

PSCI 2211: Terrorism and Intrastate Conflict
Department of Political Science
Vanderbilt University

Spring 2022
Commons Center 335
Tuesday & Thursday 2:45-4:00 PM

Prof. Peter Schram
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OHs: Tuesday: 4PM-5PM

Course Description

This class examines terror and insurgency through a scientific lens. This class discusses relevant political science works examining (a) why does political violence occur, (b) who participates in political violence, (c) how do terror and insurgent groups organize and operate, (d) best practices for counterinsurgency, and an assortment of other topics.

To reflect recent trends in political science, the class will be quantitatively oriented. In the class, you will develop the skills to read and critically assess contemporary political science research and to conduct data exploration of your own.

Assignments and Course Requirements

Lecture Participation (10%): You will be expected to attend and participate in lecture and labs.

Assignment 1 (7.5%), Assignment 2 (7.5%), Assignment 3 (10%): You will complete a series of short assignments on the causes for war.

Problem Set (20%): You will complete a problem set with data analysis and mapping designed to explore some of the course concepts.

Final Project (35%): You will design a 15-page document on a counterinsurgency plan for Iraq (circa 2014).

Referee Report (10%): Before it is due, you will review one of your classmate's final project and offer helpful feedback.

Course Policies¹

Academic Honesty.

¹If you have any questions regarding course policies, you are expected to ask Prof. Schram. Failure to understand the policies will not be treated as an excuse for noncompliance.

This course will follow Vanderbilt's high standards of academic honesty, available in detail in the University's Student Handbook.

Reading and Materials.

All required materials for the course are listed below. I will provide some supplementary materials for some of the topics.

The class will contain readings from the following books that are available at the bookstore.

Berman, Eli. *Radical, religious, and violent: The new economics of terrorism*. MIT press, 2011.

Shapiro, Jacob N. *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing violent covert organizations*. Princeton University Press, 2013.

Technology in the Classroom.

Pedagogical research on teaching and learning shows that students learn and retain more when they handwrite their notes and are free from technological distractions like laptops, phones, and tablets. As a result, this is a technology-free classroom. Laptops are not allowed during class and please remember to turn cell-phones to silent before class begins.

Unexcused Late work.

Deadlines are very important for this class, and it is critical to stay on top of your assignments. Assignments will specify the day and time of when items should be turned in.

Unexcused late assignments will be penalized. These penalties will be as follows.

Within 1 hour: Grace period, this is ok.

>1 hour to 24 hours late: your final grade = (your grade)*0.9

>24 hours to 48 hours late: your final grade = (your grade)*0.8

>48 to 72 hours late: your final grade = (your grade)*0.7

>72 to 120 hours late: your final grade = (your grade)*0.5

>120 hours late: your final grade = (your grade)*0.1

Excused Late Work.

As stated above, deadlines are very important for this class. Furthermore, there are no assignments in this class that require a fast turn-around; in all cases, assignments will be posted weeks before they are due. For that reason, there are very few cases where extensions will be granted. If you feel you are in one of these highly unusual situations, you must (a) email me, (b) set up a meeting with me, and (c) send me your problem set or final project as it stands. You must do all of these before the assignment is due.

Missing Lectures.

Lectures account for 10% of your grade. This isn't much, but it could be the difference between a B and a C+. If you must miss class for a good reason, please reach out to us beforehand so we can keep track; if you are missing lots of lectures, we may ask you to meet with us.

Students with Disabilities.

If you need course accommodations due to a disability, please make an appointment with Prof. Schram. We will work together along with the University's EAD Department to meet your needs.

Sensitive Nature of the Class

This class will discuss disturbing political phenomena. Outside of lecture, you will be exploring datasets on (a) lynching during the Reconstruction Era, (b) political violence in Africa, and (c) violence against Coalition forces and civilians in Iraq. If participating in this class is causing you distress, set up an appointment with Prof. Schram to find alternate assignments.

