semester. Each week they will spend approximately 8 hours outside of class doing the course readings, totaling 104 hours. Each of the 2 short papers will require 5 hours of work, the draft literature review will require 20 hours of work, and the final literature review will require 10 hours of work.

Required Readings:

You are expected to come to class having read the pages assigned for that day. All readings are available on Canvas. While many of the readings are quantitative in nature, a previous background in statistics is not required for the course. I expect you to consider the argument made, the kinds of data used, and the conclusions of each piece.

Assignments:

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>How it will be assessed</i>	<i>Date</i>
Class Participation	20	Attendance (10%), participation in class discussion (10%)	Every week
Critique Short Paper	15	3-page critique of a reading from weeks 1-4	Beginning of class on September 30th
Application Short Paper	15	3-page application of the argument made in a reading in weeks 5-8 to a new empirical case not discussed in the reading	Beginning of class on November 4th
Literature Review Draft	30	8-10-page discussion of the state of literature on a topic relevant to this class with a minimum of 20 sources	Beginning of class on December 2nd
Literature Review	20	8-10-page discussion of the state of literature on a topic relevant to this class with a minimum of 20 sources + a 1-page memo detailing how you revised your draft	3pm on Monday, December 16th

Policies:

You are expected to not only attend but to actively participate in class. The first half of each class will focus on the readings assigned for that day, and the second half will consist of a simulation or exercise or review of an assignment. If you must miss class, please provide me with documentation of the reason for the absence for it to be excused. Each student can take one unexcused absence without a penalty, and all further unexcused absences will result in a 15% reduction of the class participation grade. Similarly, if you need an extension on an assignment for illness or other emergency reasons, please reach out to me as soon as possible. Extensions due to university events or religious holidays can be accommodated with two weeks' notice. I will accept late at-home assignments for which I have not granted an extension, but each day that the assignment is late will result in a 5% reduction on the grade. All essays should be double-spaced, with 12-point Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins.

If you would like me to review a graded assignment, I will happily do so. Please submit your requests in writing. You must wait 48 hours between the time you receive the graded assignment and when you contact me. I reserve the right to raise or lower your grade.

I expect you to comply with the Brown Academic Code. You can find details at <https://college.brown.edu/design-your-education/academic-policies/academic-code>.

Resources and Support:

1) My goal is to create a learning environment that supports a diverse range of perspectives, experiences, and identities.

- The topics that we're covering in this class are often difficult, not just intellectually but also emotionally. While I expect there will be rigorous discussion and even disagreement during our class discussions, I ask that you engage in each class meeting with care and empathy for the other members in the classroom. I will not tolerate insults; gender or racial slurs; or any other form of bullying, intimidation, or hate speech. I expect all members of this class to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of this class.
- Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you may require accommodations or modification of any of course procedures. You may speak with me after class, during office hours, or by appointment. If you need accommodations around online learning or in classroom accommodations, please be sure to reach out to [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) for their assistance (sas@brown.edu, 401-863-9588). Undergraduates in need of short-term academic advice or support can [contact an academic dean in the College](#) by emailing college@brown.edu. Graduate students may contact one of the deans in the Graduate School by emailing graduate_school@brown.edu.

2) Resources:

- My office hours are Wednesdays from 9:30-11:30am in 25 George Street, Office 204. You do not need to sign up for office hours and are welcome to drop by anytime! I encourage you to come to office hours to talk about assignments, readings, or other course content; careers; or other ways that I can support you.
- I recommend that students take full advantage of the Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning's [Writing Center](#).
- [Brown Student Support Services](#) is available to assist students dealing with a range of issues and concerns. Find out more information online or at 401-863-3145.
- Brown [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) offers a range of mental health and prevention services in an inclusive, compassionate, affirming and socially just environment.
- For tips on how to read academic articles, I recommend resources from [Amelia Hoover Green](#) and [Leanne C Powner](#).

Schedule:

1) September 9th: Introductions

a. Readings:

- i. Syllabus
- ii. Khan, Azmat. 2021. "Hidden Pentagon Records Reveal Patterns of Failure in Deadly Airstrikes." *The New York Times*, December 18, 2021, sec. U.S.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/12/18/us/airstrikes-pentagon-records-civilian-deaths.html>.

