GOV94MCC: Peacebuilding: Approaches to Reducing Ethnoreligious Conflict

Professor Melani Cammett                Fall 2020
Government Department                Office hours: TBD
E-mail: mcammett@g.harvard.edu
Assistant: Kathleen Hoover (kathleen_hoover@harvard.edu)

Course day/time: Thursdays, meeting time TBD (based on locations of seminar participants)

Course Overview
Ethnoreligious 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 these identities. Even if they are not the root cause of these conflicts, ethnicity or religion often becomes 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 (re)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 – or at least improved intergroup relations – in the wake of violent conflict. Towards this end, we will focus on both the substantive issues raised by research on peacebuilding and identity politics and the data and methods used to support the arguments and associated policy recommendations in the work we encounter. What are the strengths and limits of different methodological approaches to peacebuilding, such as case studies, historical analyses and experimental research? How do distinct methodological approaches help us make sense of what “works” in improving intergroup relations and why interventions are successful in some contexts but not in others? 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:

Assignment #1: The politicization (and non-politicization) of ethnicity
Pick a country with multiple cultural communities (i.e., a “plural” society). Write a memo on whether ethnicity (such as religion, race, origin, etc.) is salient in public life and is a source of violent or nonviolent tensions in the country. What causes ethnicity to matter or not matter in this context?

- Be clear about how you define significance in this context. Is your definition limited to the political, or does it also entail social or economic significance? Consider whether and how these factors might be connected.
- Make sure to discuss how different communities interact.

The memo should be 3-4 pages, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and should reference at least one reading from each week in Unit 1, with at least 3 or 4 course readings overall.

Submit your essay electronically on Canvas in either PDF or Word format. You can submit the memo at any time during Unit I. The last date of submission is Sept. 24 by 9am EDT (before the last meeting for Unit I).

Assignment #2: Institutional Design
Imagine that you are an advisor brought in to recommend the institutional design for a country that has just emerged from a conflict. Write a memo outlining what institutions you would recommend the government to adopt and why. You can choose a specific post-conflict setting to discuss or have a general discussion about post-conflict settings.

- Be clear about your goals in the post-conflict setting and why you prioritize one goal over another (e.g. focusing on conflict prevention over economic development)
- Explain how the institutional design you recommend will help to achieve the specified goals.
- You may write about a country case already discussed in the course. If you choose not to address a case discussed in the readings or class, be sure to spend some time researching the context about which you are writing.

The memo should be 3-4 pages, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and should reference at least 1 reading from each week in Unit II, with at least 3 or 4 course readings overall.

The memo should be electronically submitted on Canvas. Please make sure you upload a pdf or word copy. You can submit the memo at any time during Unit II, the last date to turn it in is Oct. 15 by 9am US EDT (before the last meeting for Unit II).
Assignment #3: Group project
You are a researcher working with an NGO tasked with designing a societal intervention to reduce prejudice and promote intergroup tolerance in a post-conflict setting. In a memo or report format, outline the intervention you propose to implement. Take one of the studies you have read in Unit III as a model and choose a post-conflict setting from one of the cases covered in the course.

For the intervention, make sure to address:
- The goal of the intervention or what you hope to accomplish;
- The context you are working in;
- The theoretical basis of the intervention (i.e. the contact hypothesis, ingroup policing, or another underlying mechanism aimed at achieving the outcome);
- The precise nature of the intervention;
- The actors involved (both participants and implementers);
- A preliminary logistical plan discussing when the intervention will take place, how long it lasts, time interval(s) when the outcomes will be measured, and anticipated challenges and some potential solutions to them.

During the first week of Unit III, you will be split into small groups for the assignment. Some class time will be set aside for the groups to organize themselves and deal with logistics.

The assignment has two components:
1. Presentation of the proposed intervention in seminar on Thurs., Dec. 3.
   a. Each presentation will last about 15-20 mins followed by a 5-10 mins for Q&A with all seminar participants
2. Memo/Report due on Dec. 4 by 9am US EST
   a. 5-7 pages, double-spaced to be submitted by one participant on behalf of the group, with the names of all group members on the memo

Assignment #4: Final project

Proposal
The major assignment for the course is a research project, which may take the form of a research paper or a proposal for a peacebuilding intervention. (See final project instructions below.) To ensure that you are on the right track and leave yourself sufficient time to produce a strong final product, you are required to upload a 1-2 paged outline of your proposed project to the course website no later than Mon., Dec. 7 at 9am US EST.
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
- For research papers: Possible data sources and proposed methods of data analysis
- For interventions: Broad description of proposed intervention.
- Preliminary bibliography

**Final research project**
For the final project, you have two options:

1) 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. 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

2) In lieu of a research paper, you may choose to design another intervention or elaborate on the intervention you designed with your group as a research paper, developing its theoretical foundations and research design as stated in the guidelines for the research paper. Use one of the studies in Unit III as a model.

Final projects should not exceed 10-12 double-spaced pages and must be uploaded to the course website by **Wed., Dec. 16 at 9am US EST.**
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.

Some readings on the syllabus employ econometric and experimental methods, often aimed at making causal inferences from quantitative data. Training in such methods is not a requirement to take this course, but those who are unfamiliar with these approaches are encouraged to read the following or consult similar resources:


Policies
Please note the following requirements and expectations. In the interest of upholding the rule of law, exceptions to these policies cannot be granted without a documented excuse. Any potential obstacles to meeting these requirements and expectations should be communicated to the professor as far in advance as possible, ideally at the outset of the semester. The global Covid-19 pandemic and consequent shift to an online format have created challenging conditions and every effort will be made to accommodate student needs in these difficult times.

