Political Science 361/461: State-Building and State Collapse
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Are nation-states the most effective means of organizing society? To answer this question, we will examine the historical rationales behind the development of nation-states. We will also consider the functions that modern states aspire to perform and explore why some states fail to perform these functions, even to the point of state collapse. Finally, we will investigate potential alternatives to the state. Can potential alternatives to the state, such as tribes, mercenaries, mafia groups, and international organizations, provide typical state services? Does the provision of these services by entities other than states undermine state legitimacy and capacity?

To explore these issues, we will draw on examples from most regions of the world, including the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe, the former Soviet Union, North America, and South America. The course also incorporates policy exercises.

Course Materials

Books and Articles: Six works are available for purchase at the bookstore and on reserve at Kelvin Smith Library: 1) Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns, 2) States and Power in Africa, 3) Poor People’s Politics, 4) Subversive Institutions, 5) Anthills of the Savannah, and 6) When Things Fell Apart. Unless otherwise noted, other required materials will be distributed in class.

News: Students are strongly encouraged to follow world events. These sources offer some of the best foreign coverage:


▪ **The Economist** is available for free online through EuclidPLUS and in print at Kelvin Smith Periodicals. For information about a student subscription rate call 1-800-456-6086.

▪ National Public Radio (WCPN 90.3 FM) broadcasts brief news updates at the top of the hour and news analyses throughout the day on programs, such as Morning Edition, Talk of the Nation, All Things Considered, and Marketplace. See [http://www.wcpn.org/schedule/](http://www.wcpn.org/schedule/) for the schedule.

Blackboard: Students will post questions on Blackboard, as later described. To post a question, go to the Case web site, select Academics, choose Computing, and select Blackboard. Select Course Catalog, College of Arts & Sciences, POSC. Login next to POSC 361. Choose Discussion Board. Doubleclick on the appropriate week and then on my message. Select reply, write your questions, and click submit. Additional assistance is available through Blackboard FAQ on the first site.

* No office hours August 28, September 18, September 25, November 20
**Course Requirements**

**Participation:** The focus of each class will be on discussion. Students should craft at least two analytical questions based on each week’s readings and post them on the course Blackboard site by noon Monday prior to class meetings during Parts I, II, and III of the course. Students should read their classmates’ questions before the start of class. The instructor will select some questions for class discussion, and students are welcome to raise questions in class. Students are expected to actively participate in class discussion and to thoughtfully complete evaluations of their classmates’ presentations (described below). Students are strongly encouraged to take notes on the readings in order to be prepared to integrate and critique the materials in class. Because participation is critical to understanding the material, students are expected to attend all classes. Except under extraordinary circumstances, absenteeism will negatively affect students’ final grades.

**Commentaries:** In addition to reading course materials, posting questions, and participating in class, students will write a commentary on the readings for four class meetings. Students should write papers for two weeks in Part I, one week in Part II, and one week in Part III. No commentaries will be accepted for Parts IV and V. The purpose of the commentaries is to help students understand, critique, and integrate the readings and prepare to pose questions for discussion in class. Students should not summarize the readings but should instead use the course materials to answer their own questions and explore their own arguments. Students should incorporate concepts and arguments in readings from previous weeks, and the quality of the commentaries should improve throughout the semester. For the commentaries informal citations—phrases like “as Bates argues”—are acceptable. Commentaries should be between two and two and a half pages double-spaced. They must be submitted at the beginning of the class the analyzed materials are assigned. Grading of the responses will take into account the degree of independent thinking, use of assigned materials, and quality of writing.

**Individual Presentation:** Each student will develop an argument integrating the readings from Part I, Part II, or Part III of the course and share this argument with classmates in a ten-minute presentation. In preparation for this presentation, students will share their topics with the instructor, and the class will discuss techniques of effective public speaking. Students will receive two types of feedback on their presentations; students will receive written evaluations from their classmates, and the instructor will provide her own evaluation, taking into account insights offered on student evaluations. The instructor’s evaluation will be based on the degree of independent thinking, use of assigned materials, and quality of presentation. Part I presentations will take place on October 2, Part II presentations will take place on October 23, and Part III presentation will take place on November 13.

**Group Research Session:** Teams of two to four students will select a non-state actor and research its viability as an alternative to the state, its impact on state legitimacy and capacity, and other analytical questions of their choosing. During a 30-minute period November 18 or November 25, each group will share its findings through presentation and discussion techniques of its choosing. In preparation, groups will consult with the instructor about their topics; review relevant materials suggested by the instructor; gather and analyze additional research materials; work during and outside class, as needed; and develop an informative and interesting approach for sharing their ideas with classmates. Students will receive the two types of feedback described above. The instructor’s evaluation will be based on the degree of independent thinking, the extent of research, and the quality of the session. Each student will receive an individual grade.
**Final Paper:** Each student will write a critique of a group research session that takes place on the day he or she does not lead a session. The critique should focus on the substance, not the style, of the session, and it should incorporate concepts and arguments from other class meetings. Evaluation of the critique will take into account the degree of independent thinking, use of session and course materials, and quality of writing. *Undergraduates’* critiques should be 5-6 pages long, double-spaced. *Graduate students’* critiques should be 10-12 pages long, double-spaced. Papers are due at the beginning of class December 4.

All written work should be carefully structured and grammatically correct. To avoid plagiarism, students should review “Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It,” distributed in class. Cases of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be investigated by university judicial bodies.

Participation and attendance will constitute 15 percent of the course grade, the four commentaries will count for 25 percent, the individual presentation for 15 percent, the group research session for 30 percent, and the final paper for the remaining 15 percent. Students will lose a half a grade on an assignment for each day it is late. Not completing an assignment will negatively affect a student’s final grade.
Course Schedule and Readings

I. August 26: Introduction to State and Course

NO CLASS August 28

PART I: STATE-FORMATION

II. September 2, 4: “Stateless” Societies


III. September 9, 11: The Formation of States—Europe


IV. September 16: The Formation of States—Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia


NO CLASS September 18
PART I: STATE-FORMATION
(continued)

V. September 23: The Formation of States—Africa


NO CLASS September 25

VI. September 30, October 2: The Formation of States—By Design


INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS FOR PART I—October 2

PART II: STATE FUNCTION

VII. October 7, October 9: Strong and Weak States—Legitimacy, Autonomy, and Capacity


VIII. October 14, October 16: State Roles—Particularistic versus Programmatic Politics


NO CLASS October 21
PART II: STATE FUNCTION
(continued)

IX. October 23: State Roles—Rentier versus Welfare States


INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS FOR PART II

PART III: STATE COLLAPSE

X. October 28, October 30: The Collapse of an Empire


XI. November 4, November 6: The Collapse of States—Initial Analysis


XII. November 11, November 13: The Collapse of States—A Theory


INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS FOR PART III—November 13
PART IV: POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES TO THE STATE

XIII. November 18: State Alternatives I

Commentaries will not be accepted for this week.

GROUPS RESEARCH SESSIONS

NO CLASS November 20

XIV. November 25: State Alternatives II

Commentaries will not be accepted for this week.

GROUPS RESEARCH SESSIONS

NO CLASS November 27

PART V: THE FUTURE OF THE STATE

XV. December 2, December 4: The State: The Most Viable Form of Organization?

For these class meetings students are expected to review their notes and be prepared to integrate the topics we discussed. Commentaries will not be accepted for this week.

DUE Thursday, December 4, 1:15, Clark 205: Final Paper