- iii. Khan, Azmat, and Ivor Prickett. 2021. "The Human Toll of America's Air Wars." *The New York Times*, December 20, 2021, sec. Magazine.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/19/magazine/victims-airstrikes-middle-east-civilians.html>.

b. In-class: requirements for critique short essay, how to read social science

2) September 16th: What is political violence?

a. Readings:

- i. Davies, Shawn, Garoun Engström, Therése Pettersson, and Magnus Öberg. 2024. "Organized Violence 1989–2023, and the Prevalence of Organized Crime Groups." *Journal of Peace Research* OnlineFirst.
- ii. Davenport, Christian. 2007. "State Repression and Political Order." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10 (1): 1–23.
- iii. Barnes, Nicholas. 2017. "Criminal Politics: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Organized Crime, Politics, and Violence." *Perspectives on Politics* 15(4): 967–87.
- iv. Staniland, Paul. 2012. "States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders." *Perspectives on Politics* 10(2): 243–64.

b. In-class: investigation of commonly used datasets

3) September 23rd: Civil Wars 1, State-Level Causes

a. Readings:

- i. Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97 (01): 75–90.
- ii. 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 (3): 478–95.
- iii. Walter, Barbara. 2004. "Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Recurring Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (3): 371–88.
- iv. Lewis, Janet I. 2017. "How Does Ethnic Rebellion Start?" *Comparative Political Studies* 50 (10): 1420–50.

b. In-class: bargaining model of conflict simulation (published in Haynes 2015)

4) September 30th: Civil Wars 2, Individual-Level Mobilization (**Critique Short Paper Due**)

a. Readings:

- i. Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2008. "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War." *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (2): 436–55.

- ii. Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War." *The American Political Science Review* 107 (3): 418–32.
- iii. Thomas, Jakana L and Kanisha D. Bond. 2015. "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations." *The American Political Science Review* 109 (3): 488–506.
- iv. Mitts, Tamar. 2021. "Countering Violent Extremism and Radical Rhetoric." *International Organization* 76(1): 251-272.
- b. In-class: recruitment techniques of modern rebel groups simulation (from Livia Schubiger)

5) October 7th: Civil Wars 3, Violence against Civilians

- a. Readings:
 - i. Balcells, Laia, and Jessica Stanton. 2021. "Violence Against Civilians During Armed Conflict: Moving Beyond the Macro- and Micro- Level Divide." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24: 2.1-2.25.
 - ii. Hoover Green, Amelia. 2016. "The Commander's Dilemma: Creating and Controlling Armed Group Violence." *Journal of Peace Research* 53 (5): 619–32.
 - iii. Kalyvas, Stathis N., and Matthew Adam Kocher. 2007. "How 'Free' Is Free Riding in Civil Wars? Violence, Insurgency, and the Collective Action Problem." *World Politics* 59 (2): 177–216.
 - iv. Cohen, Dara Kay. 2013. "Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980–2009)." *American Political Science Review* 107 (03): 461–77.
- b. In-class: review strengths/weaknesses of critique short essay, outline requirements for application essay

6) October 21st: Civil Wars 4, Third Parties & Endings

- a. Readings:
 - i. Fortna, Virginia-Page. 2004. "Does Peacekeeping Work? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly* 48: 269–92.
 - ii. Stanton, Jessica A. 2020. "Rebel Groups, International Humanitarian Law, and Civil War Outcomes in the Post-Cold War Era." *International Organization* 74 (3): 523–59.
 - iii. Hartzell, Caroline, and Matthew Hoddie. 2003. "Institutionalizing Peace: Power Sharing and Post-Civil War Conflict Management." *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (2): 318–32.
 - iv. Council on Foreign Relations Model Diplomacy simulation sections 1.1-3.2 [more details to be provided in class]
- b. In-class: Council on Foreign Relations simulation

7) October 28th: Protests & Revolutions

- a. Readings:
 - i. Kuran, Timur. 1991. "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics* 44 (1): 7–48.
 - ii. Ketchley, Neil, and Thoraya El-Rayyes. 2020. "Unpopular Protest: Mass Mobilization and Attitudes to Democracy in Post-Mubarak Egypt." *The Journal of Politics* 83 (1): 291–305.
 - iii. Reny, Tyler T., and Benjamin J. Newman. 2021. "The Opinion-Mobilizing Effect of Social Protest against Police Violence: Evidence from the 2020 George Floyd Protests." *American Political Science Review* 115(4): 1499–1507.
 - iv. Hager, Anselm, and Krzysztof Krakowski. 2022. "Does State Repression Spark Protests? Evidence from Secret Police Surveillance in Communist Poland." *American Political Science Review* 116(2): 564–79.
 - b. In-class: practice designing application essays in small groups, using an article from this week
- 8) November 4th: State-Sponsored Violence 1, Repression (**Application Short Paper Due**)
- a. Readings:
 - i. Soss, Joe, and Vesla Weaver. 2017. "Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race–Class Subjugated Communities." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20 (1): 565–91.
 - ii. González, Yanilda, and Lindsay Mayka. 2023. "Policing, Democratic Participation, and the Reproduction of Asymmetric Citizenship." *American Political Science Review* 117(1): 263–79.
 - iii. Magaloni, Beatriz, and Luis Rodriguez. 2020. "Institutionalized Police Brutality: Torture, the Militarization of Security, and the Reform of Inquisitorial Criminal Justice in Mexico." *American Political Science Review* 114(4): 1013–34.
 - iv. Murdie, Amanda M., and David R. Davis. 2012. "Shaming and Blaming: Using Events Data to Assess the Impact of Human Rights INGOs." *International Studies Quarterly* 56(1): 1–16.
 - b. In-class: Torture, the ticking clock, and Guantanamo Bay
- 9) November 11th: State-Sponsored Violence 2, Genocide
- a. Readings:
 - i. Braun, Robert. 2016. "Religious Minorities and Resistance to Genocide: The Collective Rescue of Jews in the Netherlands during the Holocaust." *The American Political Science Review* 110 (1): 127–47.
 - ii. Harff, Barbara. 2003. "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955." *The American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 57–73.