Course Dates

Course Dates & Logistics

Below is the class schedule. Please note: the class has been recently overhauled. I will try very hard to stick to this schedule, but I will not do so at the expense of sacrificing your learning. Therefore, this schedule is subject to change.

Date		Material Covered	Logistic Notes
18-Jan	Module 0	Syllabus Day	
20-Jan	Module 1	We're Rational People...	
25-Jan	Module 2	...Why Can't We Just Get Along? (1/2)	
27-Jan	Module 2	...Why Can't We Just Get Along? (1/2)	
1-Feb	Module 2	...Why Can't We Just Get Along? (1/2)	Assignment 1 Due
3-Feb	Module 3	...Why Can't We Just Get Along? (2/2)	
8-Feb	Module 3	...Why Can't We Just Get Along? (2/2)	
10-Feb	Module 3	...Why Can't We Just Get Along? (2/2)	Assignment 2 Due
15-Feb	Module 3	Commitment Problems Lab	
17-Feb	Module 4	Methodology Class (experimental ideal)	
22-Feb	Module 4	Method cont./Causes of War Debrief	Assignment 3 Due
24-Feb		Introduction to QGIS	
1-Mar	Module 5	Who Fights?	
3-Mar	Module 6	Who Supports?	

8-Mar		No Class (Spring Break	
10-Mar		No Class (Spring Break)	
15-Mar	Module 7	Delegation Lab	
17-Mar	Module 7	Organizing Terror	
22-Mar	Module 7	Organizing Terror	Problem Set 1 Due
24-Mar	Module 8	Kinetic COIN	
29-Mar	Module 8	Kinetic COIN	
31-Mar	Module 9	Winning Hearts and Minds	
5-Apr	Module 9	Winning Hearts and Minds	
7-Apr		Iraq Briefing	
12-Apr		No Class	Peter's @ conference
14-Apr		Work on final project	
19-Apr		Work on final project	
21-Apr		TBD	
26-Apr		TBD	
28-Apr		Final Class	

Course Readings

Module 1: We're Rational People...

Required Readings

- The War Puzzle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=459LThO2HHM>
- F Walter, Barbara F. "Bargaining failures and civil war." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 243-261.

Recommended readings

- Primer on expected utility theory (with risk aversion): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-aUroyt1v8>

Module 2: ...Why Can't We Just Get Along? (1/2)

Required Readings

- **Lecture 1:**
 - o Crisis bargaining and War: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeNg1k0y8OA>
 - o Crisis bargaining and War: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Udk60XUnKxM>
- **Lecture 2:**
 - o Private Information and War: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-4gJMvEF5I>

Recommended readings

- Fearon, James D. "Rationalist explanations for war." *International organization* 49.3 (1995): 379-414.
- The Economist: "Kazakhstan's president asks Russia for help as unrest grows."

Module 3: ...Why Can't We Just Get Along? (2/2)

Required Readings

- **Lecture 1:**
 - o Colombia Reading
- **Lecture 2:**
 - o Commitment Problems: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jNGngVspS8>
- **Lecture 3: (Readings in preparation for the next few classes)**
 - o Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war." *American political science review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-90.

Recommended readings

- Powell, Robert. "War as a commitment problem." *International organization* 60, no. 1 (2006): 169-203.
- Coe, Andrew J. "Costly peace: A new rationalist explanation for war." *Unpublished article, Harvard University* (2011).
- Jackson, Matthew O., and Massimo Morelli. "Political bias and war." *American Economic Review* 97, no. 4 (2007): 1353-1373.

Module 4: Methodology Primer

Required Readings

- Johnston, Patrick B. "Does decapitation work? Assessing the effectiveness of leadership targeting in counterinsurgency campaigns." *International Security* 36.4 (2012): 47-79.
- [Randomized Controlled Trials Youtube](#) (UNICEF)

Recommended readings

- [Karl Popper "Science as Falsification" Youtube](#)
- Dube, Arindrajit, Oeindrila Dube, and Omar García-Ponce. "Cross-border spillover: US gun laws and violence in Mexico." *American Political Science Review* 107.3 (2013): 397-417.

