Irregular War: History, Culture, and Theory, 26:735:541
Fall 2015, Thursdays, 5:30 pm, 626/628 Hill Hall

Course Description

“Irregular War” is an ethnography-based, comparative examination of recent intra-state wars, where at least one party is not a government-based military, and different sides are seen as having a distinctive social and cultural character. The first weeks review a variety of theoretical stances applied to such conflicts. The bulk of the course focuses on case studies. Cases have been chosen for geographical and situational diversity, but also in response to the availability of rich, ethnographic-level descriptions of conflict and cooperation on the ground.

In addition to considering general theoretical positions, and explanations particular to any given case, each week will seek answers to a set of questions. These are: What are the social identities associated with different sides? What are the material and political interests associated with different identities? How are gender and age involved? Who are the key players? What is “the state,” in local terms and as a prize for combatants? What is the character of the “state military”? How are states “weak” or “strong”? How did historical processes lead to the definition of sides, including both local and larger (regional, global) trends? What instrumental goals are pursued via the definition of conflicting identities? What are the social bases of recruitment and mobilization? What cultural/historical themes are employed in shaping the conflict? What is the interaction of material and symbolic values? How does war transform social relations? What is the process of transitioning from peace to war? In moving across weekly cases, students examining issues will also be challenged to identify and discriminate broad geo-cultural contrasts, and differing local foci of scholarly enquiry.

Each week students will have assigned readings averaging 120 pages. Readings are available on Blackboard. Week 1 will be a broad introduction and discussion about the course, expectations, and student interests. Week 2 considers a variety of high-profile, non-anthropological perspectives on what are varyingly called “new,” “ethnic,” “civil,” “communal,” “tribal,” or “sectarian” wars. Week 3 consists of anthropological perspectives on the same. All subsequent weeks are case oriented.

This course was developed specifically to fit within the general curriculum of our Peace and Conflict Studies Program. While it connects to other courses, it does not duplicate them. So, for instance, readings do not often go into mediation resolution or post-conflict processes. Other courses do that. The point here is to understand why irregular wars happen the way they do, with both similarities and great difference, in so many areas of the world.

Class Participation

This class is not just about “taking in” information. It requires critical thinking, the ability to formulate your own ideas, and present them clearly in class discussion. The basic format for each week is that I will give an overview of the readings, contextualize them, explain what I was going for in assembling that particular collection of articles. Then we will collectively go
through the readings, usually in sequence. I will ask you to tell me what the author is saying, what you think about it, and as time goes on, how it relates to other readings and discussions.

In addition to the reading assignments, you are also expected to browse around on the web about each week’s cases. Most of these cases end some years ago, so what happened later, what is happening now, and how are the prospects for peace and justice? This does not mean you do a full scale research assignment each week, just spend some time familiarizing yourself with the places. A good place to start is the website of the International Crisis Group.

**Reaction Papers**

After each class, you will produce a 2-3 page (600-900 words) to that week’s readings and class discussion. This is where you will demonstrate that you have understood the material, and are thinking about it critically. The questions noted in the second paragraph of this syllabus are all good to think about, but each case will present its own issues. As we go on, comparison with other cases is always appreciated.

**Research Paper**

You are required to produce a 20-30 page (6000-9000 words) research paper about one global crisis area. We will discuss this requirement more in class, and you and I will have individual discussions about selecting a topic around the fourth week of the semester. This gives you the opportunity to focus on an area of interest to you. It can be one of the cases we do in class, in more depth, or a completely different situation. I am open to your ideas.

**Course Grade**

40% of your grade is based on the reactions papers, 40% on the research paper, and 20% on class participation. The latter would be fulfilled by basic participation–answering questions about readings, offering ideas, and participating in discussion. But doing exceptionally well in class participation can also count extra in reinforcing your term grade.

**Learning Outcomes**

1) You should develop a broad range of substantive knowledge, becoming familiar with both contemporary theoretical controversies, and the on-the-ground facts of many irregular wars.

