

POL S 527 Special Topics in IR: Civil Wars  
Spring 2026  
Tuesdays 1:30-4:20pm  
SAV 140

**Instructor:**

Gabriella Levy (glevy2@uw.edu)  
Office Hours: Thursdays 1-3pm, Gowen 37

**Course Overview:**

This course is aimed at graduate students in Political Science, but students in other related fields are very welcome. In this class, students will study the causes of civil war; consider conflict processes such as violence, governance, and armed group fragmentation; and examine how armed actors make and keep peace. Throughout this course, we will examine explanations for a variety of phenomena from three levels of analysis: the micro-level (e.g. the individual), the meso-level (e.g. the armed group), and the macro-level (e.g. the country).

This is a discussion-based course, meaning that students will be expected to critically but respectfully evaluate arguments presented by authors, peers, and the professor. The course is also designed to help build students' skills as researchers and political scientists; students will conduct reviews of published papers, and they will put together a research proposal at the end of the semester.

**Required Readings:**

You are expected to come to class having read the pages assigned for that day. All journal articles are available online via UW's access to a wide range of academic journals. I have also assigned portions of the following books. I have noted which ones are available in their entirety online via UW Libraries with a \* following the end of the bibliographic entry below.

- Staniland, Paul. 2021. *Ordering Violence: Explaining Armed Group-State Relations from Conflict to Cooperation*. Cornell University Press.\*
- Petersen, Roger D. 2009. *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe*. Cambridge University Press.\*
- Kalyvas, Stathis. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2006. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge University Press.\*
- Stanton, Jessica A. 2016. *Violence and Restraint in Civil War: Civilian Targeting in the Shadow of International Law*. Cambridge University Press.
- Steele, Abbey. 2017. *Democracy and Displacement in Colombia's Civil War*. Cornell University Press.\*

- Wood, Elisabeth. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge University Press.\*
- Krystalli, Roxani. 2024. *Good Victims: The Political as a Feminist Question*. Oxford University Press.\*
- Staniland, Paul. 2014. *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse*. Cornell University Press.\*
- Christia, Fotini. 2012. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*. Cambridge University Press.\*
- Arjona, Ana. 2016. *Rebelocracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mampilly, Zachariah Cherian. 2012. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*. Cornell University Press.\*
- Autesserre, Séverine. 2010. *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and The Failure of International Peacebuilding*. Cambridge University Press.
- Daly, Sarah Zukerman. 2016. *Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.

**Assignments:**

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>How it will be assessed</i>	<i>Date</i>
Participation	20	Attendance & participation in weekly classes	Every week
Review 1	20	4-page critical review of a reading assigned for that week + a 5-minute presentation in class	24 hours before class; students will select their assigned weeks during the first class
Review 2	20	4-page critical review of a reading assigned for that week + a 5-minute presentation in class	24 hours before class; students will select their assigned weeks during the first class
Research Design	40	A 15-25-page research project proposal which 1) identifies a relevant question, 2) locates that question within the relevant literature, 3) proposes a theory which extends existing work 4) details a methodological approach which could be taken to test the theory	June 9 <sup>th</sup> at 1:30pm

**Policies:**

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](#). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](#).

Only after written confirmation from the professor should the student consider an extension to an at-home assignment granted. Late at-home assignments for which no extension has been granted will result in a 5% reduction in the assignment grade for each day the assignment is late. All written assignments should be double-spaced, with 12-point Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins.

You are expected to not only attend but to actively participate in class. This is a discussion-based class, and it requires your engagement. I will assign each student a participation grade for each class meeting, and the lowest such grade will be dropped.

