POLI 102 Understanding Violence
Fall 2013

Maybank Hall 316
MWF 10:00-10:50am

Professor Christopher Day
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Course Syllabus

“Violence is just an incomplete thought coming to a complete stop.”
-Them Crooked Vultures

Course Description

What is violence? In some cases it seems senseless. Yet in others it appears as a rational way of advancing goals or settling disputes. Around the world violence has simultaneously produced great benefits and caused irreparable damages. In studying this phenomenon, we ask questions such as: What is the nature of violence? Why do individuals, communities, or countries choose violence as a strategy to pursue their goals? How is the decision justified? In what situations does violence produce desirable results? This learning community studies the historical and contemporary roles of violence in politics and society around the world. It challenges students interested in global perspectives to use logic, theory and empirical evidence to better understand violence as both an analytical concept and a lived reality. Focusing on the topic of drugs, HIST 116 explores violence through the global relationships between economics, culture, politics and law over the last 500 years. POLI 102 focuses on the political causes and impacts of modern violence, considering factors such as historical legacies, social and political identities, and economic agendas. Both courses suggest that violence is ultimately about ‘power.’ In studying a wide variety of local, regional and world events – from two different disciplinary perspectives – students will be challenged to discern what ‘power’ is and how it encourages or discourages violence in any given situation.

POLI 102 has three goals. The first is to introduce students to the comparative study of political violence by looking at the wider world through international, domestic, and individual/group levels of analysis. The second goal is to show how Political Science engages this wider world not just by gaining empirical knowledge, but with concepts, theories, and methods. The third goal is to provide freshmen with building blocks for how to be a successful college student: how to organize your mind and develop good routines; how read and write for college; how to start thinking about independent research; and how to develop critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills. The course proceeds in three parts. Part I will provide a basic overview of Political Science as an academic discipline and how it approaches the study of violence. In Part II, each week we will look at a different category of political violence. Part III gives special attention to another category of political violence, and that category is contemporary civil wars.
Course Objectives and Methodology

General education social science requirement student learning outcome:

**Students can apply social science concepts, models or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions or social institutions (through readings and writing assignments)**

In addition, students come away from the course with the following:

** reading and critical comprehension (through required reading and writing assignments)
** oral communication, listening, presentation abilities (through class discussion)
** effective writing and development of arguments (through writing assignments)
** comprehension of other’s views and capacity to formulate, defend one’s own position (through reading, class discussions, quizzes, and writing assignments)
** time management and personal responsibility (through set-up of entire course)
** critical analysis and thinking (through reading, discussion, and lectures)

The course is taught through readings, lectures, class discussions, and following current events:

- **Readings.** Readings Students are expected to have completed the readings before the class sessions. Keeping up with these readings will be vital to your overall course performance, and it will be difficult to catch up if you fall behind. The knowledge acquired in the readings will be cumulative. That is, each week you will be introduced to new ideas that will become part of the "tool-box" you will use to analyze readings and lectures in subsequent weeks.

- **Lectures.** Class sessions serve as the “textbook” for this course. Each week will feature a specific topic and a corresponding lecture that will anchor the readings and class discussions with key terms, concepts, cases, and historical context.

- **Discussions.** Class discussions will be fundamental to this class and students are expected to participate.

- **Student Presentations**

- **Journal**
Course Requirements

Midterm Exam 25%. There will be an in class Midterm Exam on Wednesday, October 9

Journal 20%

Paired Presentations 20%.

Final Project 25%

Class Participation 10%

Course Policies
Here are the rules of the road:

Grading Scale
A 93-100  A- 90-92  B+ 88-89  B 83-87  B- 80-82
C+ 78-79  C 73-77  C- 70-72  D+ 68-69  D 63-67
D- 60-62  F: Below 60

Attendance Policy. Attendance is REQUIRED.

Submission of Work. Late work will not be accepted. Work submitted electronically will not be accepted.

Honor Code. All students are expected be familiar with the College of Charleston Honor Code, and to abide by it. Violations will not be tolerated and will be dealt with appropriately.

Learning Disabled. If you have a learning disability, please let me know as soon as possible so special arrangements can be made for certain class requirements.

Other Special Circumstances. I normally will do business with anyone who lets me know in advance of any special circumstances. But please note that the expression “it is better to ask for forgiveness than permission” was not invented by a College Professor.

Center for Student Learning. I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and they are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at http://csl.cofc.edu or call (843)953-5635.
Required Readings
The following books are available at the campus bookstore:

Sebastian Junger, War (Twelve; 1 edition May 11, 2010)

Marie Olson Lounsbery and Frederic Pearson, Civil Wars: Internal Struggles, Global Consequences (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2008)

Lansana Gberie, A Dirty War in West Africa (C Hurst & Co Publishers 2005)

All other readings are posted on OAKS or are available online.

“Like” the Department of Political Science on Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/CofCPoliticalScienceClub
Course Outline and Readings

Part I: Setting the Scene

1. August 21-23: Introduction to Political Science

No readings

2. August 26-30: The Study of Political Violence

Readings:

***No Class Friday, August 30 for APSA Conference***

Part II: Categories of Political Violence

3. September 2-6: War

Readings:

Carl Von Clausewitz, “What is War?” from On War, (Routledge 1966) pp. 1-26


4. September 9-13: Terrorism

Readings:

Robert Pape, “It’s the Occupation, Stupid,” Foreign Policy, October 18, 2010

Junger, “Book 1: Fear,” Chapters 4-6, pp. 53-85

5. September 16-20: Human Rights and “Structural” Violence

***No class Friday, September 20 for “Fates of Rebels” Book Workshop***

Readings:


Junger, “Book 2: Killing,” Chapters 1-4, pp. 91-130
6. September 23-27: Genocide

Readings:


7. September 30-October 4: Organized Crime

Readings:


8. October 7-11: Blueprints of Violence

Readings:

Adrian Raine, “From Genes to Brain to Antisocial Behavior,” Current Directions in Psychological Science, Volume 17 – Number 5, 2008

Junger, “Book 3: Love,” Chapters 4-6 plus Afterword, pp. 229-270

***MIDTERM EXAM WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9TH***

Part III: The Politics of Civil Wars

9. October 16-18: What is a Civil War?

*** No class Monday, October 14 Fall Break ***

Readings:

Lounsbery and Pearson, Chapter 1, pp. 1-23

Gberie Chapter 1, pp. 1-16

10. October 21-25: Individuals & Groups in Civil War

Readings:

Lounsbery and Pearson, Chapter 2, pp. 25-53

Gberie Chapters 2-3, pp. 17-69
11. October 28-November 1: States and Civil War

Readings:

Lounsbery and Pearson, Chapter 3, pp. 55-82

Gberie Chapters 4-5, pp. 70-117

12. November 4-8: International Actors and Civil War

Readings:

Lounsbery and Pearson, Chapter 4, pp. 82-118

Gberie Chapters 6-7, pp. 118-155

13. November 11-15: Conflict Processes

Readings:

Lounsbery and Pearson, Chapter 5, pp. 119-154

Gberie Chapter 8, pp. 180-196


Readings:

Lounsbery and Pearson, Chapters 6 and 7, pp. 155-222

Gberie Chapter 9, pp. 197-215

Part IV: Putting it all Together

15. November 25: Final Assignment

A take home final assignment will be handed out and discussed in detail.

16. December 2: Last Day of Class, Final Assignment Due

NOTE: Additional readings may be assigned and the course outline may be adjusted to serve the needs of the class.