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**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO**  
**POLS 4367-001 Ethnic Conflict and Civil Wars (CRN: 26902)**  
**Spring 2022**

MW 10:30am-11:50am / Physical Science Building 314

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**Instructor:** Dr. Cigdem V. Sirin

**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays 9:30am-10:20am via Zoom or by appointment

**E-mail:** [cigdemsirin@utep.edu](mailto:cigdemsirin@utep.edu)

**Class Website:** Blackboard through MyUTEP portal

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## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

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This course examines the causes and consequences of ethnic conflict and civil wars (such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, genocide in Rwanda, civil war in Syria), along with key strategies that are employed to contain/resolve such conflicts. Throughout the course, we will play various instructional games and engage in simulations that will enable us to virtually experience some dynamics related to ethnic conflict and civil wars. Please note that course assignments and assessments are developed in line with UTEP Edge goals.

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## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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With adequate effort and willingness, all of you are capable of doing well in this course. By the end of this course, you can expect to accomplish the following learning outcomes:

- understand and use concepts/terms relevant to the study of ethnic conflict and civil wars
- apply and critique a body of factual knowledge and theories relevant to understanding the role of domestic and international arrangements that structure intergroup relations
- apply and critique major theses relevant to analyzing the role of historical, social, political, economic, and global forces on the outbreak of ethnic conflict and civil wars
- apply and critique major theories and conflict management strategies relevant to the resolution of ethnic conflict and civil wars
- identify and formulate testable hypotheses relevant to the study of ethnic conflict and civil wars
- apply a body of factual and theoretical knowledge to evaluate past and current events and conditions related to ethnic conflict and civil wars
- develop foresight for situations where outbreak of ethnic violence or civil war is likely
- develop ideas, foster empathy, and practice leadership skills via community engagement regarding issues, actions, and humanitarian concerns related to ethnic conflict and civil wars

Targeted Edge advantages: Critical thinking, problem solving, communication, global awareness, social responsibility, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

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## **IMPORTANT NOTE**

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This course includes materials on ethnic conflict and civil wars including genocide and other kinds of atrocities that some might find disturbing. Please note that all materials are used for instructional purposes only and taken from the UTEP library collection. Students who do not wish to be exposed to such materials are free to drop the course and should do so before the academic deadline for dropping courses.

## REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS

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DeRouen, Karl R. 2015. *An Introduction to Civil Wars*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.  
Taras, Raymond and Rajat Ganguly. 2010. *Understanding Ethnic Conflict*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

## GRADING POLICY

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Your final grade in this class will be based on the following requirements:

Course Requirement	Weight	Due Dates
Midterm Exam	20%	Wednesday, March 9, 10:30am-11:50am.
Final Exam	20%	Friday, May 13, 10:00am-12:45pm.
Team-Based Research Project and Presentation	20%	due by Sunday, May 8, 11:00pm.
Instructional Games	20% (total)	All modular tasks (instructional games, discussion posts, and practice quizzes) are due by Sunday @ 11:00pm at the end of each respective module.
Discussion Posts	20%	
Practice Quizzes	Bonus points	

All grades (including the final grade) are based on the following distribution of points:

Points	Letter
≥ 89.50	A
79.50-89.49	B
69.50-79.49	C
59.50-69.49	D
≤ 59.49	F

I do not change grades or give individual-specific extra-credit opportunities to be fair to everyone. If you are concerned about your grade, please contact me and/or visit me during my office hours or by appointment. This is particularly important if your grade on the first exam is not what you expected. I will not change the grade, but I can give you feedback and suggestions on how to improve your performance in the class.

## COURSE FORMAT AND LEARNING MODULES

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The synchronous lectures for this course will be held in-person and asynchronous course activities and materials will be available on Blackboard. Access to asynchronous course content is designed in a modular format—that is, each level is “packaged” as a single module so that all

the materials, lecture notes, submission areas, discussion posts, and other tasks for that level are in one area before we move to the next level throughout the semester.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS**

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The key to success is to attend class and to log into our Blackboard course page on a regular basis. As mentioned above, the course is designed in a modular format so each module provides new lecture materials, instructional simulations and games, practice quizzes, discussion posts (posted not only by me but also your peers on a rolling basis), and many other supplementary materials (such as videos, documentaries, and relevant web sources). The course page also includes important announcements and instructions to guide you throughout the semester.

Attending class or signing into our Blackboard course site only once in a while will not be sufficient for you to effectively review the posted material and fulfill all the course requirements. In other words, trying to do everything in a single day each week is simply not feasible to fully understand the course material, effectively engage in the course activities, and produce high-quality work. In short, I urge you to access the course on a regular basis and I am sure you will feel much more in synch with the course flow that way.

