

**Conflict in Africa (POL 120)**  
**Summer II 2019 M W 11-2**  
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**Course Description**

This course considers some important themes and debates about civil conflict, and applies and tests them in the contexts and histories of sub-Saharan Africa. Africa offers important test cases for understanding, mitigating, and preventing conflict, but it's important to remember that Africa is a large and diverse continent. Our department offers a class that focuses on development success stories in Africa which is equally central to understanding politics and society there.

Few of you will, of course, get jobs specializing in conflict or African politics. So why take this class? I offer two reasons.

First, the human dilemmas that cause or exacerbate civil conflict in Africa are in some ways structurally similar to the dilemmas that cause conflict or erode cooperation in many circumstances. Solutions may also be structurally similar. Building and honing an instinct for how the incentive structures between players frustrate cooperation generalizes well to lots of jobs.

Second, we evaluate theories about conflict by using the scientific method to derive hypotheses and test them. The process of evaluating the causes of and solution to cooperation problems is likewise useful in a broad range of situations.

In sum, this class provides practice in the art analytically diagnosing and solving social problems, and measuring and verifying that the solutions are working.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, you should be on your way to understanding:

- 1) How to consider social behavior as a game in which players change the strategy they follow to meet their goals to adjust to rule changes.
- 2) How to identify and question the assumptions implicit in theories of social behavior.
- 3) How to evaluate theories that explain variation in cooperation between states, and how to apply that method of evaluation to other theories
- 4) The circumstances under which state actors maintain peaceable relations or cooperate on achieving desirable economic and social outcomes.

## **Assessment and Grades**

This course is graded on four assignments, two group presentations, a short group paper, and a cumulative final exam.

*Group Presentations and Paper (3 @ 20% each)*

The class is divided into several sections in which we discuss a theoretical debate in conflict studies, and then consider evidence from a case of conflict in Africa. On the weeks noted on the syllabus, student groups will present a theory from that unit and “test” it using evidence from the recommended case readings.

Notice that these assignments should require no outside research. A-level papers and presentations will summarize the theory from a reading assigned on the syllabus or presented in class; choose observations, facts, or other evidence from the case study readings; and discuss whether those observations are consistent with the theory. More detail and a specific rubric will be provided.

*Final Exam (40%)*

During the time slot indicated on the course registration, we will have a short essay final exam hosted on TED which you may take on your personal computer anywhere you like. The exam is closed book, but also designed to make using notes a waste of time.

The exam will last 55 minutes and include six questions, of which you will choose four. The best answers to each question tend to be 4-6 sentences. This creates a lot of time pressure. On purpose.

## **Course Policies**

*Academic Dishonesty.*

Don't cheat. Especially: don't plagiarize. Following UCSD's Academic Honesty guidelines, plagiarism will result in a failing grade in the course. Plagiarism is completely unnecessary, by the way. It is very possible to demonstrate an A level understanding of course material while citing every single sentence on all your exams.

It is also dishonest to free-ride on your other group members. I will consider demoting the grade of individual members of a group if their partners complain together.

*Harassment*

Harassment is absolutely not tolerated. Anyone who makes another student in class feel intimidated or unwelcome will be prosecuted to the fullest extent allowed by UCSD's code of conduct.

### *Late Work*

Exams are offered on-line and the exam link will stay open for the full three hours offered in the final. Given this flexibility, I expect you to finish the exams by the deadline. Barring a catastrophic, multi-day emergency, I will not consider late work.

### *Disability Accommodations*

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with disabilities in the course.

### **Required Texts**

All readings listed below are posted to the course dropbox, a link to which is available in the Announcements section of the course TED site. Any supplemental readings will be emailed or distributed in class.

### **Schedule of the Class and Reading Assignments**

#### **Unit 1: Method and Theory in Comparative Politics**

##### August 5: Method and Theory in Comparative Politics

##### Readings

—— (2013). “The Free Rider Problem.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Hardin, G. (1968). “The Tragedy of the Commons.” *Science*.

Poundstone, W. (1992). “The Game of Chicken.” *Prisoner’s Dilemma*. Anchor Books.

Clarke, M. (1996). “The Problem of Time Inconsistency.” *Trinity College Study Guide*.

Akerloff, G. (1970). “The Market for Lemons.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

Abdalla, K. (2008). “The Principal-Agent Problem”. *Jargon Alert*.

##### Discussion Questions

How do social scientists attempt to measure changes in variables of interest? By what logic can they hope to prove causation? What are the problems with applying these standards to transnational crime?

Why do social scientists consider stylized games like those discussed today as so important? Why do we experience the worst possible outcome in prisoner’s dilemma games? What real-life problems remind you of each game?

## August 7: The Origin of States and State Development in Africa

### Readings

Herbst, J. (2000). *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1

Migdal, J. (1988). *Strong Societies, Weak States: State Society Relations in the Third World*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

Scott, J. (1999). *Seeing Like a State*. Yale University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

### Discussion Questions

Why did Olson's "roving bandits" decide to pick home and become "stationary bandits"? What would influence your decision about whether to rove or stay if you were a bandit leader? Why does Tilly make a comparison between organized crime and governments?

Why do Tilly and Olson think we have governments? What problem does this appear to solve for civilians? What problems does it create? What different challenges to African states face in engineering social outcomes?