If you would like to appeal a grade, please wait 24 hours from the time you receive the grade. After reviewing your answers and the comments, provide a typed statement to me explaining why you believe the grade you received should be altered. This typed statement must be about the substance of the work, not the effort you put into it or the class. The statement should be sent within one week of receiving the graded assignment; otherwise, it will not be considered. I have the right to leave your grade as it is, raise the grade, or lower the grade. If you would like to appeal the regrade, then a similar procedure must be followed. You must provide a typed statement to the Associate Chair of the Political Science department explaining why you believe the grade (and regrades) you received you should be altered. Bring your work and your written statement to the Associate Chair within 10 days of receiving the regrade decision from the course professor. The Associate Chair will confer with relevant department faculty, reevaluate the assignment, and return it to the student within 1 week. The departmental grade appeal decision from the Associate Chair is final.

I expect you to comply with the University of Washington's policies regarding student misconduct, which can be found here: <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/for-students/student-code-of-conduct/>. Any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, when working on assignments is forbidden; use of generative AI will be considered academic misconduct and subject to investigation. All work submitted for this course must be your own. This policy exists because the assignments in this class have been designed to challenge you to develop creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills; using AI technology will limit your capacity to develop these skills and to meet the learning goals of this course. If the Community Standards & Student Conduct (CSSC) office finds you responsible for any form of academic misconduct, you will receive a 0 on the relevant assignment.

See the grade scale for this course on Canvas and below at the end of this document.

### **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.

- Please inform me early in the term if you require accommodations or modification of any of course procedures. Accommodations must be established and documented with [Disability Resources for Students \(DRS\)](#).

## 2) Resources, Questions, and Communication:

- You do not need to sign up for office hours and are welcome to drop by to talk about assignments, readings, or other course content; careers; etc.
- If you have an administrative or logistical question, please consult the syllabus first, and then email your TA if you remain uncertain. If you still do not have an adequate answer, please email the professor. Please allow 24 hours for email replies during the week, and 72 hours on the weekends.
- Students are encouraged to take full advantage of the [Odegaard Writing and Research Center](#).
- [UW Seattle Health Services](#) is available to assist students dealing with a range of health-related issues and concerns. Health care on campus is provided through the [Hall Center](#) and the [Counseling Center](#).
- For tips on how to read academic articles, I recommend resources from [Amelia Hoover Green](#) and [Leanne C Powner](#).
- For tips on how to write a peer review, I recommend the following article:

Miller, Beth, Jon Pevehouse, Ron Rogowski, Dustin Tingley, and Rick Wilson. 2013. "How To Be a Peer Reviewer: A Guide for Recent and Soon-to-Be PhDs." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46 (1): 120–23.

## Schedule:

### 1) Civil Wars: Trends and Definitions (March 31<sup>st</sup>)

- a. Sambanis, Nicholas. 2004. "What Is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (6): 814–58.
- b. Kalyvas, Stathis N., and Laia Balcells. 2010. "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict." *American Political Science Review* 104 (3): 415–29.
- c. Staniland, Paul. 2021. *Ordering Violence: Explaining Armed Group-State Relations from Conflict to Cooperation*. Cornell University Press. → Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3
- d. Davies, Shawn, Garoun Engström, Therése Pettersson, and Magnus Öberg. 2025. "Organized Violence 1989–2024, and the challenge of identifying civilian victims." *Journal of Peace Research* 62(4): 1223-1240.
- e. Staniland, Paul. 2023. "The Evolution of Civil Wars Research: From Civil War to Political Violence." *Civil Wars* 25(2-3): 187-207.