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

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In each module, you will have assigned readings from your textbooks. Lecture notes will be provided for each module's readings but simply skimming through the lecture notes will not be sufficient for effectively completing the course tasks. It is important that you begin each module by first carefully doing the required readings. The list of readings per module is provided on the last section of the syllabus.

Among other Edge Advantages, the required readings in this course align particularly well with the Edge Advantage "Global Awareness" that promotes a mindset in which students understand and appreciate people, cultures, and ideas from around the world that impact our community.

## **PRACTICE QUIZZES**

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After you do the assigned readings for a given module, you can take the practice quiz. The quiz can be taken up to three times. These practice quizzes are not only useful for preparing for the exams but also for earning bonus points toward your final grade point average. At the end of the semester, those who achieve an average score that ranges from 70 to 79 for their practice quizzes will receive 1 bonus point to be added to their final grade point average. If your average practice quiz score ranges from 80 to 89, 2 bonus points will be added to your final grade point average and if your average score is 90 and over, you will earn 3 bonus points. No bonus points will be earned for a score less than 70.

## **EXAMS**

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There are two exams for the course. Each exam constitutes 20 percent of your final grade point average. Questions are primarily based on the readings, lectures, and discussions. Please refer to the section on "Academic Integrity" below to review the university and instructor policies on cheating, collusion, and plagiarism.

Among other Edge Advantages, the exams and practice quizzes in this course are primarily designed to trigger the Edge Advantage “Problem Solving” where students find solutions to difficult or complex issues.

### **Make-up exams**

Make-up exams will be given in the case of a documented emergency or an excused reason (see “Excused Absences and Excuse for Late Work” below). Note that make-up exams may be in a different format than the original exam and may require more intensive preparation.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL GAMES AND SIMULATIONS**

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Each module in this course contains instructional games and simulations related to the topics covered. After you complete each of these gamification activities, you will be asked to answer several questions related to your experiences, which will constitute 20 percent (in total) of your final grade point average.

## **TEAM-BASED RESEARCH PROJECT AND PRESENTATION**

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This course incorporates a team-based research project that involves the selection of a current or past ethnic conflict or civil war, and using that context, creating a game or simulation design to increase awareness and empathy for survivors of such conflict or war. The instructions for the research project and presentation guidelines will be provided on the course website. This assignment will constitute 20 percent of your final grade point average.

Among other Edge Advantages, this activity is particularly in line with the Edge Advantages “Teamwork” (i.e., participate as an effective, efficient member of a group in order to meet a common goal) and “Entrepreneurship” (i.e., develop, organize, and manage ideas and opportunities turning them into new products, services, firms, or industries).

## **DISCUSSION POSTS/CLASS PARTICIPATION**

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For each module, you will submit **(1)** a discussion post in response to a guided question (minimum of 250 words and maximum of 500 words) and **(2)** respond to at least one of your classmates’ post (minimum of 100 words and maximum of 500 words). Class participation via discussion posts will count for 20 percent of your final grade. I expect everyone to actively participate in class and do so in a positive and appropriate way (see the “Online Etiquette and Effective Communication” section below).

Keep in mind that class participation is more than just completing the scheduled assignments and taking exams—you should be willing to ask and answer questions, and contribute intellectually to class debates. Before posting a discussion, you should complete the assigned readings and go over the lecture notes. Exams will cover material from the readings, lectures, and our online discussions, so doing just one or the other will leave you at a disadvantage. Full credit for a discussion post is reserved only for those that follow the online etiquette and effective communication rules below.

Among other Edge Advantages, this activity is particularly in line with the Edge Advantage “Communication” that encourages UTEP students to reach mutual understanding through the effective exchange of information, ideas, and feelings.

## **OFFICE HOURS**

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My office hours are on Mondays and Wednesdays 9:30am-10:20am via Zoom. It runs in your browser, so no extra software is needed. It is also accessible via your mobile device. If you want to be heard and/or seen, you will need a microphone and/or webcam. However, you can also just “chat” with me. To attend my virtual office hours, click on the link provided on Blackboard. Remember that the link will be active only during those hours. Feel free to email me ([cigdemsirin@utep.edu](mailto:cigdemsirin@utep.edu)) if you need to make an appointment for a virtual or an in-person meeting outside of these hours.

## **COURSE/INSTRUCTOR POLICIES**

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### ***E-Mail Protocol***

UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt during weekdays. I will respond to weekend messages by Monday at the latest. When e-mailing me, please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.

