POSC 241: Ethnic Conflict
Carleton College, Winter 2013

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Winter Term Office Hours
Mondays, 12:00-2:30
Tuesdays, 1:30-4:30pm
Thursdays, 1:30-4:30pm
And Skype, by appointment

Overview

This course provides an introduction to the study of ethnic conflict and is organized around two core questions: (1) how can we understand why, when, and where ethnic conflicts occur? And (2) what can we do to manage, minimize, or eliminate ethnic conflict? To answer these questions, we will begin by investigating different theories of ethnicity and the ways in which ethnic identities can be shaped, manipulated, understood, and used to sow discord among different groups. We will also explore these dynamics in a range of case studies to build a more complex picture of conflict processes and to develop a deeper understanding of how different kinds of social, economic, and political conditions contribute to—or inhibit—violence. We will conclude by examining what can be done to prevent ethnic conflict and to promote reconciliation and healing in societies that have experienced ethnic violence.

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore.


All other readings will be available on Moodle. You are expected to do all the required readings before coming to class.

** Optional purchase. You may also access the free e-book version of this text (link available on Moodle)
Requirements

Your grade in this course will be based on the following five elements:

- Participation: 15%
- Short response papers: 20%
- Policy paper: 30%
- Video case study: 25%
- Bibliographic essay: 10%

**Participation:** Your participation grade will be based on regular, informed contributions during class and Moodle discussions as well as periodic turns serving as discussion leaders for the rest of the class. When calculating your participation grade, I will be weighing the quality of contribution over quantity. You will receive a higher grade for making thoughtful comments or raising questions that enhance our understanding of the material or further our investigation of ethnic conflict rather than speaking just for the sake of hearing yourself talk. Active listening is also a core component of participation, but this is not a class where active listening alone will earn you a respectable participation grade. Unexcused absences, habitual lateness to class, inattentiveness, and disruptive or discourteous behavior during class can lower your participation grade, in some cases, precipitously. Please refer to the handout on participation expectations (on Moodle) for more details about how your participation will be evaluated.

**Short response papers:** During the first half of the course, you will write two short (3-5 double-spaced pages) response papers on a question of your choosing from a provided list. These short papers are intended to make you think critically about some of the readings and theories that we encounter in class and connect them to cases and current events. There will be some (minimal) outside research required. Each paper will be worth ten percent of your grade.

**Policy paper:** This paper, which will be 10-12 double-spaced pages, will require you to analyze a contemporary case of ethnic conflict—the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—and make a policy recommendation about what (if anything) the United States should consider doing to help stop the ongoing violence in this situation. This paper will require you to conduct some background research on the DRC and to make a clear argument, backed by data and evidence, to build a persuasive case either favoring or opposing intervention. This paper will be due on the last day of class (note: not our last class meeting, but the last day of classes for this term—Monday, March 11th).

**Video case study:** In order to write the policy paper, you will need to amass a wealth of knowledge about the DRC, which is a very complex case, in a relatively short amount of time. The video case study is a way to use the collective researching power of the entire class to facilitate this learning process. We will build a joint foundation of knowledge about our common case, and each student will become something of an expert on a selected aspect of the larger case in order to then “teach” this information to the rest of the class.

For this project, you will work in small groups, each of which will focus on a selected aspect of the case study (e.g., country background; existing conflict resolution efforts; political/diplomatic/economic relationships with the US, etc.). After doing research on your topic, you will produce a short (no more than 12 minutes) video podcast/screencast about it,
which will then be screened for the rest of the class. Essentially, you will be making mini-documentaries about your particular topic to inform others. The members of the class will then build on these mini-documentaries to advance their own knowledge of the case in an efficient way. We will screen these videos in class in the 7th and 8th weeks of the term. Part of your grade for this component will be based on content, part will be based on presentation effectiveness, and part will be based on individual contribution to the overall group’s work.

**Bibliographic essay:** In addition to the video, all members of the group will turn in separate bibliographic essays on the sources that they consulted and found helpful when researching the content for their videos. These essays will be posted on Moodle and will be available to others in the class to aid their own research for the policy paper. The essays will be due on the day that your group is scheduled to screen its video.

