

CONFLICT AND SECURITY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

ECON 4415-OS1, CRN 92001
Conflict and Security in Developing Countries
Fall 2026

Class times: Monday/ Wednesday 2:00pm-3:15pm

Location: Skiles 311

Course Website: canvas.gatech.edu

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ECON 4415—Fall 2025 Class Policies and Course Outline

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces research on the causes and consequences of contemporary armed conflict and serves as an introduction to economic studies of terrorism.

COURSE SUMMARY AND GOALS

This course will engage undergraduate students in the analysis of multiple dimensions of contemporary civil conflict and will serve as an introduction to economic studies of terrorism. The first part of the course will cover six topics: the causes of civil war, short and long-term effects of civil wars on population, patterns of recruitment and participation, the organization of rebel groups, strategies used by warring factions, negotiation in the context of peace processes and civil war termination. The second part of the course will cover terrorism, counterterrorism and strategic behavior, review statistical studies of terrorism and the economic effects of international terrorism. In the process, we will also learn about datasets and empirical methods used in economics and political science to analyze armed conflict and terrorism.

Every second or third week we will introduce a new theme and discuss the major theoretical and empirical issues surrounding the topic. The course will be delivered through a combination of lectures and seminars. The seminars will be structured discussions with class participants taking turns in leading the discussion.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

Understand Conflict Dynamics

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- Explain how social, political, and economic factors contribute to the onset, persistence, and consequences of political violence and armed conflict in developing countries.
- Describe the goals and strategies of armed actors and identify ways to prevent violent conflict and reduce its impact on affected populations.

Apply Analytical Tools

- Analyze data commonly used in development economics to examine the trends in and causes and consequences of political violence and armed conflict.
- Interpret and critically assess empirical findings related to political violence, armed conflict and post-conflict recovery.
- Use game-theoretical models to explore the logic of terrorism and counterterrorism strategies.

Engage with Research and Methods

- Identify key research questions and debates in the study of armed conflict and terrorism.
- Understand the methodological approaches, both qualitative and quantitative, used to study these issues.

Communicate and Develop Ideas

- Effectively communicate insights through discussions, written assignments, and presentations.
- Develop independent research interests by selecting readings and participating in peer-led discussions and projects.

IMPORTANT FALL 2026 DATES: GT academic calendar and Econ 4415 Exam Dates

1st day of classes: August 24th (Mon)

Sept 7th (Mon) – Labor Day (no class)

Withdrawal Deadline: TBA

Fall Break:

Oct 5th (Mon) - mid semester break from instruction (*no class*)

Oct 6th (Tue) - mid semester break from instruction (*no class*)

Econ 4415: Midterm Exam: tentative: October 12th, during the regular class time (in-class)

Student Recess: Nov 25th (Wed): no classes

Thanksgiving Break: Nov 26th (Thu)– Nov 27th (Fri)

Final Instructional Day: December 7th (Mon)

Reading period: December 9th – all day

Econ 4415: Final Exam: TBA

End of Term: Dec 17th

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE (detailed outline with readings is forthcoming)

1. *Civil War (CV)*: Introduction: definitions and concepts of civil war and terrorism
2. CV: Global and local effects of civil wars.
3. CV: Effects of conflict on households and individuals
4. CV: Determinants of conflict
5. CV: Theories and empirics of recruitment
6. CV: Violence towards civilians

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7. CV: Policies for peace
8. *Terrorism (T)*: definitions and concepts. Liberal democracies and terrorism
9. T: What makes a terrorist?
10. T: Consequences of terrorism
11. T: Counterterrorism and Game theory

Note: the syllabus & class policies are subject to change as the semester progresses if I believe that this will enhance student learning and the overall quality of the course. Changes will be discussed with students in class or on-line, student input sought, and notifications sent out well before initiation of any changes.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

World Development Report 2011: *Conflict, Security, and Development* (English). World development report| World development indicators Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/966731468161352341>

Other required course materials will be made available digitally via Georgia Tech library service “Reading List” that enrolled students can access for free via course Canvas site.

Key recommended texts:

Collier, Paul. *Breaking the conflict trap: civil war and development policy*, Washington, DC: World Bank; [New York]: Oxford University Press, c2003. (available via GT library in electronic form).

Enders, Walter and Todd Sandler. *The Political Economy of Terrorism*, Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Detailed Reading list will be made available separately.

Many of the required readings (marked with *) for the class will come from the books listed under “Required” or “Key recommended texts”. All books should be available for purchase from the GT Barnes and Nobles Bookstore. Published academic papers listed in the course outline can be accessed through the GT library catalogue; working papers can be downloaded from author(s) web-pages. Many of the readings were also placed on electronic reserves at GT library (available via [Canvas: Reading List](#)).

GRADING POLICY:

Your understanding of the course material will be communicated via the following set of assignments (*percentages indicate rough weightings, not a fixed formula for grade calculation*).

Please note that the class involves a fair amount of group work. You should expect to make time for group meetings or other related events and contribute your fair share (and more) of the group assignments. **Free riding is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.**

Summary: Assignments

- Presentation: 10% of final grade
- Projects: 35% of final grade

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- Exams: 40% of final grade
- Participation: 15% of final grade

Assignments in detail

10% - **Paper presentation** - Each week two groups of students (2-3 in a group) will be required to lead a discussion or give a presentation based on one or two research papers. Select a presentation partner and choose a paper from the readings section titled “Papers for student presentations”. The guidelines for the presentation will be made available on Canvas.

