

**Department of Political Science
Case Western Reserve University**

**Fall 2012
POSC 334/434**

**Dr. Vincent McHale
Mather House #222**

VIOLENCE AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

This course is designed to investigate various theoretical and descriptive perspectives on political violence. Our principal objective in this course is to cast the phenomenon of political violence into a clear perspective, by attempting to construct several analytical frameworks for a systematic understanding of the problem. Discussion will center on historical and contemporary scholarship which has analyzed and interpreted the use of violence for political ends.

The course will be organized around three major components: (1) theories regarding the conditions and processes that have been hypothesized to cause or mediate political violence; (2) attempts to discover and categorize patterns of political violence in the “real world”; and (3) systematic attempts to apply particular theoretical perspectives in selected “real world” contexts.

REQUIREMENTS:

There will be a midterm and final examination on the dates specified in the syllabus. Both exams will be primarily essay in nature, drawing on the class lectures, research projects, and assigned reading material. Each student will also prepare two (2) brief (5 to 7 pages) research papers. The paper assignments will vary in content and will be staggered throughout the semester. The details of each assignment will be described in separate class handouts. Due dates for each assignment are noted in the syllabus.

ATTENDANCE:

Regular class attendance and participation in class discussion are expected. Attendance will be monitored with a “sign-in” sheet for each class. Since the lectures will be largely independent of the reading, it will be difficult, if not impossible for students to master the subject matter without regular class attendance. Students with more than three (3) unexcused absences will have their final course grade reduced by one letter grade. Even where absences are excused, an unusual number of class absences (e.g., over 7) will result in a grade reduction. There will be no exceptions to this policy. The final course grade will be based on the following weighted distribution:

Class attendance and participation (10%) – Important for borderline grades
Midterm examination (30%)
Research papers (30% -- 15% for each paper)
Final examination (30%)

Consult the attached performance sheet (“Evaluation of Student Performance”) for a more detailed explanation of grade expectations.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating on examinations, etc.) is a serious offense that can result in loss of credit, suspension, and possibly expulsion from the university. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

CELL PHONES AND COMPUTERS:

Please turn off cell phones before entering class. The class period is only 50 minutes. No texting; no tweeting. Note book computers are permitted in class provided they do not disturb other students.

OFFICE HOURS:

Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor in a timely manner regarding any problem they might be having in the course. This can be done on a “walk-in” basis during regular office hours (Monday and Wednesday, 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.) or by making an appointment via email (vem). Telephone messages may also be left on 368-2425.

IMPORTANT DATES:

A monthly calendar of lecture topics and other relevant information pertaining to the class will be provided to each student on a timely basis. Students will be notified of any changes in the class calendar.

First class meeting	August 27th
Labr Day holiday	September 3 rd (NO CLASS)
Paper #1 due	October 17th (on or before)
Midterm examination	October 17 th (firm)
Midterm grades due	October 22th
Fall break	October 22-23 rd (NO CLASS)
Thanksgiving holiday	November 22-23 rd (NO CLASS)
Paper #2 due	December 10 th (on or before)
Last class meeting	December 7th
Final examination	December 17th (12:30 - 3:30 p.m.)
<i>All outstanding written work due</i>	December 17 th (before 5:00 p.m.)

TEXTS AND READING MATERIALS:

- Jerzy Kosinski, *The Painted Bird*. This book will be read early in the semester and will be the subject of one major question on the midterm examination.. Students are encouraged to locate personal copies in local bookstores. The 1995 edition (preferred) is available at amazon.com.
- Additional readings for each major section of the course will be announced in class. When assigned, non-text (optional) materials may be distributed in class or sent as a PDF attachment to each student via email. *All references listed below(*) are optional, and designed for those students wishing to explore topics in depth.*

MISCELLANEOUS REFERENCES:

Definitions of terms and concepts used in the class lectures and readings can be found in Jack C. Plano, *The Dictionary of Political Analysis*, 2nd edition, or Carl Beck, *Political Science Thesaurus II*, 2nd edition. Both volumes are located in the reference section of the Kelvin Smith Library. Otherwise use Google (Wikipedia).

Students are encouraged to explore various web sites (e.g., terrorists sites, violent political groups, US State Department warnings, etc.) to gain additional familiarity and insights regarding violent political actors and events worldwide.

Several handouts (calendars, notes, charts, graphs, etc.) will be distributed in class or sent via email attachments. Students are responsible for obtaining all class handouts even when absent from class.

LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

1. THE STUDY OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Violence and the nature of politics
Political violence defined
Scope of political violence historically – how to measure?
Political violence as a continuum: characteristics and typologies
Modes of conflict, opposition, and protest
Causes of political violence: assumptions, arguments, theories, fallacies

Reading: Kosinski (begin reading)

References: *G. Barak, *Violence and Nonviolence* (2003).
*L.R. Kurtz (editor-in-chief), *Violence, Peace, Conflict* (1999),
*R.G. Geen and E. Donnerstein (eds.), *Human Aggression* (1998).