### ***Online Etiquette and Effective Communication***

Some of our class discussions will take place on Blackboard. In an online environment, it is essential that utmost respect and professionalism be adhered in all exchanges between class members. This is a political science course and we will be at times discussing sensitive and controversial topics. In our virtual discussions, avoid any unnecessary arguments with other class members, such as political polemical arguments (e.g., negative partisan talking points targeting those of opposing ideological perspectives or particular political figures) or, even worse, personal attacks on others for having different views. No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated. Unprofessional conduct will be dealt with swiftly through the university and it is at the professor’s full discretion to have a student dropped from the course for any inappropriate behavior. Please carefully read the following:

### **Online Etiquette and Effective Communication Policy**

**Language:** Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong or offensive language, all capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamation points. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any strong language.

**Respect:** A web-based classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom are likely to be inappropriate in a web-based course as well. Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect. Remember that members of the class and I will be reading any postings.

**Be Forgiving:** If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to me as your professor. Remember that the person contributing to the discussion may be new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may quite possibly have been unintended and can best be cleared up by the professor.

**Think First, Post Later:** Think carefully about the content of your message before composing and posting it. When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

**Edit Your Work:** The grammar, spelling, and punctuation of a message are part of the grading criteria – you should not expect your professor and peers to decode misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. It is a good practice to compose and check your comments in a word-processor before posting them.

**Test for Clarity:** Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be perfectly obtuse to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly. If you can read it to another person before posting it, even better.

**Follow the Parameters/Stick to the Point:** Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. You need to stick to the point. Don't waste others' time by going off on irrelevant tangents. Also keep in mind that no credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.

### ***Excused Absences and Excuse for Late Work***

I will excuse absences and late work when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of her/his faith that happens to coincide with a class session, is called to and participates in active military service for a reasonably brief period, or confronts a medical emergency. To be excused, you must notify me *in writing* prior to the date of absence. That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency), you must provide notification as soon as possible following your absence. Such notification must include an explanation of why notice could not be sent in advance. You must also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence. In case of an illness, a doctor's note is the proper documentation required. *For my records, you should e-mail me an electronic copy of the documentation that verifies the reason for your absence (if you don't have access to a scanner, you can take a photo of the documentation). Documentation that is not provided in a timely manner will not be accepted.*

See academic regulations in UTEP Undergraduate Catalogue for a list of excused absences: <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=54418>. According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, "When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of "W" before the course drop deadline and with a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline."

### ***Incomplete Grade Policy***

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

### ***Academic Integrity***

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to cheating, collusion, and plagiarism. *Cheating* may involve copying from or providing information to another student and possessing unauthorized materials during a test. *Collusion* involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. One example of collusion is preparing a discussion entry for another person or having someone prepare a discussion entry for you. *Plagiarism* is commonly defined as passing off the ideas, works, writing, etc., of another person as your own. Accordingly, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own work, even if you have the permission of that person. I encourage students to study together and work collectively; however, working together to write any part of a written assignment, research paper, and/or exam is plagiarism. Be aware, just as the internet has made it easier to find material, it has also made it easier to trace the source of any written work. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

### ***Copyright Statement for Course Materials***

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further retained or disseminated.

### ***Course Recordings***

Any recordings in this course is governed by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and UTEP's acceptable-use policy. Any course-related recording will be kept and stored by UTEP, in accordance with FERPA and UTEP policies. As your instructor, I will not share the recordings of class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students, teaching assistants, or graduate assistants, and any guest faculty or community-based learning partners with whom we may engage during a class session. Any recordings that contain FERPA-protected information (such as recorded discussions during office hours sessions) will not be publicly shared. You are not allowed to share any recordings outside of this course. Doing so may result in disciplinary action.

### ***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)***

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you require specific

accommodations and support services, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Please keep in mind that accommodations need to be requested at least two weeks (or a month if advance planning, such as the acquisition of books-on-tape, is required) prior to the beginning of the semester. Here is the contact information for CASS: web: <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>; phone: (915) 747-5148; fax: (915) 747-8712; e-mail: [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu); location: UTEP Union Building East Room 106.

## **SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS**

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You will need the following software on your computer to efficiently work in this course (your computer may already have some of these programs installed):

- **Microsoft Office.** If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office 365](#) and follow the instructions.

## **ALTERNATE MEANS OF SUBMITTING WORK IN CASE OF TECHNICAL ISSUES**

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I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#). You can email me ([cigdemsirin@utep.edu](mailto:cigdemsirin@utep.edu)) your back-up document as a last resort.

## **RESOURCES FOR ASSISTANCE**

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UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

### Technology Resources

- **[UTEP Help Desk](#):** If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

### Academic Resources

- **[UTEP Library](#):** Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- **[University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#):** Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- **[Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#):** Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- **[History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#):** Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.



- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

#### Individual Resources

- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

### COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS AND ACCOMODATIONS

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In UTEP President Wilson's words:

“Here's what I would ask of each of you.

**First, stay home if you are sick.** Let your supervisor know, and let's all be flexible and help each other out so that our work gets done as a team.

**Second, if you haven't been vaccinated or boosted yet, it's the best thing you can do.** We've arranged for testing and vaccination on campus. Separate emails will give you all of the details.