**Optional extra credit:** You may earn up to three percentage points of extra credit over the course of the term by keeping a current events journal. For this journal, you will read current news articles (from a reputable source) about a contemporary case of ethnic conflict and write brief responses (<500 words each) to these articles that reflect on the events covered and try to understand them using material that we have covered in class. You will hand in this current events journal—both the original articles and your reflections—*in class* on Thursday, March 7th. To qualify for extra credit, you must include at least five different articles/reflections, and these will be assessed on a four-point scale: satisfactory-plus (S+) will earn you three percentage points; satisfactory (S) will earn you two percentage points; satisfactory-minus (S-) will earn you one percentage point; unsatisfactory will earn you no additional points.

All assignments will have more detailed instructions, guidelines, and expectations posted on Moodle, along with specific requirements for formatting and citations.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. You are expected to come to class regularly and on time. If you are unable to attend a particular session due to illness or some other emergency, you should notify me by email in advance. A pattern of unexcused absences or tardiness will significantly lower your participation grade (and yes, I *do* make a regular mental note of who is and is not in class). If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and then come see me in office hours to answer any questions you have. Please do not email me to ask “did I miss anything important?” The answer is always: “yes, you did.”

**Deadlines:** All assignments, unless otherwise noted, should be uploaded to Moodle **IN PDF FORM** by 5pm on the date due. Documents that are not in PDF form will not be accepted and will not count as being “turned in.”

**Late work:** Late work will automatically incur a penalty of 1/3 grade for every 24 hours past the specified deadline unless you provide documentation of extenuating circumstances (illness, family emergency, etc.) Technology failures – unless system-wide – will **not** excuse late work.

**Extensions:** Extensions will not be granted unless there are compelling reasons involving unforeseen complications or obstacles to completing your work on time. Simply having
they arise so they do not interfere with your learning. If you feel more comfortable raising your strongly if at any point in time you feel as if the classroom climate is not welcoming or supportive, I strongly encourage you to come speak with me in private so that we can address problems as they arise so they do not interfere with your learning. If you feel more comfortable raising your
concerns anonymously, you can also approach any member of the faculty or staff you trust who can pass along your comments to me while keeping your identity confidential.

**Schedule of Readings**

All readings should be completed carefully before coming to class in order to facilitate discussion. Readings not from the main course texts can be found on Moodle.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introduction and Course Overview</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 3</td>
<td>• No reading. Explore the class Moodle site and read through this syllabus carefully</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ethnicity, Psychology, and Conflict</strong></td>
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| January 8 | • Cordell and Wolff, pp. 14-17  
| January 10 | • Cordell and Wolff, pp. 37-43.  
| **Week 3** | **Greed, Grievance, and Competition** |
| January 15 | • Cordell and Wolff, pp. 32-37  
*Short paper #1 due 5pm on 1/18* |
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<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Insecurity, Institutions, and Entrepreneurs</th>
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| January 22 | • Cordell and Wolff, pp. 26-32  

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<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Civil Society</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>• Varshney, Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life, ch. 1-4</td>
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| January 31 | • Varshney, Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life, ch. 5-11 (read only the specific chapters assigned to your group)  
**Short paper #2 due 5pm on 2/1** |

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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Conflict Dynamics: Escalation and De-Escalation</th>
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<td>February 5</td>
<td>• In-class movie screening: “Earth”</td>
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<td>February 7</td>
<td>• Roy, Some Trouble With Cows, ch. 1-5 (small class discussions; attend your assigned time slot)</td>
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<th>Week 7</th>
<th>International Interventions</th>
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| February 12 | • Cordell and Wolff, ch. 5  
**Screening group DRC podcasts** |
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<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Peace Settlements</th>
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| February 19 | • Cordell and Wolff, ch. 7  
| February 21 | • Cordell and Wolff, ch. 8  

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<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Justice and Reconciliation</th>
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<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Peacebuilding and Trust</th>
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| March 5 | • In-class movie screening: “Promises”  
Extra-credit journal due in class |
Policy paper due 5pm on 3/11 |