2) You should acquire the analytic capability to approach any situation of irregular war or other identity-linked violence, research it, analyze the complex factors involve, and present key issues in ways that other can understand and which highlights possible ways to ameliorate destruction and violence.
Assigned Readings (There may be some changes in readings, to be announced)

**Week 2 (9/17)–Non-Anthropological Theory on Irregular War**
Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”
Thomas Homer-Dixon, Jeffrey Boutwell, and George Rathjens, “Environmental Change and Violent Conflict”
Michael Ross, “What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil War?”
Martin Shaw, “The Contemporary Mode of Warfare? Mary Kaldor’s Theory of New Wars”
Stathis Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?”
Michael Brown, “The Causes of Internal Conflict: An Overview”
Joshua Goldstein, Introduction to “Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide”

**Week 3 (9/24)–General Anthropological Perspectives**
Carolyn Nordstrom, “Deadly Myths of Aggression”
R. Brian Ferguson, “Violent Conflict and Control of the State”
Eric Wolf, “Comments on State, Identity, and Violence”
Yale Ferguson, “The State Concept and a World of Polities under Perpetual Siege”
Carolyn Nordstrom, “Global Fractures”

**Week 4 (10/1)–Guatemala**
Shelton Davis, “Introduction: Sowing the Seeds of Violence”
Robert Carmack, “The Story of Santa Cruz Quiche”
Linda Green, “Living in a State of Fear”
Kay Warren, “Interpreting La Violencia in Guatemala: Shapes of Maya Silence and Resistance”

**Week 5 (10/8)–Peru**
Carlos Ivan Degregori, from *How Difficult It Is to Be God: Shining Path’s Politics of War in Peru, 1980-1999*, “The Years We Lived in Danger”
Linda Seligmann, “Civil War in Peru: Culture and Violence in Historical Perspective”
William Mitchell, “Detour onto the Shining Path: Obscuring the Social Revolution in the Andes”

**Week 6 (10/15)–Colombia**
Aldo Civico, “‘We Are Illegal, but not Illegitimate.’ Modes of Policing in Medellin, Colombia”
Lesley Gill, “War and Peace in Colombia”
Kimberly Theidon, “Reconstructing Masculinities: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia”
**Week 7 (10/22)–Sierra Leone**
Paul Richards, “Insurgency in Sierra Leone: Context, Events, and Interpretations”
Paul Richards, “State Recession and Youth: The Political Culture of Patrimonial Decline”
Krijn Peters, “The RUF as a Rural Underclass Project”

**Week 8 (10/29)–Mozambique**
Stephen Lubkemann, “ Prosecuting Life by Other Means”
Bjorn Enge Bertelsen, “Sorcery and Death Squads: Transformations of State, Sovereignty, and Violence in Postcolonial Mozambique”

**Week 9 (11/5)–Sudan**
Jok Madut Jok and Sharon Elaine Hutchinson, “Sudan’s Prolonged Second Civil War and the Militarization of Nuer and Dinka Ethnic Identities”
Tim Allen, “Ethnicity and Tribalism on the Sudan-Uganda Border”
De Waal, Alex, “Tragedy in Darfur”

**Week 10 (11/12)–Serbia-Croatia**
Bette Denich, “The Spector of Superfluity: Genesis of Schism in the Dismantling of Yugoslavia”
Gavan Duffy and Nicole Lindstrom, “Conflicting Identities: Solidary Incentives in the Serbo-Croatian War”
Andre Simic, “Nationalism as a Folk Ideology: The Case of the Former Yugoslavia”
Ivan Colovic, from Politics of Identity in Serbia, “Story,” “Time,” and “Nature”
Robert Hayden, “Muslims as ‘Others’ in Serbian and Croatian Politics”
Maja Povrzanovic, “The Imposed and the Imagined as Encountered by Croatian War Ethnographers”

**Week 11 (11/19)–Sri Lanka**
Mia Bloom, “Ethnic Conflict, State Terror and Suicide Bombing in Sri Lanka”
Stanley Tambiah, “Reflections on Political Violence in Our Time”
Bruce Kapferer, from Legends of People, Myths of State, “Ethnic Violence and the Force of History in Legend,” and “Ideological Practice, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Passions”

**Week 12 (12/3)–Palestine**
Davida Wood, “Politics of Identity in a Palestinian Village in Israel”
Avram Bornstein, “Military Occupation as Carceral Society: Prisons, Checkpoints, and Walls in the Israeli-Palestinian Struggle”
Week 13 (12/10)--Pakistan
Lincoln Keister, “Death Enmity in Thull: Organized Vengeance and Social Change in a Kohistani Community”
Mukulika Banerjee, “The Ideology of Islam, Pukhtunwali, and Non-Violence”
Ikram Badshah, Hafeez-ur-Rehman, Sarfraz Khan, and Farhan Ahmad Faiz, “War on Terrorism and its Impacts on the Socio-Political Structure of Pakhtun Society of Pakistan”

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