

Conflict: Root Causes, Consequences, and Solutions for the Future

(MPP Course: PPHA 38740)

Class Information

University of Chicago, Harris School
Instructor: Oeindrila Dube (odube@uchicago.edu)
Winter 2021
Instruction: Remote

Class time: **Monday, 9:10 – 11:10 am OR Monday, 1:50 – 3:50 PM**

Note: This is an unusual year. Owing to COVID-19, this class will be run remotely. To maximize accessibility by students residing across different time zones, I have opened up my Undergraduate class to MPP students (and vice versa). Thus, there are two potential times, and you can choose which one to take. I would like you to register for one specific class/time (and barring emergencies and explicit permission from me) I would like you to consistently attend the class at the time that you have registered for.

TA Session Information

The Teaching Assistant for this course is Leah Luben: luben@uchicago.edu

TA Section times: **Friday, 9:10 – 10:10 am OR 10:20 – 11:20 am**

You are expected to attend one of these TA sections. *Unlike class*, the section you choose to attend can vary from week to week.

Course Objectives

The goals of this course are to introduce you to key concepts in the study of conflict, and to help you develop the analytical skills you need to understand and assess key arguments advanced in this arena.

We will examine fundamental topics in the study of conflict. Drawing primarily on economics and political science, as well as psychology, we will examine the role of economic shocks and ethnic divisions on civil war. We will also discern whether similar factors explain the rise of terrorism. In addition, we will study the consequences of conflict on socio-economic development, and examine the role of foreign aid and post-conflict reconciliation in helping countries recover from conflict.

The objectives of this course are both to help you learn the content of these topics, and also to help you become savvy consumers of conflict research -- as might be required of a policymaker, or someone who seeks to produce empirical research in this area.

Thus a second major emphasis of this course is learning how to think critically about empirical evidence, and developing an understanding of methodologies used in empirical analysis, such as fixed effects, differences-in-differences research designs, and instrumental variables estimation.

Running a Remote Course

This class will be run remotely. It will include both pre-recorded lectures and a synchronous zoom component, in which we meet for up to a 2-hour interval.

Prior to each class I will be uploading a pre-recorded lecture, which will vary from 60-90 minutes in length. It is essential that you watch the pre-recorded lecture *in advance of class*.

During the class, on Zoom:

- You will have a chance to ask questions about all the material covered in the lecture
- We will have a discussion around 1 focal paper for the class, on which you will also be preparing a comment assignment (see Course Requirements)
- We will have 2 student presentations on the basis of which we will have additional classroom discussions.

Course Requirements

There are 4 course requirements on which you will be graded.

- 1) All students must complete **2 written memo assignments**. In these assignments, you will be required to critically assess an academic argument using a memo style format. The assignment will typically be posted 1 week to 10 days prior to their due date. These assignments should be typed, and should not exceed 3 pages in length (double-spaced, using 12 point font, 1-inch margins all around). Your grades on the written assignments will be based on both the quality of your writing as well as the clarity and content of your points.

Note: These should be uploaded on Canvas by 5 pm on the date they are due.

- 2) All students will also be required to do an **in-class presentation**, 20 minutes in length. You will be asked to select one of the papers designated under the student presentation section of each topic in the syllabus below. The goal of the presentation is two-fold: to lead a class discussion on the topic; and to develop the skills needed to translate the content of an academic paper into simple terms, critically analyze the content, and effectively communicate this analysis to an audience. In the presentation, you will be asked to present a brief overview, followed by an extensive assessment of the paper, in which you comment on the nature of the data, the empirical strategy and analysis, and offer suggestions for what other evidence would

be needed to support the conclusion of the paper. (See note on “Presentation Guidance” for further details).

Depending on class enrollment, the presentation may be done in groups or pairs. **Note: The final presentation slides are due in Friday, Friday, by noon, preceding the Monday you present.** I encourage you to meet me in Office Hours the week before to discuss the content of the presentation.

- 3) Class participation is also an essential part of the course. I expect active discussion and comments, and encourage questions, particularly on days that you are not presenting. To facilitate discussion, students will be asked to submit **a short comment** (1-2 paragraphs) on a pre-specified focal reading. Focal readings will be marked with an ** in the final version of the syllabus.

These comments are intended to stimulate discussion and will be due **Saturday 5 pm preceding Monday’s class**. The submission page will be open from the end of the previous class and remain open until the due date. The comments should focus on the economics, political science, or psychology of the reading and might propose alternative explanations for the results, comment on the research design and propose follow-up work, or explain a flaw or concern with the research design. These should not focus on small, idiosyncratic issues.

Note: Students who are doing a presentation are excused from submitting the comment assignment the week of their presentation.

- 4) Finally, you will be required to take a **final exam**.

In past years, this exam has been administered on the last day of class. Owing to the shortened winter quarter schedule, the exam will instead be administered during finals week.

Course Grading

30% - 2 Written memo assignments (15% each)

15% - Class Presentation

35% - Class Participation based on written comments & verbal comments (including comments on other students presentations)

20% - Final Exam

Late Policy

For the memo assignments and the presentation, each day an assignment is late, a full grade is deducted (e.g., A- to B+). Starting from 30 minutes after the official deadline, your assignment is considered to be a day late, and two days late 24 hours after the official deadline, etc.

Note: You cannot submit late comment assignments, since we discuss the paper and comments in class on Monday.

If you are anticipate not being able to turn an assignment in on time because of a serious emergency such as sickness, please alert me and the TA in advance, by writing me about the circumstances in advance of the time at which the assignment is due. I will consider extensions related to emergencies on a case by case basis.

Re-grading Policy

Feel free to discuss your grade with your TA to get clarification. If following this conversation, you think an error was made, ***please submit a re-grade request to me, with your TA cc'd, on email, within a week of the assignment being handed back.*** Please include an explanation of the re-grade request: substantively discuss why you thought you answered the question or why you think a mistake may have been made. Please be aware that when you submit your assignment for a re-grade, and I examine the response in full, your grade can change to either a higher level if I agree with the substantive concern or to a lower level, if I see additional potential concerns with your responses.

Texts

Conflict is a new field within disciplines like economics, and there is no textbook that comprehensively covers the new and cutting edge material covered in the course. I have thus structured the class around published articles.

All articles will be uploaded on Canvas. Links are also provided below for most readings. Links such as www.jstor.org may only work from an on-campus computer or IP address. Scholar.google.com is generally another good way of locating references.

It is expected that you do all the readings before class, including the papers listed under the student presentation sections. The presentations are meant to be interactive with all students in the class participating, and not just the presenter. Thus having all students read the papers is essential for having quality discussion during class.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

Submitting another person's statements or ideas as one's own work is contrary to academic integrity. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system.

Proper acknowledgment of another's ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be cited and identified by author, title of source, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes "use" should be addressed to me.

Charges of academic fraud by students are subject to the University's policy on academic fraud / subject to the University's area disciplinary system. The complete statement of policy on academic honesty and fraud are here: <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/Policies#Honesty>.

Tentative Syllabus

1. January 11th – Introduction

We will go over the course requirements and assignments. We will also cover the content of these two papers as an introduction to the literature examining determinants of civil conflicts, and focus on interpreting regression tables.

Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "[Greed and Grievance in Civil War](#)." *Oxford Economic Papers*. 56 (2004): 563-595.

Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. "[Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War](#)." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Feb., 2003), pp. 75-90

Meier, Gerald M., and James E. Rauch. (2005). "Appendix: How to Read a Regression Table", *Leading Issues in Economic Development*, Eight Edition, p. 561-566. (Posted on Canvas)

2. January 18th – University Holiday - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – No class

3. January 25th – Ethnic Divisions and Civil Conflict

Montalvo, Jose G., and Marta Reynal-Querol. 2005. "[Ethnic Polarization, Potential Conflict, and Civil Wars](#)." *American Economic Review* 95 (3): 796–816.