35% - **Projects** (2 group projects: 15% and 15%) and one (1) take-home assignment (5%).

20% - **Exam: Midterm** [Tentative date: Monday, October 12th – during the regular class time]

20% - **Exam: Final exam. TBA**

15% - **Participation:** Discussion, in-class assignments, and reading write-ups.

a) In-class participation (7 percent): – discussion of in class readings and assignments and attendance. Assignments will be posted on Canvas. You can skip three assignments without penalty to your grade.

b) Online class participation (8 percent): every week (Tuesday by 4pm) you must submit on Canvas one-two pages discussion (11ppt font, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins) of the selected readings assigned/ or respond to a question. There will be at least 10 assignments. Assignments submitted via email will **not be** counted towards the participation grade. To receive full credit by the end of the semester you should submit 8 (eight) such assignments. Students can use whatever format (bullet points, outlines, essay, short notes) they feel clearly summarizes the major points of the reading and ***discuss their reaction to the reading***. **Each write-up should separately contain one substantive question about the reading.** An assignment that does not include such a question on the readings will lose 50% of the grade for the submission.

Students should note that, for individual assignments (papers, quizzes, etc.), grades in this course are not rigidly related to numerical scores, distribution functions, predetermined percentages, or your knowledge of buzzwords. As can be seen from the following grade descriptions, individual assignment grading in this course is related more directly to a student’s demonstrated mastery of the material. This also means that the relative performance of one’s peers is less important, though not irrelevant, to one’s grade. Finally, in determining an assignment’s grade, consideration is given for elegance of presentation, creativity, imagination, and originality *only* where these have been appropriately being called for, and where mastery of the fundamentals has already been demonstrated. A completed individual assignment will receive one of the following grades:

Grading:

A: 90-100

Exceptionally good performance - demonstrating a superior understanding of the subject matter, a foundation of extensive knowledge, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials.

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B: 80-89

Good performance - demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to skillfully handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.

C: 70-79

Adequate performance - demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter, an ability to handle relatively simple problems.

D: 60-69

Minimally acceptable performance - demonstrating at least partial familiarity with the subject matter and some capacity to deal with relatively simple problems but also demonstrating serious deficiencies.

F: 0-59

Unacceptable performance. Has not demonstrated familiarity with the subject matter, nor the capacity to deal with simple problems in a manner recognizable to the consensus of mainstream academic practitioners within the field.

Grade Change Policy

Legitimate requests for grade changes are welcome and encouraged. However, you should resist the temptation to file a frivolous request just hoping to “get lucky”. Simple computational or clerical errors should be brought to the professor’s attention immediately. Otherwise:

A) Requests for grade changes must:

- i) be submitted in writing, both electronically and in hard-copy, and
- ii) be submitted not sooner than 7 days and not later than 20 days of receiving the graded assignment, and
- iii) be no longer than 600 words.

B) Requests for grade changes should:

- i) identify what was required in the assignment, and
- ii) describe *precisely* how these requirements were fulfilled at a level above the received grade, and
- iii) address any relevant comments written by the professor on the graded assignment (if applicable)

and explain why they do not apply.

Approach a grade change request as if arguing a legal case: you should have strong and convincing arguments and evidence to support your request. Be aware that appeals to the practices of other professors generally do not constitute good argument or evidence. Note also that grade changes requests can result in re-grading that revises your grade either up or down (or may leave unchanged). That is, if the greater scrutiny demanded by a grade change request reveals your assignment to deserve a lower grade than previously awarded, then the lower grade may be assigned.

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ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Attendance and participation are essential to your success in this course. You are expected to attend class in person and actively engage in class. Not attending a scheduled class session in-person results in an absence.

There may be times when you cannot or should not attend class, such as if you are not feeling well, have an interview, or have family responsibilities. Therefore, this course allows a specified number of absences without penalty, regardless of reason. After that, penalties accrue. Exceptions are allowed for Institute-approved absences (for example, those documented by the Registrar) and situations such as hospitalization or family emergencies (documented by the Office of the Dean of Students).

Your instructor can communicate with you about how to access materials or make-up work you may have missed during your absence or suggest ways to participate in class asynchronously. Students may miss a total of *three* (3) classes over the course of the semester without penalty, which could be further extended which can be further extended if you send me a doctor or other official note. These should be delivered no later than 1 week after absence. Each additional absence after the allotted number deducts 2% from a student's final grade.

ACADEMIC HONESTY/INTEGRITY STATEMENT:

Students are expected to adhere strictly to the honor code. Copying, cheating and plagiarism (copying sections of a text and passing it as your own work) are *unacceptable*. Discussion of projects and homework is acceptable and even encouraged, but answers to the problems should be completed individually. If you engage in plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct, you will fail the assignment in which you have engaged in academic misconduct and be referred to the Office of Student Integrity, as required by Georgia Tech policy. We strongly urge you to be familiar with these Georgia Tech sites:

- Honor Challenge — <https://osi.gatech.edu/students/honor-code>
- Office of Student Integrity — <http://www.osi.gatech.edu/index.php>

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

STUDENT-FACULTY EXPECTATION AGREEMENT

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of

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me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

CORE IMPACTS STATEMENT(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following *Learning Outcomes*:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following *Career-Ready Competencies*:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion