POSC 241: Ethnic Conflict
Carleton College, Fall 2011

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Fall Office Hours:
Mondays, 2:00-4:30pm
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:00-4:30pm
Or by Skype appointment

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the theories and empirics necessary to analyze and understand ethnic conflict. The course is organized around two core questions: what causes ethnic conflict? And what can we do to manage, lessen, or eradicate ethnic conflict? To answer these questions, we will begin by investigating different theories of ethnicity and identity and the ways in which such identities can be shaped, manipulated, and used to generate discord among different groups. We will then turn to the exploration of how these underlying disagreements can escalate into conflicts, and how different kinds of social, economic, and political conditions contribute to increasing hostility. We will conclude by focusing on a range of possible solutions to ethnic conflict and explore their potential and their limitations.

Course Materials

The following texts are required for this class and are available through the Carleton bookstore:


Additionally, the following text has been ordered in limited numbers at the bookstore and also exists in (free) e-book form. The link to the e-book is available on Moodle.


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

Your grade will be based on the following elements, which will be weighted as follows:

- **Participation**: 15%
- **Midterm exam**: 20%
- **Research project**: 40%
- **Take-home final exam**: 25%

**Class participation.** Your participation grade will be based on regular, informed contributions during class discussions and occasional Moodle discussions. 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. Students who are perennially late or absent, or who come to class unprepared for discussion will receive low marks for participation.

**Midterm exam.** Halfway through the course, there will be a take-home midterm exam. You will be given a list of questions that ask you to draw from the readings and in-class discussions. You will select two questions and write a 7-8 page (double-spaced) response to be turned in the following week.

**Research project.** Throughout the term, you will work in small groups of 3-4 people to explore a question pertaining to ethnic conflict. Because this is a large undertaking, the project will include several sub-components involving both collaborative and individual elements. Ultimately, each group will be responsible for researching a particular topic, collecting the necessary literature and data to better understand the issue, analyzing those data, investigating relevant case studies, writing up the results, and presenting the result to the class. The specific graded portions of this project are divided as follows:

- Short review of scholarly literature: 5% (group grade)
- Initial data exploration: 5% (individual grade)
- Final paper: 10% (group grade)
- Case studies: 10% (individual grade)
- Class presentation: 5% (group grade)
- Individual contribution to group: 5% (individual grade)

**Please note:** The data analyses that you will carry out for this project will be very simple and straightforward, and do not require any specialized knowledge of statistics. While such knowledge will be helpful for the assignment, it is not necessary in any way.

**Final exam.** The final exam for this class will consist of multiple essay questions that you will answer based on your understanding of the readings and discussions from class. The questions will be handed out on the last day of class, and your responses will be due on the last day of the exam period.
Course Policies

Attendance.
You are expected to come to class regularly and on time. If you are unable to attend due to illness or some other personal matter, please notify me in advance. A pattern of unexcused and unexplained absences, or chronic tardiness will affect your participation grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and/or come see me in office hours. Emailing me to ask “did I miss anything” is NOT an acceptable substitute and will make me very cranky.

Late work.
Late work will be penalized by 1/3 grade per 24 hours after the stated deadline unless you provide documentation of extenuating circumstances (illness, family emergency, etc.) Make a note: computers crash, printers jam, and files occasionally disappear into thin air. Plan ahead, make back-ups of your work, and do not expect technological difficulties will 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 a busy week full of exams and papers is not, in itself, sufficient grounds for an extension. Please make note of assignment due dates in this and your other classes and plan your workload accordingly.

Internet/cell phones
You are not to text, surf the internet, check email, Facebook, etc. during class. There is a zero tolerance policy in effect; if you are caught violating this expectation, your participation grade will be seriously affected.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty.
Both are offenses that the College and I take very seriously. You are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity in this class, submitting only your own work and not taking credit for work done by anyone else. Anyone caught cheating, plagiarizing, or otherwise violating the rules of academic honesty at Carleton will automatically receive a zero for the assignment and will have the case referred to the Dean’s office for further investigation and possibly disciplinary action.

