GOV94: Peace-Building: Approaches to Reducing Ethnoreligious Conflict

Professor Melani Cammett  
Government Department  
Office: CGIS K213

Fall 2019  
Office hours: Thursdays 2-4pm  
E-mail: mcammett@g.harvard.edu

Course time/location: Wednesdays, 9-11:45am, CGIS K450

Course Overview
Identity-based conflict seems to be on the rise—or at least shows few signs of abatement. Many countries in Africa, South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the Former Soviet Union have witnessed wars, conflict and riots that are ostensibly waged in the name of ethnicity or religion. Even if they are not the root cause of these conflicts, such identities often become politically salient as a result of political violence targeting ethnic or religious “others” and, once activated, exhibit remarkable stickiness in social and political life. When intergroup tensions have ratcheted up, is it possible to reduce their importance? Can a shared civic identity be constructed in the wake of violence waged in the name of ethnicity or religion? This course explores these questions through an exploration of relevant social science literature and in-depth analyses of case studies of conflict and conflict resolution.

A key goal of the course is to bridge academia and policy by examining the implications of cutting-edge social science research for policies to promote peace and reconciliation in the wake of violent conflict. Thus, beyond the substantive issues raised by theory and empirical research on peacebuilding and identity politics, we will also assess the data and methods used to support the arguments and associated policy recommendations in the work we encounter. For example, studies of post-conflict reconciliation and tolerance increasingly rely on evidence from field experiments, which are considered by some to be the gold standard for determining what interventions actually work. Conversely, what can quantitative or qualitative observational data tell us about effective ways to promote peacebuilding? What are the strengths and limits of these diverse methodological approaches and how might they help us make sense of why interventions are successful in some contexts but not in others? More generally, how can we best understand the ways in which the local political, social and/or economic context affects efforts to promote peace and reconciliation?
Requirements
The course requirements include:

1) Three short essays: In these essays, you are expected to synthesize and critically engage with the readings assigned in a week of your choosing. Essays should pose a clear question and make a succinct argument at the outset (i.e., in the first paragraph) and prosecute this argument throughout. Avoid summaries of and quotes from the readings and focus on the course readings rather than outside material. Do not exceed 3 double-spaced pages. Essays must be uploaded to the course website before the course meeting in which the topic is covered (i.e., before Wednesday at 9am of the relevant week). For each unit of the course, you are required to write one short essay:

Essay #1 on:
  Week 2: What is “positive peace”? (Due on Wed., Sept. 11 at 8:59am)
  OR
  Week 3: What causes ethnic or religious conflict? (Due on Wed., Sept. 18 at 8:59am)
  OR
  Week 4: When is ethnoreligious identity not politicized? (Due on Wed., Sept. 25 at 8:59am)

Essay #2 on:
  Week 5: How wars end: Military victory and negotiated settlements (Due on Wed., Oct. 2 at 8:59am)
  OR
  Week 6: Institutional design: The pros and cons of power-sharing (Due on Wed., Oct. 9 at 8:59am)
  OR
  Week 7: Decentralization, regional autonomy and secession (Due on Wed., Oct. 16 at 8:59am)
  OR
  Week 8: Mediation and third-party enforcement (Due on Wed., Oct. 23 at 8:59am)

Essay #3 on:
  Week 9: Truth and reconciliation commissions (Due on Wed., Nov. 6 at 8:59am)
  OR
  Week 10: Interventions to promote intergroup tolerance (Due on Wed., Nov. 13 at 8:59am)
  OR
  Week 11: Peace education (Due on Wed., Nov. 20 at 8:59am)
  OR
  Week 12: Development and post-conflict peacebuilding (Due on Mon., Nov. 25, time TBD)
2) **Paper proposal:** The major assignment for the course is a research paper. To ensure that you are on the right track and leave yourself sufficient time to write a strong paper, you are required to upload a 1-2 page outline of the paper to the course website no later than **Wed., Oct. 16 at 9am**. The proposal should include the following elements:

