

IR 318

Violent Conflict

Spring 2016

Instructor: Andrew Coe, acoe@usc.edu

Section Number: 37808

Meetings: TTh, 9:30–10:50am, VKC 102

Final Exam: Take-home, due by noon on May 11, NO EXCEPTIONS

Description

Why do we inflict violence on each other? Why do societies experience civil war, and states fight wars with each other? How can we make it stop?

The last two decades have seen a massive outpouring of research on these questions, across the social sciences. Archaeologists are studying the way human beings fought before civilization, anthropologists study how the rise of agriculture and government affected human violence, and political scientists and economists are learning about why some modern countries are more prone to strife and war than others.

Thanks to these efforts, our understanding of human conflict—why it happens and how it can be prevented—has advanced by leaps and bounds. In this class, we will explore the science of human conflict. We will learn what is known about ancient human warfare. (Did you know that Native American societies, far from being made up of “peaceful savages” as they were once called, were actually far more violent than the United States is today?) We will think hard about where conflicts of interest come from, and why they are sometimes prosecuted and resolved violently. (Sex, money, and power...) We will delve into the history of human violence in all its forms. (What decade was the most peaceful in all human history? Believe it or not, the 2000s.) And we will evaluate the world’s ability to end wars, and the benefits and costs of doing so. (War might not always be worse than peace—it depends on the character of peace!)

Along the way, you will gain and refine a number of skills that will be useful in later classes, and in your eventual career. You will learn how to analyze controversial issues, dispelling the hype and

vitriol that often surrounds these in public commentary. You will practice communicating your assessments and judgments with calm, concision, and clarity. You will see how modern research in social science is done, and how it is applied to real-world problems. Finally, you will learn how to read and digest academic research, even when it uses mathematical or other techniques you don't understand.

Contacting Me: You can email me at any time, and I will try to respond within a day, though exceptions will happen. I will also try to respond more quickly as exams or assignment deadlines approach. You may also set up a time to come by my office and talk, using my online calendar.

Students with Disabilities: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible.

Academic Integrity: Don't lie, cheat, or steal. Plagiarism is all three (think about it). Also, don't abet the bad behavior of others. If you catch a classmate breaking exam rules or copying another's work and don't report it, you're abetting it. Get caught doing any of these and the penalty is an F in the course, *at minimum*. For more detail, see the Trojan Integrity Guide and the related guide to avoiding plagiarism.

Books

Please acquire the following two books; Amazon's prices for a hardcopy are listed. Gat's book is also available for free online through the USC Libraries web portal.

1. Azar Gat. *War in Human Civilization*. Oxford University Press, 2008. \$22.
2. Steven Pinker. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. Penguin Books, 2012. \$16.

Requirements

Preparation and Participation (10%): Careful, thorough reading of the assigned papers before class and participating thoughtfully in class are essential to the value of this course. Though most meetings will be devoted to lecture, there will be ample opportunity for you to raise questions and engage in discussion with your classmates.

Short Assignments (30%): At several points during the semester, I will give you a short assignment to help you work through the readings.

Midterm (25%) and Final (35%) Exams: The midterm exam will be closed-book, closed-notes, and administered in class. The final will be a take-home exam, to be completed on your own

time, but emailed to me by noon on Wednesday, May 11. The exams will include multiple choice and short answer questions, and will also ask you to define some key terms from the readings.

Late Policy: If you need to, you may submit one short assignment up to a week late, with no questions asked as long as you email me before the deadline to let me know you'll be taking the extension. However, everyone must take the midterm at the specified date and time and submit the final by the listed deadline. Exceptions to this policy for personal emergencies will be granted at my discretion.

Schedule and Readings

Readings are to be completed by the beginning of class on the date listed. Some of the readings build in a sequence: it will be easier to understand them if you read them in the order listed. The journal articles and working papers listed below will be available on the class website.

NOTE: Many of the papers listed below contain appendices that describe the mathematical details behind the paper's results. I will not test you on the material in these appendices, but I encourage you to read them if you are curious about the details.

The Evolution of Violent Conflict among Humans

What role did violence play in the evolution of human society? Is war part of basic human nature, or an artifact of civilization? How and why did early humans fight? How did the development of civilization alter human violence?

Tuesday, January 12: Overview of the class, no assigned readings.

Thursday, January 14: [60 pages]

- Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Preface and Chapters 1–3.

Tuesday, January 19: [91 pages]

- Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Chapters 4–7.

Thursday, January 21: [82 pages]

- Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Chapters 8–9.