**Third, other than when alone in my own office, I'm going to be wearing a high-quality mask when I'm on campus, at least until this wave passes through.**

I'm vaccinated and boosted. But it seems pretty clear that I could have no symptoms and still give the disease to someone more vulnerable than me. I know there's some debate about this, and I don't like wearing a mask. None of us do. **For now, I'd ask you to wear a mask, too.”**

**Vaccination Resources:** <https://www.utep.edu/resuming-campus-operations/vaccine/index.html>

**COVID-19 Testing at UTEP:** <https://www.utep.edu/resuming-campus-operations/testing/index.html>

**COVID-19 Illness Reporting:** For the safety of the campus community, it is very important to inform the University when you are ill. If you have tested positive or have been exposed to an individual who tested positive for COVID-19, please inform UTEP EH&S at [COVIDaction@utep.edu](mailto:COVIDaction@utep.edu).

Here is a [student training video](#) prepared by UTEP. Check out UTEP's [COVID-19 website](#) for updates and announcements.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE AND TASKS BY MODULES\***

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### **Module 1: January 19-January 23**

- Carefully read the syllabus and do the syllabus quiz
- Introduce yourself to the class
- Review all the posted materials in the “Welcome and Course Introduction” module

### **Module 2: January 24-February 6**

- Do this module’s readings:
  - DeRouen: Chapter 1: Introduction
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 1: Ethnic Conflict on the World Stage
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 5: Nationalism and the Collapse of Empire: The Russian-Chechen Conflict
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 6: Separatist Movements in Constitutional Democracies: Canada and Quebec Nationalism
- Check out the recommended readings and resources
- Complete “Social Identity Wheel” and the reflection activity
- Play Instructional Game: The Republica Times
- Watch the documentary: On Our Watch
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **Module 3: February 7-February 20**

- Do this module’s readings:
  - DeRouen: Chapter 2: Costs of Civil War
  - DeRouen: Chapter 3: Civil War Dynamics
  - DeRouen: Chapter 4: What Causes Civil War?
- Check out the recommended readings and resources
- Play Instructional Game: Finding Home – A Refugee’s Journey
- Watch the documentary: Ghosts of Rwanda
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **Module 4: February 21-March 6**

- Do this module’s readings:
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 2: Ethnic Conflict and International Norms
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 3: Ethnic Conflict and International Security
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 9: Western Military Intervention and Ethno-Religious Conflicts: Iraq, Afghanistan, and Former Yugoslavia
- Check out the recommended readings and resources
- Play Instructional Game: Parable of the Polygons

- Watch the documentary: The Death of Yugoslavia
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **Module 5: March 7-March 13**

- Do this module's readings:
  - DeRouen: Chapter 5: Natural Resources and Civil War
- Check out the recommended readings and resources
- Midterm Exam – March 9 (in class)

### **Spring Break: March 14-March 20**

### **Module 6: March 21-April 3**

- Do this module's readings:
  - DeRouen: Chapter 6: The Termination of Civil War and Post-Conflict Issues
  - DeRouen: Chapter 7: International Intervention
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 4: Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Through International Intervention
- Check out the recommended readings and resources
- Play Instructional Game: End Game Syria
- Watch the documentary: Syrian Uprising
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **Module 7: April 4-April 17**

- Do this module's readings:
  - DeRouen: Chapter 8: Terrorism and Civil War
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 7: Intractable Ethnic War?: The Tamil-Sinhalese Conflict In Sri Lanka
- Check out the recommended readings and resources
- Play Instructional Game: Peacemaker (play the Israeli side in the first week of the module and then the Palestinian side in the second week)
- Watch the documentary: Israel and the Arabs: Elusive Peace
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **Module 8: April 18-May 1**

- Do this module's readings:
  - Wolff Chapter 6: Post-Conflict Reconstruction
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 8: Weak States and Ethnic Conflict: State Collapse and Reconstruction in Africa

- Check out the recommended readings and resources
- Team Presentations
- Play Instructional Game: GAP - Gaming for Peace
- Watch the documentary: Once Upon a Time in Iraq
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **Module 9: May 2-May 8**

- Do this module's readings:
  - DeRouen: Chapter 9: Conclusion
  - Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 10: To Intervene or Not to Intervene
- Check out the recommended readings and resources
- Play Instructional Game: Syrian Journey
- Watch the documentary: As We Forgive
- Watch the Ted Talk: The Power of Forgiveness
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **IMPORTANT END-OF-SEMESTER DEADLINES:**

- Team-Based Research Project due by Sunday, May 8, 11:00pm.
- Final Exam (in class) – Friday, May 13, 10:00am-12:45pm.

\*The course schedule and format may be revised based on progress in class and the University guidelines.