Michalopoulos, Stelios and Elias Papaioannou. 2015. "[The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa](#)." *American Economic Review*.

Joan Esteban, Laura Mayoral and Debraj Ray, [Ethnicity and Conflict: An Empirical Investigation](#) with, *American Economic Review* **102** (2012), 1310-1342.

Papers for student presentations:

Yanagizawa-Drott, David. "[Propaganda and Conflict: Theory and Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide](#)." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

Jha, Saumitra. 2013. [Trade, Institutions and Ethnic Tolerance: Evidence from S. Asia](#), *American Political Science Review*

4. February 1st – The Economic Causes of Civil Conflict

Edward Miguel, Shanker Satyanath and Ernest Sergenti, 2004. "[Economic Shocks and Civil Conflict: An Instrumental Variables Approach](#)," *Journal of Political Economy* 112 (4), 119-144.

Dube, Oeindrila and Juan Vargas. "[Commodity Price Shocks and Civil Conflict: Evidence from Colombia](#)." *Review of Economic Studies*. (2013) 80, 1384–1421.

Berman, Nick and M. Couttenier. [External shocks, internal shots: the geography of civil conflicts](#), 2015, *Review of Economics and Statistics* vol 97(4), pp 758-776.

Blair, Graeme, Darin Christensen and Aaron Rudkin, "[Do Commodity Price Shocks Cause Armed Conflict? A Meta-Analysis of Natural Experiments](#)", 2021, ESOC Working Paper.

Papers for student presentations:

Andersen, Jorgen Jeul, Frode Martin Nordvik and Andrea Tesei. "[Oil and Civil Conflict: On and Off \(shore\)](#)." Working Paper.

"[This mine is mine! How minerals fuel conflicts in Africa](#)", (Nicolas Berman, Mathieu Couttenier, Dominic Rohner, and Mathias Thoenig), forthcoming in *American Economic Review*.

Extra reading for reference:

Bazzi, Samuel, and Christopher Blattman. 2014. "[Economic Shocks and Conflict: Evidence from Commodity Prices](#)." *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, 6(4): 1-38.

TENATIVE DUE DATE FOR ASSIGNMENT 1: Monday February 8th

5. February 8th – Can Economic Factors Explain Terrorism?

Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, 2003. "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is there a Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (17) 4, pp. 119-144.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/3216934.pdf>

Blair, Graeme C., Christine Fair, Neil Malhotra and Jacob Shapiro, "[Poverty and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan](#)," *American Journal of Political Science* Volume 57, Issue 1, pages 30–48, January 2013.

[“Relative Poverty, Perceived Violence, and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan.”](#) 2016 by C. CHRISTINE FAIR, REBECCA LITTMAN, NEIL MALHOTRA AND JACOB N. SHAPIRO. *Political Science Research Methods*

Eli Berman, Michael Callen, Joseph H. Felter and Jake Shapiro, [“Do Working Men Rebel? Employment and Insurgency in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Philippines.”](#) *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2011) 55 (4): 496-528

Benjamin W. Bahney, Radha K. Iyengar, Patrick B. Johnston, Danielle F. Jung, Jacob Shapiro Howard J. Shatz. [“Insurgent Compensation: Evidence from Iraq,”](#) *American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings*, 2013, 103(3): 518-522.

Papers for student presentations:

Piazza, James. A. [“A Supply-Side View of Suicide Terrorism: A Cross-National Study.”](#) 2008. *Journal of Politics*. 70(1): 28-39.

Benmelech, Efrain and Esteban Klor. [“What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?”](#) NBER Working Paper 22190

6. February 15th – Social and Psychological Causes of Conflict

Littman, Rebecca and Betsy Levy Paluck. 2015. [“The Cycle of Violence: Understanding Individual Participation in Collective Violence”](#) *Advances in Political Psychology* 36(1): 79-99.