- Statement of a falsifiable research question, ideally in the form of a puzzle
- Identification and brief discussion of the range of potential explanations or hypotheses to be assessed in the paper
- Identification of potential cases (i.e., countries, sub-national units, etc.) for in-depth analysis in the paper
- Possible data sources
- Proposed methods of data analysis
- Preliminary bibliography

3) **Research paper:** Final papers should address a topic of direct relevance to the course such as why and how a particular conflict was resolved or a structured, focused comparison between two conflicts that have witnessed distinct outcomes. Final papers should not exceed 20 double-spaced pages and must be uploaded to the course website on the course’s official final exam date assigned by the Registrar. The paper should include the following elements:

- Statement of a falsifiable research question, ideally in the form of a puzzle, with a clear outcome to be explained
- Brief statement of tentative hypothesis
- Identification and brief discussion of the range of possible rival and/or complementary hypotheses or explanations of the phenomenon in question, situated in relevant scholarly literatures
- Elaboration of tentative hypothesis, ideally with more in-depth discussion of logic, mechanisms and observable implications
- Justification of case selection
- Data sources
- Methods of data analysis
- Conclusion, including (re)statement of the importance of the question and implications for future research and/or for policy-making

**Grading**

Grades will be assigned on the following basis:
- Attendance and active participation (10%)
- Short essays (45% or 15% each)
- Final paper proposal (5%)
- Final paper/project and proposal (40%)

**Materials**

Available on the course website
Policies
Please note the following requirements and expectations. In the interest of upholding the rule of law, no exceptions to these policies can be granted.

No Late Work: Assignments will lose ½ grade per day except in the case of documented, serious medical or family problems.

Absentee Policy: Attendance at both lecture and section meetings is critical and mandatory. In the case of absence from a section meeting, a two-page (approx. 600-1,000 words) critical analysis of the readings must be submitted by the end of the same day. These papers may not substitute for attendance; two or more absences from section meetings will result in deductions from the final grade.

Laptop/Wireless Policy: Laptops and other devices are permitted but only for course-related content and reasons. Abiding by this policy will help to foster a respectful and constructive seminar.

Abide by the Harvard College Honor Code: You may reacquaint yourself with the Honor Code here.

Individual work: For all written work in this class, students’ ideas must be their own. Students may read each other’s work and offer feedback to each other. However, all idea generation and writing for submitted assignments must be done individually. Students that peer review each other’s work must be sure that their ideas and composition reflect their own individual effort. Students must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped them with their work.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability should present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the Professor within the first three weeks of class meetings. All discussions will remain confidential.
I. FOUNDATIONS: PEACE AND PEACEBUILDING IN “PLURAL” SOCIETIES

This section of the course will cover core concepts in the study of conflict resolution and reconciliation. It will also explore the most prominent explanations for the outbreak of identity-based conflict, addressing the conditions under which conflict does and does not break out in societies with diverse ethnic and religious populations.

Week 1 (Wed., Sept. 4): Course overview
No readings

Week 2 (Wed., Sept. 11): What is “positive peace”?
Is “peace” the absence of violence or can we understand peace (and reconciliation) in more “active” or “positive” terms? What does peace actually look like on the ground in post-conflict settings?

Further reading (not required)
- See reports and papers on the CDA: Practical Learning for International Action website.
Week 3 (Wed., Sept. 18): What causes ethnic or religious conflict?

What is “identity”? How can we define religion, ethnicity and related social identities? How do scholars explain the emergence and persistence of conflict along ostensibly ethnic or religious lines?

- The British Academy. The Role of Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding. London: The British Academy, 2015. Choose one case study chapter from ch. 5 (“Case Study I: Religion and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”) OR ch. 6 (“Case Study II: Mali”) OR ch. 7 (“Case Study III: Bosnia-Herzegovina”).

Further reading (not required)

Week 4 (Wed., Sept. 25): When is ethnoreligious identity not politicized?
What explains why some societies with diverse ethnic or religious groups have never experience conflict along these lines? How did some societies gradually overcome deep-seated religious tensions and legacies of religious violence to establish norms and practice of tolerance? What lessons might their experiences offer for resolving ethnic or religious conflict?

