CPO 3057-A060: Contemporary Revolution and Political Violence
3 credits
(Web-Based)

Summer A
(May 13-June 23, 2026)
Mehmet Gurses
Office: HPH 202A
Office hours:
Wednesday 9:00-10:00 AM (or by appointment)
Email: gurses@ucf.edu

Course Description
Since the conclusion of World War II, there has not been a single day without some form of armed conflict occurring somewhere in the world. While war has never been uncommon, what distinguishes the last half-century or so is that the predominant type of armed conflict since 1945 has not been interstate wars between sovereign nations, but rather intra-state conflicts, such as civil wars, within individual nations. Furthermore, these conflicts have predominantly taken place in Third World countries.

This course delves into the causes, evolution, and ramifications of revolution and political violence in the contemporary world. Utilizing Karl DeRouen's *An Introduction to Civil Wars* as a foundational text, students will investigate the intricate interactions between state weakness, societal grievances, identity, ideology, and opportunity structures that lead to civil wars, insurgencies, and revolutionary movements. The course engages with significant theoretical frameworks while anchoring analysis in both contemporary and historical case studies from regions such as Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Students will evaluate the roles of non-state actors, state repression, international intervention, and peace processes in shaping violent political conflicts. By the conclusion of the course, students will have developed analytical tools to critically assess the causes and consequences of revolutionary change and political violence in today's world.

The course adopts a thematic approach and is divided into three main sections. The first section introduces fundamental concepts, including the definition of civil war, its distinctions from other forms of violent conflict, as well as the various types, costs, and outcomes associated with civil wars. The second section explores the causes of civil wars, utilizing key theoretical frameworks such as 'Grievance-Based Explanations,' 'Opportunity-Based Explanations,' 'State Capacity and Fragility,' and 'External Factors.' Finally, the third section assesses how civil wars conclude and the subsequent post-conflict challenges that arise.

Instructional Method
This is a fully online course accessible only through UCF's Canvas learning management system. *You must log into Canvas with your UCF ID and Password to access the materials and assignments in this course.*

This is an asynchronous class. There is no scheduled class meeting time. However, the assignments and tests are scheduled for completion during open windows on the scheduled days and times.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and explain the major theoretical frameworks used to understand civil war, revolution, and political violence, including grievance-based, opportunity-based, and rationalist approaches.
- Analyze the root causes of civil wars and revolutionary movements by applying interdisciplinary perspectives that include political, economic, and social factors.
- Critically assess the role of state capacity, governance, and legitimacy in either preventing or enabling violent political conflict.
- Evaluate the influence of external actors—such as foreign states, international organizations, and diasporas—on the escalation, duration, and resolution of civil wars.
- Engage in informed discussion on the ethical and policy challenges related to intervention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction.
- Develop well-supported arguments in written and oral form, demonstrating critical thinking and familiarity with key debates in the field of political violence.

Course Evaluation Method

Introduce Yourself: 5 points (see Canvas Page for details)
Reflection Assignment: 10 points (see Canvas Page for details)
Quizzes: 4 multiple-choice quizzes (5 points each), totaling 20 points
Discussions: 3 Discussions (5 points each), totaling 15 points
Book Chapter Review: 20 points (see Canvas Page for details)
Final Exam: 30 points (see Canvas Page for details)

Failure to complete an assignment or exam on time will result in an automatic zero.

Grading Scale: A 94-100; A- 90-93; B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83; C+ 77-79; C 74-76; C- 70-73; D+ 67-69; D 64-66; D- 61-63; F 0-60.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Rules of Conduct at <http://osc.sdes.ucf.edu/process/roc>. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in

- Unauthorized assistance: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise unless specifically authorized by the instructor of record. The unauthorized possession of examination or course-related material also constitutes cheating.
- Communication to another through written, visual, electronic, or oral means: The presentation of material which has not been studied or learned, but rather was obtained through someone else's efforts and used as part of an examination, course assignment, or project.
- Commercial Use of Academic Material: Selling of course material to another person, student, and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the university and the instructor. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, Instructor's PowerPoints, course syllabi, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, handouts, etc.
- Falsifying or misrepresenting the student's own academic work.

- Plagiarism: Using or appropriating another's work without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.
- Multiple Submissions: Submitting the same academic work for credit more than once without the express written permission of the instructor.
- Helping another violate academic behavior standards.

For more information about Academic Integrity, consult the International Center for Academic Integrity <http://academicintegrity.org>.
For more information about plagiarism and misuse of sources, see "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices" <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9>.

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating
Students should familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, *The Golden Rule* <http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/docs/goldenrule.pdf>. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and when necessary respond to academic misconduct. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, suspension or expulsion from the university, and/or a "Z Designation" on a student's official transcript indicating academic dishonesty, where the final grade for this course will be preceded by the letter Z. For more information about the Z Designation, see <http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/zgrade>.

Course Accessibility Statement
The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need disability-related access in this course should contact the professor as soon as possible. Students should also connect with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/> (Ferrell Commons 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone 407-823-2371). Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodations requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student.

Campus Safety Statement
Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise during class, everyone needs to work together. Students should be aware of their surroundings and familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.
In case of an emergency, dial 911 for assistance.

Every UCF classroom contains an emergency procedure guide posted on a wall near the door. Students should make a note of the guide's physical location and review the online version at <http://emergency.ucf.edu/emergency_guide.html>.

Students should know the evacuation routes from each of their classrooms and have a plan for finding safety in case of an emergency.

If there is a medical emergency during class, students may need to access a first-aid kit or AED (Automated External Defibrillator). To learn where those are located, see <http://www.ehs.ucf.edu/AEDlocations-UCF> (click on link from menu on left).