Please note: you can violate academic dishonesty standards without ever intending to do so. To avoid landing yourself in this kind of trouble, please take pains to cite your sources accurately and thoroughly. You are also strongly encouraged to keep outlines or rough drafts of your papers to document the evolution of your work. If you have any doubts or questions about citing sources, please feel free to consult with me. You are also strongly encouraged to familiarize yourself with the College’s website on academic honesty, which is available at apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/honesty/.

Special needs.
If you require special accommodation due to a documented physical or learning disability, please come see me during the first week of class to discuss how I can best help you get the most out of this class.
A note on classroom climate.
That class deals with sensitive and difficult subjects that often disturbing or upsetting. In order to have discussions that are productive, challenging, and thought-provoking, we will all work to make the classroom a safe space in which to share and critique others’ ideas. At no time will derogatory, insulting, or rude comments be tolerated. I will do my best to enforce this rule, but ask you to assist me by choosing your own words thoughtfully and being willing to call others (in a respectful and courteous way) on inadvertent violations.

Making the class a safe and supportive place for discussion does not mean, however, that you are free to share your views uncritically and unchallenged. We will push people to explain their reasoning, examine their assumptions, and think about topics in ways that might be, in some cases, quite difficult—especially for those among us who may have very strong personal beliefs or opinions on some of these matters. The goal here is not to stifle debate and analysis, but to set the ground rules for how to debate and analyze difficult topics in a fair, civil, and constructive way.

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 a member of the faculty or staff that you trust who can pass along your comments to me while keeping your identity confidential.

Schedule of Readings

Note: readings available on Moodle are marked (M)

Tuesday, September 13  Introduction to ethnic conflict
• No reading; familiarize yourself with the course Moodle site and the syllabus

Thursday, September 15  Creating and mobilizing ethnic identities

What causes ethnic conflict?

Tuesday, September 20  Dehumanization, schadenfreude, and perpetrator psychology
• Esses and Vernon, ch. 2, 5, 9, 11

Thursday, September 22  Myth, memory, and grievance
• Esses and Vernon, ch. 6
Tuesday, September 27       Political institutions, elites and the state
   • Esses and Vernon, ch. 8

Thursday, September 29     Deprivation, contact, and competition
   • Esses and Vernon, ch. 4

Tuesday, October 4          Civil society
   • Varshney, ch. 1-6.

Wednesday, October 5
   • Group literature review due by 5pm on Moodle

Thursday, October 6         Conflict spirals
   • Roy, ch. 1-5 (small group discussion day)
   • Midterm exam handed out in class

Case Studies

Tuesday, October 11         Rwanda

Thursday, October 13        India/Pakistan
   • In-class movie: “Earth.” No reading; we will discuss the movie on Moodle
   • Midterm exam due by 5pm on Moodle

Tuesday, October 18         Northern Ireland

Thursday, October 20        Israel/Palestine — Guest Lecture: Professor Avraham Sela
## What can be done to stop ethnic conflict?

### Tuesday, October 25  
**International intervention and peacekeeping**

### Thursday, October 27  
**Grassroots mobilization against conflict**
- In-class movie: “Pray the Devil Back to Hell.” No reading; we will discuss the movie on Moodle
- *Data exploration papers due by 5pm on Moodle*

### Tuesday, November 1  
**Peace settlements**

### Thursday, November 3  
**Peacebuilding and trust**
- In-class movie: “Promises.” No reading; we will discuss the movie on Moodle

### Tuesday, November 8  
**Post-conflict reconciliation**

### Thursday, November 10  
**In-class presentations**

### Tuesday, November 15  
**In-class presentations**
- *Group paper, case studies due by 5pm on Moodle*
- *Final exam handed out in class (due by 5pm on Moodle on last exam day)*