- f. Sweet, Rachel. 2026. "Knowing What We Don't: the Fundamental Problem of Data Quality in Conflict Research – and Methodological Solutions." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 70(1): 140-169.
- 2) Macro-Level Causes of War (April 7<sup>th</sup>)
- a. Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97 (01): 75–90.
  - b. Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (4): 563–95.
  - c. 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.
  - d. Walter, Barbara. 2004. "Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Recurring Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (3): 371–88.
  - e. Lewis, Janet I. 2017. "How Does Ethnic Rebellion Start?" *Comparative Political Studies* 50 (10): 1420–50.
  - f. Blair, Graeme, Darin Christensen, Aaron Rudkin. 2021. "Do Commodity Price Shocks Cause Armed Conflict? A Meta-Analysis of Natural Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 115(2): 709-716.
- 3) Micro-Level Causes of War (April 14<sup>th</sup>)
- a. 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.
  - b. Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War." *The American Political Science Review* 107 (3): 418–32.
  - c. Thomas, Jakana L and Kanisha D. Bond. "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations." *The American Political Science Review* 109 (3): 488–506.
  - d. Petersen, Roger D. 2009. *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe*. Cambridge University Press. → Chapters 1, 2, 4, 9
  - e. Mitts, Tamar. 2021. "Countering Violent Extremism and Radical Rhetoric." *International Organization* 76(1): 251-272.
  - f. Yanagizawa-Drott, David. 2014. "Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129 (4): 1947–94.
- 4) Violence Against Civilians: Causes (April 21<sup>st</sup>)
- a. Kalyvas, Stathis. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. → Chapters 4-7
  - b. Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2006. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge University Press. → Introduction, Chapters 1-2

- c. Balcells, Laia. 2010. "Rivalry and Revenge: Violence against Civilians in Conventional Civil Wars: Rivalry and Revenge." *International Studies Quarterly* 54 (2): 291–313.
- d. Stanton, Jessica A. 2016. *Violence and Restraint in Civil War: Civilian Targeting in the Shadow of International Law*. Cambridge University Press. → Chapters 1-3
- e. Cohen, Dara Kay. 2013. "Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980–2009)." *American Political Science Review* 107 (03): 461–77.
- f. Steele, Abbey. 2017. *Democracy and Displacement in Colombia's Civil War*. Cornell University Press. → Chapters 1, 5, and 6

5) Violence Against Civilians: Effects (April 28<sup>th</sup>)

- a. 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.
- b. Lyall, Jason, Graeme Blair, and Imai Kosuke. 2013. "Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan." *American Political Science Review* 107 (4): 679–705.
- c. Wood, Elisabeth. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge University Press. → Chapters 1, 7, 8
- d. Kaplan, Oliver. 2013. "Protecting Civilians in Civil War: The Institution of the ATCC in Colombia." *Journal of Peace Research* 50 (3): 351–67.
- e. Daly, Sarah Zukerman. 2019. "Voting for Victors: Why Violent Actors Win Postwar Elections." *World Politics* 71 (4): 1–59.
- f. Krystalli, Roxani. 2024. *Good Victims: The Political as a Feminist Question*. Oxford University Press. → Chapters 1, 4, and 5

6) Fragmentation, Alliances, & Cohesion (May 5<sup>th</sup>)

- a. Staniland, Paul. 2014. *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse*. Cornell University Press. → Chapters 1-3
- b. Christia, Fotini. 2012. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*. Cambridge University Press. → Chapters 1-2
- c. Oppenheim, Ben, Abbey Steele, Juan F. Vargas, and Michael Weintraub. 2015. "True Believers, Deserters, and Traitors: Who Leaves Insurgent Groups and Why." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (5): 794–823.
- d. Carey, Sabine C., Michael P. Colaresi, and Neil J. Mitchell. 2015. "Governments, Informal Links to Militias, and Accountability." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (5): 850–76.
- e. Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher. 2013. "Actor Fragmentation and Civil War Bargaining: How Internal Divisions Generate Civil Conflict." *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (3): 659–72.