Victoroff, Jeff. [“The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches.”](#) *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Feb., 2005), pp. 3-42

Merari, Ariel, Ilan Diamant, Arie Bibi, Yoav Brishi and Giora Zakin. [“Personality Characteristics of ‘Self-Martyrs / Suicide Bombers’ and Organizers of Suicide Attacks”](#) *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22:1, 87-101.

Papers for student presentations

Whitehouse, Harvey, Brain McQuinn, Michael Buhrmest, and William B. Swann, Jr. 2014. [“Brothers in arms: Libyan revolutionaries bond like family.”](#) *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111(50).

Jeremy Ginges, Scott Atran. [What Motivates Participation in Violent Political Action: Selective Incentives or Parochial Altruism?.](#) *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Wiley, 2009, 1167, pp.115-123.

7. February 22nd – The Role of Foreign Aid

Berman, Eli, Jacob Shapiro and Joseph Felter. Forthcoming. "[Can Hearts and Minds be Bought: The Economics of Counterinsurgency in Iraq.](#)" *Journal of Political Economy*.

Crost, Benjamin, Joseph Felter and Patrick Johnston. 2014. "[Aid under Fire: Development Projects and Civil Conflict.](#)" *American Economic Review*.

Beath, Andrew, Fotini Christia and Ruben Enikopolov. 2016. "[Winning Hearts and Minds? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan.](#)" Working paper, MIT.

Papers for student presentations

Crost B., J. Felter and P. Johnston. 2016. [Conditional Cash Transfers, Civil Conflict and Insurgent Influence: Experimental Evidence from the Philippines.](#) *Journal of Development Economics* 118: 171-182

Nunn, Nathan and Nancy Qian, "[US food aid and civil conflict,](#)" *The American Economic Review*, 2014, 104 (6), 1630–1666.

8. March 1st – The Effect of Conflict on Social Cohesion

Bauer, Blattman, Chytilová, Henrich, Miguel, and Mitts. "[Can War Foster Cooperation?](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*—Volume 30, Number 3—Summer 2016—Pages 249–274.

Voors, M.J., E.E.M. Nillesen, E.H. Bulte, B.W. Lensink, P. Verwimp, and D.P. van Soest. 2012. "[Violent Conflict and Behavior: a Field Experiment in Burundi.](#)" *American Economic Review*.

Dell, Melissa and Pablo Querubin. 2016. [Nation Building Through Foreign Intervention: Evidence from Discontinuities in Military Strategies.](#) *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, forthcoming.

Papers for student presentations:

Bauer, Michal, Alessandra Cassar, Julie Chytilová, and Joseph Henrich. 2014. "[War's Enduring Effects on the Development of Egalitarian Motivations and In-Group Biases.](#)" *Psychological Science* 25(1): 47–57.

Rohner, Dominic, Mathias Thoenig and Fabrizio Zilibotti), "[Seeds of Distrust: Conflict in Uganda](#)" *Journal of Economic Growth*, 2013, 18 (3): 217-252.

TENTATIVE DUE DATE FOR ASSIGNMENT 2: Monday March 1st

9. March 8th –Reconciling and Rebuilding after Conflict

Brouneus, Karen. "[The Trauma of Truth Telling: Effects of Witnessing in the Rwandan Gacaca Courts on Psychological Health.](#)" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54(3) 408 – 437

Cilliers, Jacobus, Oeindrila Dube and Bilal Siddiqi. 2016. "[Reconciling after civil conflict increases social capital but decreases individual wellbeing](#)" *Science* (Paper and Appendix).

Casey, Katherine, Rachel Glennerster and Edward Miguel. 2017. "[Reshaping Institutions: Evidence on Aid Impacts using a Pre-Analysis Plan.](#)" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*

Papers for student presentations

Paluck, E.L. (2009). [Reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict using the media: A field experiment in Rwanda.](#) *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, 574-587.

Jha, Saumitra and Moses Shayo. 2016. [Valuing Peace: The Effects of Stock Market Exposure on Votes and Political Attitudes](#), Stanford GSB Working Paper.

Final Exam: Date during Finals Week TBA