Dynamics of Armed Conflict

A doctoral course within the University of Oslo, Norwegian University of Science and Technology and PRIO Research School on Peace & Conflict

Overview: This seminar provides an overview and critical assessment of contemporary research on armed conflict. It will be in equal measure backward looking, assessing the state of the art and what we have learned; and future oriented, exploring cutting-edge issues and challenges. The first part of the course (sessions I - III) assesses what we now know about civil wars and armed conflicts – why they break out, how they are sustained, how do they end – and how to think – conceptually, theoretically and methodologically - about dynamics and process. The second part (sessions IV, VI - VIII) builds on the first to explore the cutting edge and where next questions; our focus here will be work seeking to capture the dynamics of conflict. Among other issues, we will consider the roles of transnationalism; of bureaucracies, groups and organizations; of social processes; and insurgency-counterinsurgency dynamics in driving forward or constraining the evolution of civil wars and other armed conflicts.

Reflecting the research interests of the instructors, the course will be plural in meta-theoretical (positivist, post-positivist), theoretical (political economy, political ethnography, sociological, constructivist, political psychology) and methodological terms (game theory, agent-based modelling, process tracing, case studies, interpretive approaches).

Admission: The deadline for applications is 2 March 2018. Please fill in the electronic application form here. PhD candidates should specify the topic of their project under ‘Research interests.’ PhD candidates get priority, but others with graduate studies from a relevant discipline may also apply. There is no participation fee, but the cost of transportation and accommodation must be covered by the participants. A limited number of stipends to cover basic accommodation at the neighboring Anker Hotel are available for PhD students who do not have funding through their universities or otherwise. If relevant, check the ‘accommodation stipend’ box on the application form.

If needed to make the necessary travel arrangements, PhD candidates who apply prior to the deadline may request an early evaluation of their application in an e-mail to Marte Nilsen (marnil@prio.org). Please mark the e-mail [Dynamics of Armed Conflict - Early Evaluation].

Credits: 10 ECTS.

Requirements

Active Participation in Class Discussions: The course will be run as a seminar, where debate and discussion are the norm; for each session, written discussion questions will serve as
our starting point. For this format to be successful, students need to read the seminar readings prior to our first meeting on 7 May.

**Preparation of Discussion Points:** For each class session, students are required to prepare a brief list of discussion questions and comments (3-5 in number); these should be based on the readings and will be distributed to all other seminar participants. (Please make sufficient copies for distribution!) Your questions/comments should reflect a critical assessment of those readings. What are their strong and weak points? What are their meta-theoretical, theoretical, methodological, empirical contributions? How do they relate to or build upon other readings or discussions?

**Completion of an Analytic Essay:** Students have two options. (I) Prepare an analytic review on a topic that is of special interest and is consistent with the course's purpose and theme. Or (II), prepare a draft research design for a PhD project on armed conflict where dynamics play some role. In either case, essays should be 6000-10000 words and are due by 15 August 2018. On the first day of class – 7 May - students should provide the instructors with a 2-3 page introduction to their proposed essay. These overviews will then be discussed at one-on-one meetings on the morning of Wednesday, 9 May, 0900 - 1100, when there will be no formal class sessions.

**Readings:** The following three books – all available in paperback - should be purchased.


Students should access most other assigned articles and chapters through their local libraries. A selection of hard-to-get readings will be made available by mid-April, via a shared Dropbox folder.

**Syllabus and Class Schedule**

**Day #1: Monday, 7 May**

**Session I (0900 - 1200): Civil War Research – State of the Art & Where Next**


**Session II (1315 - 1630): Capturing Dynamics and Process – Causal Mechanisms**


**Day #2: Tuesday, 8 May**

**Session III (0900 - 1200): Capturing Dynamics and Process – Modelling Causal Processes**


**Session IV (1315 - 1630): Transnationalism and Civil War**

*The Baseline*


**Adding Dynamics and Process**


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**Day #3: Wednesday, 9 May**

Session V (0900 - 1100): Individual Meetings on Course Essays

**Session VI (1100 - 1200, 1315 - 1630): The Organizational Basis of Rebellion**

**The Baseline**


**Adding Dynamics and Process**


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**Day #4: Thursday, 10 May**

No Class – Public Holiday in Norway

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**Day #5: Friday, 11 May**

Session VII (0900 - 1200): Social Context of Civil War
The Baseline


Adding Dynamics and Process


Session VIII (1315 - 1600): Insurgency-Counterinsurgency Dynamics

The Baseline


Adding Dynamics and Process