To stay informed about emergency situations, students can sign up to receive UCF text alerts by going to <https://my.ucf.edu> and logging in. Click on "Student Self Service" located on the left side of the screen in the toolbar, scroll down to the blue "Personal Information" heading on the Student Center screen, click on "UCF Alert", fill out the information, including e-mail address, cell phone number, and cell phone provider, click "Apply" to save the changes, and then click "OK."

Students with special needs related to emergency situations should speak with their instructors outside of class.

To learn about how to manage an active-shooter situation on campus or elsewhere, consider viewing this video (<https://youtu.be/NIKYajEx4pk>).

Make-Up Assignments for Authorized University Events or Co-curricular Activities

Students who represent the university in an authorized event or activity (for example, student-athletes) and who are unable to meet a course deadline due to a conflict with that event must provide the instructor with documentation in advance to arrange a make-up. No penalty will be applied. For more information, see the UCF policy at <http://policies.ucf.edu/documents/4-401.1MakeupAssignmentsForAuthorizedUniversityEventsOrCocurricularActivities.pdf>
In other cases, except medical emergencies, there will be no make-up assignments. For medical emergency cases, I will need documentary evidence.

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID REQUIREMENT: RECORDING ACADEMIC ACTIVITY POLICY

UCF must comply with a federal financial aid regulation that states that in order to receive federal aid, students must be actively academically engaged (according to a federal definition) in each course in which they are enrolled. All faculty are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. Without verification of this engagement, students will not receive their aid.
In order to document that you began this course, please **complete the canvas assignment** by the end of the first week of classes, or as soon as possible after adding the course, but **no later than the end of the second week**. **Failure to do so will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.**

Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Central Florida considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission. UCF expects every member of the university community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture for all in its classrooms, work environments, and at campus events. Dimensions of diversity can include sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, intellectual and physical ability, sexual orientation, income, faith and non-faith perspectives, socio-economic class, political ideology, education, primary language, family status, military experience, political beliefs, cognitive style, and communication style. The individual intersection of these experiences and characteristics must be valued in our community.

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu/

If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible and/or contact Student Accessibility Services. Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services - http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/ & sas@ucf.edu

Writing Support

If you need assistance with writing, please contact UCF's Writing Center.
Writing Center, Trevor Colbourn Hall, room 105
407-823-2197
http://uwc.ucf.edu/

The University Writing Center (UWC) offers writing support to UCF students from first-year to graduate in every discipline. Trained peer consultants provide help at every stage of the writing process, including understanding assignments, researching, drafting, revising, incorporating sources, and learning to proofread and edit. The UWC's purpose is not merely to fix papers or to make better writers, but to teach writers strategies to navigate complex situations for writing, both in and outside the University. Consultations are available for individuals and small groups. To make the best use of the UWC, visit far enough before your due date to allow yourself time to revise after your consultation, browse the writing resources on our website, and arrange a regular weekly appointment if you'd like long-term help. You may schedule a 45-minute appointment by phone or by using the TutorTrac scheduler on our website; walk-in consultations are also available. In addition, the UWC seeks graduate and undergraduate tutors from all majors; contact the UWC to learn more about peer writing consulting and ENC 4275/5276: Theory & Practice of Tutoring Writing, our three-credit tutor-education course.

Religious Observances

Students must notify their instructor in advance if they intend to miss class for a religious observance. For more information, see the UCF policy at <http://regulations.ucf.edu/chapter5/documents/5.020ReligiousObservancesFINALOct17.pdf>.

Deployed Active Duty Military Students

Students who are deployed active duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make related arrangements.

Required Text(s)

DeRouen, Jr. Karl. 2015. *An Introduction to Civil Wars*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Course Readings and Schedule

Module 0: Introduction to the course on Political Violence

- The Syrian Civil War Documentary Syrian Civil War SUMMARIZED - Kings and Generals DOCUMENTARY - YouTube
  For details, see "Contemporary Revolution and Political Violence: An Overview" Page and the "Assignments" Page (10 points)
  DUE May 20, 11:59 PM

Module 1: The Basics of Civil War

- DeRouen, Chapter 1
- Discussion: Watch https://tubitv.com/movies/310136/hotel-rwanda?start=true&tracking=google-feed&utm_source=google-feed and answer the following question: Was the Rwandan Genocide part of a civil war, or something else? What criteria from Chapter 1 support your answer? (5 points, for details see "Discussions Expectations and Grading")
  DUE 24, 11:59 PM

- Quiz 1 (10 Multiple Choice Questions, 0.5 points each, see Quizzes Page for details), DUE May 24, 11:59 PM

Module 2: Cost of Civil War & Civil War Dynamics

- DeRouen, Chapters 2 & 3
- Watch Zoom-Recorded Lecture(s)
- Quiz 2 (10 Multiple Choice Questions, 0.5 points each, see Quizzes Page for details) DUE 29, 11:59 PM

Module 3: **What Causes Civil War**

- DeRouen, Chapter 4
- Watch Zoom-Recorded Lecture(s)
- Discussion 2, DUE June 3 (See Canvas for details)
- Quiz 3 (10 Multiple Choice Questions, 0.5 points each, see Quizzes Page for details) DUE June 3, 11:59 PM

Module 4: **Natural Resources and Civil War**

- DeRouen, Chapter 5
- Quiz 4 (10 Multiple Choice Questions, 0.5 points each, see Quizzes Page for details) DUE June 10, 11:59 PM
- Chapter 7 Review Assignment, DUE June 15, 11:59 PM

Module 5: The Termination of Civil War and Post-Conflict Issues

- DeRouen, Chapter 6
- Discussion 3, DUE June 17, 11:59 PM (See Canvas for details)

- **Final Exam DUE June 19, 11:59 PM**