Further reading (not required)
II. MODES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACEBUILDING

This section of the course focuses on the primary ways that conflicts end – whether as a natural result of wartime dynamics or as a result of deliberative institutional design arising from local or external efforts to resolve the conflict. Each week addresses the implications of how conflicts end for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation and will explore these dynamics in specific, relevant cases.


Some scholars of civil wars argue that post-conflict stability is most likely to endure when one side decisively defeats the other. Alternatively, some argue that negotiated settlements, in which all major parties to the conflict have a seat at the table, are the best approach. What are the evidence for and logic of these claims? What lessons can we derive from relevant cases about the nature of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconciliation after decisive victories by one party to the conflict?


Further reading (not required)

Week 6 (Wed., Oct. 9): Institutional design: The pros and cons of power-sharing

A vast body of literature debates the merits of various electoral and executive system institutional arrangements for post-conflict peace duration and peacebuilding. Power-sharing is a prominent institutional recipe for ending conflict and maintaining peace. What are the pros and cons of power-sharing? Under what conditions does it keep the peace? How does it affect post-conflict reconciliation among previously warring groups?


Further reading (not required)


Week 7 (Wed., Oct. 16): Decentralization, regional autonomy and secession

Some policymakers and scholars argue that variants of political decentralization or even secession offer the best case for stability in conflict-affected settings. What do the experiences of autonomous regions, such as Aceh in Indonesia, Puntland in Somalia or the Basque Region in Spain, or of independent countries that emerged through secession, such as East Timor, Eritrea or South Sudan, teach us about post-conflict resolution?

Further reading (not required)

Week 8 (Wed., Oct. 23): Mediation and third-party enforcement
Some conflicts end as a result of international negotiations and may even entail physical guarantees such as the presence of UN peacekeeping troops to secure the peace. When and why does mediation result in sustainable peace agreements? Under what conditions does third-party enforcement keep the peace and how does it shape the prospects for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation?

Further reading (not required)

Wed., Oct. 30: No class meeting
III. APPROACHES TO BUILDING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
How do domestic and external actors actively build peace? What is the range of approaches to fostering peace, tolerance and reconciliation in the wake of ethnic or religious conflict? What are their respective track records of success and, more fundamentally, how can we conceptualize and measure “success” in achieving these outcomes after identity-based conflict?

Week 9 (Wed., Nov. 6): Truth and reconciliation commissions
What are truth and reconciliations commissions and what are they designed to achieve? Where and why have they been adopted? What factors explain their potential successes and shortcomings?

Further reading (not required)
- Kristen Kao and Mara Revkin. “To Punish or to Pardon?: Reintegrating Rebel Collaborators After Conflict in Iraq.” Unpublished manuscript, Gothenburg University and Yale University, Nov. 2018.

Week 10 (Wed., Nov. 13): Interventions to promote intergroup tolerance
How can tolerance be promoted in the wake of violent conflict along identity-based lines? How can people who have been targeted for their ethnicity or religion trust members of other groups who are perceived as enemies or aggressors? What kinds of interventions have been developed to promote tolerance in these settings and how have they fared?

Further reading (not required)
Week 11 (Wed., Nov. 20): Peace education

Some international NGOs have developed “peacebuilding” programs to promote trust and tolerance through face-to-face interactions. A prominent example is Seeds of Peace, a program developed in 1993 that brings together teenagers from countries locked in conflict with each other in a summer camp in Maine every summer. Do these programs work? What are their strengths and limitations?


Further reading (not required)

Week 12 (Mon., Nov. 25, time TBD): Development and post-conflict peacebuilding

What is the relationship between development or inequality and conflict? Can resolving economic inequality prevent civil war recurrence - or outbreak in the first place?

Further reading (not required)

Week 13 (Mon., Dec. 2, time TBD): Student presentations

No assigned readings