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

Absentee Policy: Synchronous attendance at seminar meetings is critical and mandatory. In the case of absence from the seminar, a two-page (approx. 600-1,000 words) critical analysis of the readings must be submitted by the end of the same day unless students can provide documented reasons for an emergency exception. These papers may not substitute for attendance; two or more absences will result in deductions from the final grade.

Abide by the Harvard College Honor Code: Reacquaint yourself with the Honor Code here.

Individual work: For all written work in this class, with the exception of the group project, 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, and the resultant work must reflect individual effort. It is also essential to adhere to standard citation practices in the social science and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have informed the 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 two weeks of class meetings. All discussions will remain confidential.
COURSE TOPICS

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 (Thurs., Sept. 3): Introduction and overview
No assigned readings
In-class exercises and discussion

Week 2 (Thurs., Sept. 10): What is peace?
Is “peace” the absence of violence or can we understand peace (and related concepts) in more “active” or “positive” terms? Can we think of peace as a spectrum of outcomes? What can learn from Catholic-Protestant relations in early modern Europe about what peace actually looks 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 (Thurs., Sept. 17): When is ethnoreligious identity not politicized?
What explains why some societies with diverse ethnic or religious groups have never experienced conflict along these lines? How did some societies gradually overcome deep-seated religious tensions and legacies of religious violence to establish norms and practices of tolerance? What lessons might their experiences offer for resolving ethnic or religious conflict?

Further reading (not required)

Thurs., Sept. 24: Submit assignment #1 before 9am US EST

Week 4 (Thurs., Sept. 24): When does ethnic or religious conflict break out? Insights from studies of Hindu-Muslim riots in India
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? What can we learn from debates about the outbreak of Hindu-Muslim riots in India?
Further reading (not required)
- Kyle L. Marquardt and Yoshiko M. Herrera. “Ethnicity as a Variable: An Assessment of Measures and Data Sets of Ethnicity and Related Identities.” *Social Science Quarterly* 96, no. 3 (Sept. 2015): 689-716.
II. STATE-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

This section of the course focuses on how 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 – and ways to structure political institutions in post-conflict settings. Each week addresses the implications of national-level political conditions or institutions for post-conflict peacebuilding and explores these dynamics in specific cases.

Week 5 (Thurs., Oct. 1): Peacekeeping and international interventions

Some conflicts end as a result of international negotiations and may even entail physical guarantees such as the presence of UN troops to secure the peace. Under what conditions does third-party enforcement keep the peace and how does it shape the prospects for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation? Does the “international community” have a “responsibility to protect”?


Further reading (not required)
Week 6 (Thurs., Oct. 8): 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 governance. 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? What can we learn about power-sharing from comparative analyses of the South African, Bosnian and Lebanese cases?

Guest: Prof. Bassel Salloukh, Department of Social Sciences, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon


Further reading (not required)

**Thurs., Oct. 15: Submit assignment #2 before 9am US EDT**

**Week 7 (Thurs., Oct. 15): Secession, autonomy and decentralization**

*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 studies of partition and decentralization as well as the experiences of autonomous regions, such as the Catalonia region in Spain, or of independent countries that emerged through secession teach us about post-conflict resolution?*


**Further reading (not required)**

III. APPROACHES TO PEACEBUILDING

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 of Oct. 8th: MOVIE NIGHT! In the week before our meeting, “get together” with fellow seminar participants to watch Coexist, which is available through the course Canvas website. Be prepared to discuss the film in seminar.

Week 8 (Thurs., Oct. 22): 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 9 (Thurs., Oct. 29): Interventions I: Intergroup contact and prejudice reduction**

*How can tolerance be promoted in the wake of violent conflict along identity-based lines? Can people targeted during wartime for their ethnicity or religion come to trust members of other groups who are perceived as enemies or aggressors? What kinds of interventions have been developed to promote intergroup tolerance in these settings and how have they fared?*


Further reading (not required)

**Week 10 (Thurs., Nov. 5): Interventions II: Superordinate and Intragroup Interventions**

*Beyond intergroup contact, what interventions do researchers and practitioners design to promote improved intergroup relations after conflict? What types of interventions can mitigate negative behaviors, whether by transcending group identity or focusing on behaviors within the ingroup? Under what conditions do these distinct types of interventions meet their goals?*

**Guest: Dr. David Romney, Post-doctoral Fellow, Weatherhead Scholars Program, Harvard**
- Rezarta Bilali, Johanna Ray Vollhardt, and Jason Ray David Rarick. “Assessing the impact of a media-based intervention to prevent intergroup violence and promote positive intergroup

**Further reading (not required)**

**Week 11 (Thurs., Nov. 12): Peace education: The case of P2P programs for Israeli and Palestinian youth**

*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?*

*Guest: Phiroze Parasnis, Undergraduate Student, Harvard College (and former participants in Seeds of Peace)*


**Further reading (not required)**
Week 12 (Thurs., Nov. 19): Diversity, 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 (Thurs., Dec. 3): Group presentations**
No assigned readings; group members present proposed interventions

*Fri., Dec. 4: Submit group project (assignment #3) before 9am US EST*

*Mon., Dec. 7: Final project proposal due at 9am US EST*

*Wed., Dec. 16: Final project due at 9am US EST*