## August 12: Country-Level Causes of Conflict

### Readings

Collier, Paul and Hoeffler, Anke. (1998). "One economic causes of civil war." *Oxford Economic Papers*.

### Case Study: The Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

de la Sierra, R. S. (Forthcoming). "On the Origin of States: Stationary Bandits and Taxation in Eastern Congo," *Journal of Political Economy*.

Stearns, J. (2012). *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*. Chapters TBD.

### Discussion Questions

What critique do Collier and Hoeffler level against the argument that ancient hatreds cause civil war? Why do resources cause conflict? If resources cause conflict, why do conflicts always seem to be about identity?

Which of the theories discussed in Collier and Hoeffler or Fearon and Laitin seems to best fit the DRC?

August 14: Community-Level Causes of Conflict **Class Online**

Readings

Kuran, T. (1991). "Now Out of Never: the Element of Surprise in the Eastern European Revolutions of 1989." *World Politics*.

Petersen, R. (2001). *Resistance and Rebellion*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

Case Study: Rwandan Genocide

Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2014). "Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide". *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

Strauss, S. (2006). *The Order of Genocide*. Cornell University Press. Chapters 3-4.

Hitjens, H. (1999). Explaining the Rwanda Genocide. *The Journal of Modern Africa Studies*.

Discussion Questions

What is the challenge for predicting revolution? How do individuals decide whether to revolt, according to Kuran? What dilemma does a potential revolutionary face? How can they solve it? Can we, as outsiders, ever hope to observe evidence of this?

What role did signaling play in the escalation of the Rwandan genocide? Were community groups important to the transmission of violent ideas?

August 19: Individual-Level Causes of Conflict **Presentations Due**

Readings

Humphreys, M., and Weinstein, J. (2008). "Who Fights? the Determinants of Participation in Civil War." *American Journal of Political Science* (don't sweat the math or the charts)

Berman, E. (2009). *Radical, Religious, and Violent: the New Economics of Terrorism*. MIT Press. Chapters 2 and 3.

Discussion Questions

How are Berman's assumptions about fighters different from Humphreys and Weinstein's? How do the rebel groups from H&W solve the problem of rebel commitment differently than Berman's rebels?

August 21: Abuse of Civilians in Conflict Zones

Readings

Weinstein, J. (2007). *Inside Rebellion*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2

Stanton, J. (2016). *Violence and Restraint in Civil War*. Cambridge University Press. Introduction.

Case Study: Uganda, the NRA and the LRA

Weinstein, J. *Inside Rebellion* 62-71; 108-111; 140-145; 175-180; **210-229**.

Kasozi, A. (1994). *Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*. McGill University Press. Chapter 8.

Stanton, J. (2016). *Violence and Restraint in Civil War*. Cambridge University Press.  
Chapter 8.

Branch, A. (2005). "Neither Peace nor Justice: Political Violence and the Peasantry in Northern Uganda" *African Studies Journal*.

Discussion Questions

What constraints do Weinstein and Stanton argue limit the choices of rebel organizations? How do these constraints differ from each other?

Why are civilians useful to insurgency? What do they provide? Why would an insurgent group ever abuse them?

What are the differences between the NRA and the LRA?

August 26: Abuse in Uganda **Class Online** **Group Paper Due**

Readings

No reading assignments

Discussion Questions

No discussion questions

August 28: Illicit Markets and Conflict **Class Online**

Readings

Felbab-Brown, V. (2009). *Shooting up: Counterinsurgency and the war on drugs*. Brookings Institution Press. Chapters 2 and 3.

Reno, W. (2009). Illicit markets, violence, warlords, and governance: West African cases. *Crime, law and social change*, 52(3), 313-322.

Case Study: Northern Mali and the Azawad Separatists

Crisis Group (2018). Drug Trafficking, Violence, and Politics in Northern Mali. *Africa Report No. 267*.

Pezard, s. and M. Shurkin (2013). "Toward a Safe and Stable Northern Mali". RAND Corporation.

Cline, L. (2013). Nomads, Islamists, and Soldiers: the Struggles of Northern Mali. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*.

Discussion Questions

How does Felbab-Brown argue that government reactions to illicit markets shape insurgency? How did the Shining Path capitalize on Peru's strategy? Who was trapped in the middle? What does this suggest about the hierarchical or network structure of cocaine cartels?

Why did the MNLA engage in drug smuggling? Why did it engage in civil war? Which thing is the ultimate goal of the MNLA? Does that goal match with what they tell the Tuareg they represent? Do the descriptions of rebels trafficking in Mali match Felbab-Brown's model? Do the context or the goals of the rebel groups matter in explaining the differences?

September 2: Ending Civil Wars **Presentations Due**

Reading

Walter, Barbara (1997). "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlements." *International Organization*. pp. 335-343.

Driscoll, Jesse (2016). *Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet Russia*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 1-15.

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. "Neotrusteeship and the problem of weak states." *International security* 28.4 (2004): 5-43.

*Discussion Questions*

What role do third parties play in conflict resolution? What problem does Walter argue that they solve? Driscoll argues that third parties face their own problems in solving conflict. What are those challenges? How do local actors abuse them? Is it possible for Walter and Driscoll to both be right in different places? Which places are best for each theory?

September 4: Keeping the Peace

*Reading*

Readings TBD.

*Discussion Questions*

Questions TBD.