Module 5: Who Fights?

Required Readings

- Berman 1-155

Recommended readings

- Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. "Who fights? The determinants of participation in civil war." *American Journal of Political Science* 52.2 (2008): 436-455.
- De Mesquita, Ethan Bueno. "The quality of terror." *American journal of political science* 49, no. 3 (2005): 515-530.
- Dube, Oeindrila, and Juan F. Vargas. "Commodity price shocks and civil conflict: Evidence from Colombia." *The review of economic studies* 80, no. 4 (2013): 1384-1421.
- Nathan Nunn and Nancy Qian, "US Food Aid and Civil Conflict." *American Economic Review* vol. 104, no. 6 (2014): 1630–1666.

Module 6: Who Supports?

Required Readings

- Jha, Saumitra, and Moses Shayo. "Valuing peace: the effects of financial market exposure on votes and political attitudes." *Econometrica* 87, no. 5 (2019): 1561-1588.

Recommended readings

- Jha, [Financial Asset Holdings and Political Attitudes: Evidence from Revolutionary England, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 103, No.3, August 2015.](#)
- Voigtländer, Nico, and Hans-Joachim Voth. "Nazi indoctrination and anti-Semitic beliefs in Germany." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112.26 (2015): 7931-7936.
- Blair, Graeme, et al. "Poverty and support for militant politics: Evidence from Pakistan." *American Journal of Political Science* 57.1 (2013): 30-48.
- Voigtländer, Nico, and Hans-Joachim Voth. "Persecution perpetuated: the medieval origins of anti-Semitic violence in Nazi Germany." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127.3 (2012): 1339-1392.

Module 7: Organizing Terror

Required Readings

- **Lecture 1:**

- Shapiro 1-117
- **Lecture 2:**
 - Fishman, Brian. *Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside Al-Qa'ida in Iraq*. Military Academy West Point NY, Combating Terrorism Center, 2009.

Recommended readings

- Bendor, Jonathan, Amihai Glazer, and Thomas Hammond. "Theories of delegation." *Annual review of political science* 4.1 (2001): 235-269.
- Gates, Scott. "Recruitment and allegiance: The microfoundations of rebellion." *Journal of Conflict resolution* 46.1 (2002): 111-130.
- Shapiro, Jacob N., and David A. Siegel. "Moral hazard, discipline, and the management of terrorist organizations." *World Politics* 64.1 (2012): 39-78.
- Schram, Peter. "Self-managing terror: Resolving agency problems with diverse teams." *Games and Economic Behavior* 130 (2021): 240-257.

Module 8: Kinetic COIN

Required Readings

- Calderón, Gabriela, et al. "The beheading of criminal organizations and the dynamics of violence in Mexico." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59.8 (2015): 1455-1485.

Recommended readings

- Max Abrahms and Philip B.K. Potter. 2015. "Explaining Terrorism: Leadership Deficits and Militant Group Tactics," *International Organization* 69 (2): 311-342.
- Schram, Peter. "Managing insurgency." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63, no. 10 (2019): 2319-2353.

Module 9: Winning Hearts and Minds

Required Readings

- Dell, Melissa, and Pablo Querubin. "Nation building through foreign intervention: Evidence from discontinuities in military strategies." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 133, no. 2 (2017): 701-764.

Recommended readings

- Berman, Eli, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Joseph H. Felter. "Can hearts and minds be bought? The economics of counterinsurgency in Iraq." *Journal of Political Economy* 119.4 (2011): 766-819.

Recommended Readings Post-Problem Set 1:

- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/nearly-2000-black-americans-were-lynched-during-reconstruction-180975120/>
- <https://items.ssrc.org/reading-racial-conflict/ida-b-wells-and-the-economics-of-racial-violence/>