Terrorism, Insurgency, and Civil War—Fall 2010  
(Public Policy 38730)

Professor Ethan Bueno de Mesquita  
Office 1155 E. 60th, Rm. 108  
Office Hours Tu/Th 3–4 pm (or by appointment)  
Office Phone 773.834.9874  
Email bdm@uchicago.edu

Course website The course has a website at chalk.uchicago.edu

Course Description This course introduces students to modern, social scientific approaches to the study of political violence. We will focus on several key questions: What are the causes of political violence? How is violence used? Who participates in political violence? What do we know about how to counter the use of violence? How are rebel groups organized? And what are the consequences of violence for society?  

The course addresses these questions by presenting students with the best, cutting edge research on political violence in the social sciences. The goal of doing so is three-fold. First, I hope that students will come away from the course with a better sense of the social mechanisms underlying these critical phenomena and a more nuanced understanding of the policy challenges that political violence poses. Second, I hope students will develop an appreciation for how difficult these questions are to answer credibly. Finally, and most importantly, the course is designed to help students think critically about the literature, so that they can engage the relevant policy debates in a serious-minded and informed way.

Course Requirements The course has three requirements: participation, short essays, and a final paper.

- **Participation** Class will center around a critical discussion of the papers assigned for the session. Thus, doing the reading is essential. The goal is to have a serious dialogue among class members. Your contribution to participation will be judged not in terms of its quantity, but in terms of the level of insight and the extent to which it furthers this critical dialogue.

- **Presentations** Twice during the quarter, in groups of 3–4, you will be responsible for an in-class presentation. Class presentations should take approximately the first 20 minutes of class. In these presentations, you should attempt to achieve two objectives. First, to present an overall narrative of what we can learn about the problem at hand from
the combination of papers assigned for that session’s reading. This narrative should be presented non-technically, in the way you would if you were trying to present research findings to a non-specialist policy audience. Second, to evaluate the credibility of the arguments presented, indicating what you found convincing, what you didn’t find convincing, and why. We will use these presentations as a launching point for our class discussion. The quality of these presentations will play an important role in determining your participation grade.

- **Short, critical essays** You must submit a short critical essay through the Dropbox feature of the course chalk website by 5 pm the night before class, 6 times during the quarter. These essays should be short (no more than 750 words). They should include either a comment on or critique of the readings for the session.

  The goal of these essays is two-fold. First, I want you to engage critically with the readings. Simply restating the arguments won’t do. You should organize your essay around a few key comments, critiques, or ideas about the readings. Second, I want you to work on writing in a concise and direct way (which is much more important than writing beautifully). As such, I will stop reading after 750 words. You should start your essay by laying out, very clearly, the points you are going to make. Then you should make each point in as brief and direct a manner as possible.

  Taken together, these essays will constitute 40% of your grade. If you submit fewer than 6, the missing essays will receive a 0. The essays will be graded on a 5 point scale: (5) deep stuff (this will be rare), (4) well written and interesting, (3) meets expectations, (2) seriously flawed in argument or writing, (1) seriously flawed in argument and writing (I hope this will be rare).

- **Final Paper** You must write a final paper which aims to make a contribution to our understanding of political violence. The paper can be theoretical or empirical. It can focus on one country or group, or it can be cross-national. (My guess is that most people will want to write an empirical, single country study. That is fine.)

  Masters students should write their papers in teams of 3–5 students. The goal is for team discussion to facilitate careful and creative thinking. I will grade the papers, but I will also ask each team member to submit a grade for each other team member. These within-team evaluations will play a role in final grading, especially if it is clear that any members of the team did more or less than their fair share of the work.

  Ph.D. students should write their own paper.

  About half-way through the quarter, we will devote 2 class sessions to students presenting their paper ideas and receiving feedback from the class. You should come talk to me about your paper topic before those sessions.

  Papers should be between 15 and 25 pages. If you think you need more space, rewrite again and again. If you still think you need more space, come talk to me.

  I think the best description of good academic paper writing is by John Cochrane: http://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/john.cochrane/research/papers/phd_paper_writing.pdf

**Course Materials** All readings are available online.

**Grades** Grading will be based on the course requirements as follows: participation (30%), critical essays (35%), final paper (35%).
Course Schedule

Introduction

Introduction and the Puzzle of Conflict


The Causes of Conflict

Economic Causes of Conflict 1: Macro-Level


Economic Causes of Conflict 2: Natural Resources and Violence


Ethnicity


Repression, Occupation, and Freedom


**Using Violence**

**Who Fights 1: Civil Wars**


**Who Fights 2: Terrorism**


**Does Terrorism Work?**


**Internal Organization and the Efficacy of Violence**


**Terrorism and Civil War**


**COIN and Counterterrorism**

**Modern COIN Doctrine**


**Citizens and Conflict**


**Strategic Challenges**


**Security and Civil Liberties**


**Conflict’s End**

Negotiations and Peace Processes


**Peacekeeping**


**Post Conflict: Social Reintegration**


**Post Conflict: Economic and Political Reintegration**


