Civil War

Fall 2014
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Political Science 17.582
Thursday 3:00-5:00 pm
Room: E53-438

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Course Overview
This course is a general overview of the recent political science literature on civil war. It aims to address questions of definition, operationalization of variables, and general methodological issues relevant to conducting research in the area of civil war or violent conflict. In that regard, the course looks at issues pertaining to civil war onset, process and duration and civil war termination and its aftermath. The course introduces the basic variables as well as the theoretical and empirical findings in the literature and discusses cases of civil war in a variety of regions. It also examines the role of ethnicity in civil war, the individual incentives for participation, and the various manifestations of violence, as well as a discussion on counterinsurgency practices.

Requirements:
This class will be run as a seminar and students are expected to do all readings and take part in class discussions. Apart from class attendance and participation, students will be expected to serve as discussants once or twice during the semester depending on class size. In the week that they are assigned to be class discussants, students would have to critically review the assigned readings, write a 5-page memo and give a 15-minute presentation of the general points made by the authors, highlighting the related as well as conflicting arguments, and underlying the respective works’ analytical strengths and weaknesses. Discussant assignments will be made the first week of class.

Students will also have to write a 30-page paper due on December 19. The paper can be a research design paper or a first draft of a paper intended for publication. If it is the latter, it should contain a theoretical argument and an empirical test of that argument. Paper topics must be based on one of the main themes of the course and approved by the instructor. A one-page description of the paper topic will be due on October 23.

Grading:
Discussant sessions: 20%
Class participation: 30%
Final seminar paper: 50%
Eligibility for Enrollment:
Graduate students and advanced undergraduates.

Readings

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: What is Civil War?

Week 3: Ethnicity and Conflict

Week 4: Political Economy of Civil War


Week 5: Participation and Rebel Recruitment


Week 6: Duration and International Dimensions of Civil War


**Week 7: Natural and Technological Resources in Civil War**


**Week 8: Violence**


**Week 9: Counterinsurgency I**


**Week 10: Counterinsurgency II**


**Week 11: Partition and Borders**


Jeremy Ferwerda and Nicholas L. Miller. “Resistance to Foreign Rule: Evidence from a Natural Experiment” forthcoming in *APSR*

Elissa Berwick, MIT Working Paper

**Week 12: Alliances, Collaboration, and Defection**

Fotini Christia, *The Closest of Enemies: Alliance Formation in the Afghan and Bosnian Civil Wars*, Book Manuscript, Select Chapters


**Week 13: Termination and Aftermath**