7) Armed Group Governance (May 12<sup>th</sup>)

- a. Arjona, Ana. 2016. *Rebelocracy*. Cambridge University Press. → Chapters 1-3

- b. Mampilly, Zachariah Cherian. 2012. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*. Cornell University Press. → Chapters 1-3
- c. Matanock, Aila M., and Paul Staniland. 2018. "How and Why Armed Groups Participate in Elections." *Perspectives on Politics* 16 (3): 710–27.
- d. Huang, Reyko. 2016. *The Wartime Origins of Democratization: Civil War, Rebel Governance, and Political Regimes*. Cambridge University Press. → Chapters 1-4
- e. Daly, Sarah Zukerman. 2022. "How Do Violent Politicians Govern? The Case of Paramilitary-Tied Mayors in Colombia." *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(4): 1852-1875.
- f. Liu, Shelley. 2022. "Control, Coercion, and Cooptation: How Rebels Govern after Winning Civil Wars." *World Politics* 74(1): 37-76.

#### 8) Internationalization (May 19<sup>th</sup>)

- a. Fortna, Virginia-Page. 2004. "Does Peacekeeping Work? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly* 48: 269–92.
- b. Hultman, Lisa, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon. 2013. "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War." *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (4): 875–91.
- c. Prorok, Alyssa K. 2017. "The (In)Compatibility of Peace and Justice? The International Criminal Court and Civil Conflict Termination." *International Organization* 71 (2): 213–43.
- d. Autesserre, Séverine. 2010. *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and The Failure of International Peacebuilding*. Cambridge University Press. → Chapters 1 and 6
- e. Buhaug, Halvard, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2008. "Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space." *International Studies Quarterly* 52 (2): 215–33.

#### 9) Making and Keeping Peace (May 26<sup>th</sup>)

- a. Prorok, Alyssa K. 2016. "Leader Incentives and Civil War Outcomes." *American Journal of Political Science* 60 (1): 70–84.
- b. Cunningham, David E. 2006. "Veto Players and Civil War Duration." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (4): 875–92.
- c. Tellez, Juan. 2020. "Peace Without Impunity: Worldview in the Settlement of Civil Wars." *Journal of Politics* 83(4): 1322-1336.
- d. 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.
- e. Matanock, Aila M. 2017. "Bullets for Ballots: Electoral Participation Provisions and Enduring Peace after Civil Conflict." *International Security* 41 (4): 93–132.
- f. Daly, Sarah Zukerman. 2016. *Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press. → Chapters 2, 4, 5

10) Legacies of Conflict (June 2<sup>nd</sup>)

- a. Barceló, Joan. 2025. "Attitudinal and Behavioral Legacies of Wartime Violence: A Meta-Analysis." *American Political Science Review* FirstView.
- b. Charnysh, Volha and Evgeny Finkel. 2017. "The Death Camp Eldorado: Political and Economic Effects of Mass Violence." *The American Political Science Review* 111 (4): 801–18.
- c. Grasse, Donald. 2024. "State Terror and Long-Run Development: The Persistence of the Khmer Rouge." *American Political Science Review* 118(1): 195-212.
- d. Schubiger, Livia Isabella. 2021. "State Violence and Wartime Civilian Agency: Evidence from Peru." *The Journal of Politics* 83 (4): 1383–98.
- e. Bateson, Regina. 2017. "The Socialization of Civilians and Militia Members: Evidence from Guatemala." *Journal of Peace Research* 54 (5): 634–47.
- f. 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.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Letter</b>
4.0	95-100	A
3.9	93-94	A
3.8	91-92	A-
3.7	90	A-
3.6	89	A-
3.5	88	A-
3.4	87	B+
3.3	86	B+
3.2	85	B+
3.1	84	B
3.0	83	B
2.9	82	B
2.8	81	B-
2.7	80	B-
2.6	79	B-
2.5	78	B-
2.4	77	C+
2.3	76	C+
2.2	75	C+
2.1	74	C
2.0	73	C
1.9	72	C
1.8	71	C-
1.7	70	C-
1.6	69	C-
1.5	68	C-
1.4	67	D+
1.3	66	D+
1.2	65	D+
1.1	64	D
1.0	63	D
.9	62	D
.8	61	D-
.7	60	D-
0.0	<60	E