- iii. Yanagizawa-Drott, David. 2014. "Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129 (4): 1947–94.
- iv. Fujii, Lee Ann. 2013. "The Puzzle of Extra-Lethal Violence." *Perspectives on Politics; Cambridge* 11 (2): 410–26.
- b. In-class: review strengths/weaknesses of application short essay, outline requirements for literature review

10) November 18th: Terrorism

- a. Readings:
 - i. Abrahms, Max. 2012. "The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited." *Comparative Political Studies* 45(3): 366–93.
 - ii. Berrebi, Claude, and Esteban F. Klor. 2008. "Are Voters Sensitive to Terrorism? Direct Evidence from the Israeli Electorate." *American Political Science Review* 102 (3): 279–301.
 - iii. Pape, Robert A., Kyle D. Larson, and Keven G. Ruby. 2024. "The Political Geography of the January 6 Insurrectionists." *PS: Political Science & Politics*: 1–11.
 - iv. Schwartz, Joshua A, Matthew Fuhrmann, and Michael C Horowitz. 2022. "Do Armed Drones Counter Terrorism, Or Are They Counterproductive? Evidence from Eighteen Countries." *International Studies Quarterly* 66(3): 1–14.
- b. In-class: group research and presentations based on SPLC census of hate groups

11) November 25th: Crime

- a. Readings:
 - i. Trejo, Guillermo, and Sandra Ley. 2018. "Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? Subnational Party Alternation, the Breakdown of Criminal Protection, and the Onset of Large-Scale Violence." *Comparative Political Studies* 51 (7): 900–937.
 - ii. Magaloni, Beatriz, Edgar Franco-Vivanco, and Vanessa Melo. 2020. "Killing in the Slums: Social Order, Criminal Governance, and Police Violence in Rio de Janeiro." *American Political Science Review* 114 (2): 552–72.
 - iii. Dube, Arindrajit, Oeindrila Dube, and Omar García-Ponce. 2013. "Cross-Border Spillover: U.S. Gun Laws and Violence in Mexico." *The American Political Science Review; Washington* 107 (3): 397–417.
 - iv. Dancygier, Rafaela, Naoki Egami, Amaney Jamal, and Ramona Rischke. 2022. "Hate Crimes and Gender Imbalances: Fears over Mate Competition and Violence against Refugees." *American Journal of Political Science* 66(2): 501–15.
- b. In-class: death penalty debate; teams are randomized

12) December 2nd: Philosophy of Political Violence (**Literature Review Draft Due**)

- a. Readings:
 - i. Walzer, Michael. 2015. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. New York: Basic Books. → Ch. 3, Ch. 8-9
 - ii. McMahan, Jeff. 2004. "The Ethics of Killing in War." *Ethics* 114 (4): 693–733.
 - iii. Savodnik, Peter. 2024. "What Makes a War Just? 'It's a situation where every decision is agonizing' A conversation with Michael Walzer, the author of 'Just and Unjust Wars.'" *The Free Press*.
<https://www.thefp.com/p/what-makes-a-war-just>.
- b. In-class: how Walzer and McMahan would evaluate the ethics of military attacks

13) December 9th: Legacies of Violence

- a. Readings:
 - i. Blattman, Christopher. 2009. "From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda." *American Political Science Review* 103 (02): 231–47.
 - ii. Grasse, Donald. 2023. "State Terror and Long-Run Development: The Persistence of the Khmer Rouge." *American Political Science Review* Forthcoming: 1–18.
 - iii. Rozenas, Arturas, Sebastian Schutte, and Yuri Zhukov. 2017. "The Political Legacy of Violence: The Long-Term Impact of Stalin's Repression in Ukraine." *The Journal of Politics* 79(4): 1147–61.
 - iv. Lupu, Noam, and Leonid Peisakhin. 2017. "The Legacy of Political Violence across Generations." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(4): 836–51.
- b. In-class: course wrap-up, evaluation

Final Literature Review Due 3pm Monday, December 16th