Tuesday, January 26: [92 pages]

- Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Chapter 10.

Thursday, January 28: [78 pages]

- Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Chapter 11.

Tuesday, February 2: [42 pages]

- Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Chapter 12.

Thursday, February 4: [67 pages]

- Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Chapter 13–14.

Tuesday, February 9: [58 pages]

- Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Chapter 15.

Frameworks for Understanding Violent Conflict

Analytical frameworks for thinking about violent prosecution of conflicts of interest. Why is peaceful cooperation so common? Why are some countries more likely to engage in civil or interstate warfare than others? Political and economic factors that lead to war.

Thursday, February 11: [28 pages]

- Robert Kaplan. “The Balkans: Europe’s Third World.” *The Atlantic Monthly* 264.1 (July 1989): 16–22.
- James Fearon and David Laitin. “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation.” *American Political Science Review* 90.4 (1996): 715–735.

Tuesday, February 16: no readings

Thursday, February 18: [35+ pages]

- Read the Wikipedia page on the “Russo-Japanese War.”
- James Fearon. “Rationalist Explanations for War.” *International Organization* 49.3 (1995): 379–414.

Tuesday, February 23: no readings

Thursday, February 25: [51 pages]

- Jack Hirshleifer. “The Paradox of Power.” *Economics & Politics* 3.3 (1991): 177–200.
- Jack Hirshleifer. “Anarchy and Its Breakdown.” *Journal of Political Economy* 103.1 (1995): 26–52.

Tuesday, March 1: no readings

Thursday, March 3: [92 pages]

- Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Chapter 16.

The Long-Term Decline in Human Violence

The long-term trends in murder, rape, civil conflict, and interstate war, and their relationship to changes in human societies. The changing human psychology of conflict and cooperation. What explains the rising tide of peace?

Tuesday, March 8: [58+ pages]

- Pinker, *Better Angels*, Preface and Chapters 1–2.

Thursday, March 10: Midterm Exam (in class)

SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, March 22: [70 pages]

- Pinker, *Better Angels*, Chapters 3.

Thursday, March 24: [60 pages]

- Pinker, *Better Angels*, Chapter 4.

Tuesday, March 29: [106 pages]

- Pinker, *Better Angels*, Chapter 5.

Thursday, March 31: [83 pages]

- Pinker, *Better Angels*, Chapter 6.

Tuesday, April 5: [104 pages]

- Pinker, *Better Angels*, Chapter 7.

Thursday, April 7: [? pages]

- Andrew Coe. “Modern Economic Peace.” Working paper, 2014.

Bringing an End to War

Should the world intervene to stop wars? Can it? How effective are peacekeeping, mediation, and the negotiation of settlements at permanently halting civil war? What about simply overthrowing violent regimes?

Tuesday, April 12: [58 pages]

- James Fearon and David Laitin. “Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States.” *International Security* 28.4 (2004): 5–43.
- Halvard Buhaug and Kristian Gleditsch. “Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space.” *International Studies Quarterly* 52.2 (2008): 215–233.

Thursday, April 14: [38 pages]

- Virginia Fortna. “Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace after Civil War.” *International Studies Quarterly* 48.2 (2004): 269–292.
- Kyle Beardsley. “Peacekeeping and the Contagion of Armed Conflict.” *Journal of Politics* 73.4 (2011): 1051–1064.

Tuesday, April 19: [48 pages]

- Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter. “Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence.” *International Organization* 56.2 (2002): 263–296.
- Andrew Kydd. “When Can Mediators Build Trust?” *American Political Science Review* 100.3 (2006): 449–462.

Thursday, April 21: [55 pages]

- John Owen IV. “The Foreign Imposition of Domestic Institutions.” *International Organization* 56.2 (2002): 375–409.
- Nigel Lo et al. “Ensuring Peace: Foreign-Imposed Regime Change and Postwar Peace Duration, 1914–2001.” *International Organization* 62.4 (2008): 717–736.

Tuesday, April 26: [65 pages]

- Alexander Downes and Jonathan Monten. “Forced to Be Free? Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization.” *International Security* 37.4 (2013): 90–131.
- Goran Peic and Dan Reiter. “Foreign-Imposed Regime Change, State Power, and Civil War Onset, 1920–2004.” *British Journal of Political Science* 41.3 (2011): 453–475.

Thursday, April 28: [61 pages]

- Andrew Coe. “Costly Peace.” Working paper, 2014.
- Edward Luttwak. “Give War a Chance.” *Foreign Affairs* 78.4 (1999): 36–44.