Since the end of World War Two, violent conflict in the Middle East and Africa has varied greatly. This has included inter-state wars, external power intervention, sub-state violence, and protracted social conflicts. To understand these patterns, this course explores debates around the conceptualization, causes, and consequences of violent political conflict in Africa and the Middle East. As well, it seeks to compare and contrast across these regions.

This year’s course will focus on three conflicts: Central Africa and Rwanda since the 1990s, the Israeli Occupation and Palestinian conflict, and the aftermath of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. The course is seminar based requiring student led discussion of readings, analytical writing, and class presentations.

Required Texts

Grading and responsibilities
Review papers/attendance/participation 20%
Analysis Papers (x3) 30%
Course paper (5% presentation) 50%

Requirements:
This is a seminar course dependent upon student participation. It is emphatically not a lecture based course. Please bring copies of the readings to class each week (beginning week 3 until week 14). To facilitate participation, each student will write a 1 page “reaction paper” to that week’s readings (starting week 2). The point of these papers is NOT TO SUMMARIZE the readings but draw out what you think is the most important and POSE A QUESTION for class discussion. Reactions are due Sunday by 9pm and should be up loaded to the appropriate forum on the Blackboard classroom site.

Three short analyses are required during the semester. The first paper will focus on theory and debates and will be due 2/5. The other two papers can be done on any of the other three cases, Africa and Rwanda (due 2/26), Israel and the Occupation (due 3/25), or Iraq and ISIS (due 4/22). We will agree on the paper selections the first week. Each 5 page paper will draw directly on readings from that theme or case.
debate or approach under examination in these readings? How do the authors go about making and supporting their arguments? Compare, contrast, or make your own argument to conclude the paper. Aside from each grade, these papers are also building blocks for the type of course paper that you will eventually produce.

The **course paper** is a 20 page **research paper or analytical review** of several works in the style of *The New York Review of Books, The London Review of Books, or The Boston Review*. Please familiarize yourself with this type of disciplinary writing in which several books or articles focused on a similar topic are discussed. In addition to reviewing the argument of each book, a review also draws out larger issues of the subject under review and makes an argument of its own. A course research paper can be on a theme or case of your own choosing but it must broadly align with course themes. We will meet within the first weeks of class to establish your project. **A 3 page narrative, outline, and bibliography of your paper is due Week 8.** The last week of class each student will give a class presentation of their paper and findings.

**Themes, Theories, and Cases**

**Week 1**  
**Introduction to Theory Approaches:** How do war and states interact? Europe versus Africa and the Middle East

1/11-13  


**Week 2**  
**Critiquing European War and State Theories**

1/18  
*Martin Luther King Day*

1/20  

Steven Heydemann, “War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East,” in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, edited by Steven Heydemann, University of California Press, 2000, pp. 1-30


**Week 3**  
**The New War, Civil War Debates: Concept Formation and Method**

1/25-27  
Stathis N. Kalyvas, “New and Old Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?”

The World Bank, *Breaking the Conflict Trap* (Review overview section and Part III)


**Week 4**  
**The Politics of Naming: Concepts and Methods II**

2/1-3  
Jacob Mundy, “Deconstructing civil wars: Beyond the new wars debate”  
*Security Dialogue* 42;3, 2011

Michael V. Bhatia, “Fighting Words: naming terrorists, bandits, rebels, and other violent actors,” *Third World Quarterly* 26;1, 2005


Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell*, Chapter 1

**PAPER 1 Due, 2/5 noon**

**Week 5**  
**African Conflict in the late 20th Century, Somalia to Rwanda:** Central Africa has suffered acutely violent conflict since the 1990s. The Rwandan genocide in 1994 followed years of conflict but the genocide’s aftermath only deepened the violence.

2/8-10  
Pilip Reyntjens, “War in the Great Lakes Region” in *Africa in World Politics*

Krijn Peters and Paul Richards, “Why we fight: Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone,” *Africa* 68;2, 1998 *(Focus on sections of testimony)*


See also:

**Week 6**  
**Genocide Politics**

2/15  
No Class
2/17  Fergal Keane, *Season of blood: A Rwandan Journey*, pp. 31-93


**Week 7:** Central African Wars, post-Rwanda, 21st Century Central Africa


Mahmood Mamdani, “Beyond Native and Settler as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism” *Society for Comparative Society and History* (2001)

**PAPER 2 Due 2/26 noon**

**Week 8:** State, Occupation, and Resistance: The Israel-Palestine conflict has defined much of the region’s instability and insecurity. What comprises revisionist Israeli history? How are the powers of the modern state envisioned by Focault and expressed by Gordon’s focus on occupation?


Ilane Pappe, “Post-Zionist Scholarship in Israel”

Neve Gordon, *Israel’s Occupation*, pp. 1-70

**Course Paper Outline and Bibliography Due**

**Week 9**  Spring Break

3/7-3/9  No Class

**Week 10**  Israel and Palestine

3/14-16  Gordon, *Israel’s Occupation*, pp. 70-168

Week 11  Occupation and Resistance in the Digital Age

Adi Kuntsman and Rebecca Stein, *Digital Militarism: Israel’s Occupation in the Social Media Age*, pp. 1-89

PAPER 3 Due 3/25 noon

Week 12  Non-state actors: The Terrorism Debate


Darryl Li, “A Jihadism Anti-Primer,” *Middle East Report*, (Fall 2015)


See also:


Week 13  ISIS in the aftermath of Iraq
4/4-6  William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, pp. 1-71

Pete Moore and Christopher Parker, “The War Economy of Iraq,” *Middle East Report*

**Week 14**


Jillian Schwedler, “ISIS is One Piece of the Puzzle,” *Middle East Report*, Fall 2015

**PAPER 4 Due 4/15 noon**

**Week 15**

4/18-20 Paper presentations

**Week 16**

4/25 TBA
The Middle East’s role in World War II fundamentally altered Americans’ conception of the region. For the first time, U.S. officials saw the geopolitical orientation of the Middle East as vital to American national security—a view of the region that persists to this day. (Image: Serban Bogdan/Shutterstock). Protecting North Africa and the Middle East. Once it entered World War II, however, the U.S. government could no longer ignore the geopolitical orientation of Middle Eastern countries. It was essential for the war effort that the Middle East did not fall under the control of Nazi Germany and its allies. The Soviet Union and the United States were eager to gain oil concessions of their own, and both countries pressured the Iranian government to grant such concessions. Amid dramatic changes in to the power structures of the Middle East, Brookings experts discuss how the United States can adapt its approach to the new geopolitics of the region. Today, a combination of the upheavals, revolutions, and civil wars in the region, U.S. war fatigue, the shale energy revolution, and the return of great power competition have dramatically transformed the geopolitics of the Middle East. Rebels from most neighbouring states were using Congo’s lawless forests as a base from which to launch cross-border raids. The failure of the Kabila government to curb these rebels prompted Rwanda, Uganda and Angola to enter the war. Zimbabwe, which shares no border with Congo, sent troops for different reasons: to satisfy the power-brokering pretensions of its president, Robert Mugabe, and his army's appetite for loot. Before long, the war reached a stalemate and the miscellany of armies settled down to the serious business of plunder. Zimbabwe bagged diamond seams in the south. This article appeared in the Middle East & Africa section of the print edition under the headline “Africa’s great war”. Reuse this content The Trust Project.