2. FORCE, VIOLENCE, ORDER, AND THE LIBERAL STATE: SOME PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS

The liberal tradition in political philosophy – Does it encourage violence?
The bases of political obligation – Why obey? When can you disobey?
The rule of law; the rule of force – Contrasting views of social cohesion
Civil disobedience and political violence
Vulnerabilities of liberal societies to social disorder

Reading: Kosinski (continue reading)

3. JUSTIFICATION AND RHETORIC OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Moral justifications for political violence
Instrumental and "democratic" violence
The philosophy of terror
Ideologies and belief systems and the role of violence

Reading: Kosinski (continue reading)

Reference: *K. Grundy and M. Weinstein, *Ideologies of Violence* (1989).

4. CULTURAL EXPLANATIONS OF VIOLENCE

Violence as problem-solving
Violence as ritualistic/religious behavior
Public opinion – attitudes toward violence
The acceptance of cultural diversity regarding violent political behavior

Reading: Kosinski (finish reading) – Be prepared for class discussion.

Reference: *Charles Tilly (ed.), *Violence in America* (1969).

5. THE DYNAMICS OF COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

The components of collective action
Interests, organization, and mobilization
Repression and facilitation
Repertoires of collective action
Changing contexts for collective violence

Readings: To be announced

Reference: *E. Conteh-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence* (2003).

VIDEO CLASS

A two-part video on the women's suffrage movement will be shown during this class segment. The purpose of this video is to illustrate the dynamics of collective action and reference points as discussed in Section 5. Attendance is mandatory.

***** **MIDTERM EXAMINATION** *****
(Wednesday, October 17th)

6. REVOLUTIONS AND REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE

Revolutionary situations and revolutionary outcomes
Causes and antecedents of revolutionary situations
The anatomy of revolutions – universal or changing patterns?
Revolutionary time-sequences and collective violence

Readings: To be announced

Reference: *Jack Goldstone, *The Encyclopedia of Political Revolutions* (1998).

7. INSURGENCY AND INTERNAL WARFARE

Readings: To be announced

References: *J.T. Fishel and M.G. Manwaring, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited* (2006).
*R.H. Shultz, *et al.*, *Insurgents, Terrorists, Militias* (2006).

8. THE PHENOMENON OF WAR

Readings: To be announced

References: *J. Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts* (2007).
*J. Renshon, *Why Leaders Choose War* (2006).

9. TERRORISM

Terror and terrorism: concepts, characteristics, typologies
Historical and contemporary roots of terrorism
Terrorist strategy and tactics: an adaptive process
The hijacking/kidnapping/hostage problem
Diplomatic kidnappings and attacks
Improvised technologies and suicide bombings
Modern terrorist organizations - profiles
General countermeasures against international terrorism

Reading: T. Homer-Dixon, "The Rise of Complex Terrorism" (handout)

References: *M. Bloom, *Dying to Kill* (2005)
*C. Heffelfinger (ed.), *Unmasking Terror* (2005)
*J.J.F. Forest (ed.), *The Making of a Terrorist* (2005), 3 vols.
*P. Norris *et al.* (eds.), *Framing Terrorism* (2003)
*J. Randal, *Osama: The Making of a Terrorist* (2007)

10. ESTABLISHMENT AND STATE-SPONSORED VIOLENCE

Political crime and torture in history
The *coup d'état* - spontaneous or induced
Genocide and ethnic cleansing
State-sponsored international terrorism and proxy wars

Readings: To be announced

References: *K. Smith, *The End of Genocide* (2006).
*S. Totten *et al.* (eds.), *A Century of Genocide* (2004).

11. POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND CRIMINALITY

Reading: V. McHale and J. Bergner, "On Collective and Individual Violence:
Berlin and Vienna, 1875-1914"

12. POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY

Readings: To be announced

***** FINAL EXAMINATION, December 17, 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. *****

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EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

In order for a student to receive a passing grade for this course, all requirements must be completed. The following criteria will be employed in determining the final grade:

- A** - **Superior work:** Student demonstrates command of the subject matter in *considerable detail; exhibits a clarity, precision, and some originality in analytical argument*; written work well-organized, neat, proofread, and free of grammatical and/or spelling errors. All assignments completed on time. *Almost perfect attendance.*
- B** - **Good Work:** Student demonstrates command of the subject matter; exhibits clarity and precision in analytical argument; written work well-organized, neat, proofread, and free of grammatical and/or spelling errors. All assignments completed on time *unless specifically excused*. Good class attendance – no excessive class absences.
- C** - **Fair or Competent Work:** Student demonstrates *reasonable* command of the subject matter; exhibits clarity and *reasonable* precision in analytical argument; written work *reasonably* organized, with few grammatical and/or spelling errors. *Failure to complete one or more assignments on time. Excessive class absences.*
- D** - **Passing:** Less than competent work.
- F** - **Failure:** Student demonstrates little, if any, command of the subject matter; unsatisfactory written work in content or style; failure to complete one or more written assignments (*unless specifically excused*); failure to take either the midterm or final examinations (*unless specifically excused*); poor class attendance.
- I** - **Incomplete:** Assigned at my discretion according to the provisions outlined in the General Bulletin of the University. *An I grade is not automatic; it must be arranged in advance. Students must be aware of the deadline in removing an I grade before it becomes an F. It is not my responsibility to notify students of the impending deadline for removal of the I grade.* Please check the University calendar.