


---

**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO**  
**POLS 4367-001 Ethnic Conflict and Civil Wars (CRN: 26816)**  
**Spring 2024**  
**Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00am-10:20am / Quinn Hall 203**

---

**Instructor:** Dr. Cigdem Sirin (Phonetic: Cheedém Shirin  / Pronouns: She|Her|Hers)  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 11am-12pm, in person, virtually via Zoom, or by appointment  
**Office:** Benedict Hall 302  
**E-mail:** [cigdemsirin@utep.edu](mailto:cigdemsirin@utep.edu)  
**Class Website:** Blackboard through MyUTEP portal

---

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

---

This course examines the causes and consequences of ethnic conflict and civil wars 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.

---

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

---

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 [UTEP Edge](#) advantages: Communication, critical thinking, problem solving, social responsibility, and global awareness.

---

### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

---

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.

## **OBJECTIVES FOR PROFESSIONALISM**

---

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 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 and/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.

## **REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS**

---

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**

---

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

<b>Course Requirement</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>
Midterm Exam	25%	Thursday, March 7
Final Exam	25%	Tuesday, May 7, 10:00am–12:45pm
Team-Based Research Project and Presentation	15%	Presentations to be held on Tuesday, April 30 Project due by Friday, May 3, 11:59pm
Class Participation and Attendance	20%	All class meetings
Instructional Games	15% (total)	All bi-weekly modular tasks are due by Sunday @ 11:59pm at the end of each respective module.
Practice Quizzes	Bonus points	

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

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

If you are concerned about your grade, please contact and/or visit me during my office hours or by appointment. I can give you feedback and suggestions on how to improve your performance in the class.

## **OFFICE HOURS**

---

My office hours are on **Tuesdays 11am-12pm**. I will be available in person at Benedict Hall 302, as well as via Zoom during these hours. The Zoom link is provided on Blackboard. Feel free to email me ([cigdemsirin@utep.edu](mailto:cigdemsirin@utep.edu)) if you need to make an appointment for a virtual meeting outside of these hours.

## **COURSE FORMAT AND LEARNING MODULES**

---

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 of the course materials for that level are in one area before we move to the next level throughout the semester.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS**

---

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, and many other supplementary materials (such as videos, documentaries, and other relevant multimedia resources). 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**

---

In each module, you will have assigned readings from your textbooks. Lecture notes will be provided for each week’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**

---

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**

---

There are two exams for the course. Each exam constitutes 25 percent of your final grade point average. Questions are primarily based on the readings, lectures, and class 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**

---

Each module contains instructional games and simulations related to the topics covered. After you complete each of these instructional activities, you will be asked to answer several questions related to your experiences, which will constitute 15 percent (in total) of your final grade point average.

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

---

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 for 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 are provided on the course website. This assignment will constitute 15 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).

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE**

---

Class participation and attendance 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. Keep in mind that class participation is more than just attending class and taking exams—you should be willing to ask and answer questions, and contribute intellectually to class debates.

Among other Edge Advantages, active class participation 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.

## **COURSE/INSTRUCTOR POLICIES**

---

### ***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.

### ***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 their 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, please notify me in writing prior to the date of absence if possible. That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency or lack of childcare), please provide notification as soon as possible following your absence. *If available*, please also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence (such as a doctor’s note) for my records.

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 Dishonesty and Misconduct***

Academic misconduct and dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. This 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. 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. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one. A document detailing different forms of plagiarism is provided on Blackboard. 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. All written work submitted for this course will be checked by the instructor for originality via *SafeAssign*—an online originality checking service made available by UTEP.

Any act of academic misconduct and 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](#).

### ***AI is Prohibited***

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as [ChatGPT](#) or [DALL-E](#), is **not allowed** for assignments in this class. Each student is expected to use critical and creative thinking skills to complete tasks and not rely on computer-generated ideas. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

## **DIVERSITY**

---

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally and/or for other students.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

---

It is my goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate any issues related to the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please meet with me outside of class so we can explore potential options. Students with disabilities may wish to work with the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in this course, including official accommodations. Students who are pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. For more information, please visit: <https://www.utep.edu/titleix/pregnancy-and-parenting.html>. Contact the CASS at 915-747-5148, email them at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the CASS, please inform me as soon as possible so we can develop an implementation plan together.

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT**

---

As members of the University of Texas at El Paso community, we acknowledge that we are meeting on unceded Indigenous land. We would like to recognize and pay our respects to the Indigenous people with long ties to the immediate region: Lipan Apache, Mescalero Apache, Piro, Manso, Suma, Jumano, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe, and Tortugas Pueblo. We also acknowledge the nations whose territories include present day Texas: the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, and the peoples of Chihuahua and northern Mexico from whom most/many of our students descend, such as the Rarámuri, Tepehuan, Wixarrika and Nahuatlaca peoples. Finally, we recognize all of the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories here in Paso del Norte, on Turtle Island. The University of Texas at El Paso honors your history and cultures and we seek greater awareness of the myriad ways in which your legacy can guide us in fruitful partnerships and mutually fulfilling relationships.

## **RESOURCES FOR ASSISTANCE**

---

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support. Please refer to the QR code below for a listing of campus resources or visit [https://www.utep.edu/advising/student\\_resources/student-success-resource-hub.html](https://www.utep.edu/advising/student_resources/student-success-resource-hub.html).



## **SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS**

---

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**

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.

## **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 disseminated.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS\***

### **Module 1: Introduction / Identity and Nationalism**

#### **Week 1: January 16-January 18**

- DeRouen: Chapter 1: Introduction
- Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 1: Ethnic Conflict on the World Stage

#### **Week 2: January 23-January 25**

- 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

### **Module 2: Causes, Dynamics, and Costs of Civil War**

#### **Week 3: January 30-February 1**

- DeRouen: Chapter 4: What Causes Civil War?

#### **Week 4: February 6-February 8**

- DeRouen: Chapter 3: Civil War Dynamics
- DeRouen: Chapter 2: Costs of Civil War

### **Module 3: Ethnic Conflict and International Stage**

#### **Week 5: February 13-15**

- Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 2: Ethnic Conflict and International Norms
- Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 3: Ethnic Conflict and International Security

#### **Week 6: February 20-22**



- Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 7: Intractable Ethnic War?: The Tamil-Sinhalese Conflict In Sri Lanka

#### **Module 4: Resource Curse, Terrorism, and Conflict**

##### **Week 7: February 27-29**

- DeRouen: Chapter 5: Natural Resources and Civil War
- DeRouen: Chapter 8: Terrorism and Civil War

##### **Week 8: March 5-7**

- Midterm Exam Review
- Midterm Exam – March 7

##### **Week 9: March 11-March 15**

- Spring Break – No class meetings

#### **Module 5: Conflict Interventions and Post-Conflict Issues**

##### **Week 10: March 19-March 21**

- Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 4: Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Through International Intervention
- Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 10: To Intervene or Not to Intervene

##### **Week 11: March 26-March 28**

- DeRouen: Chapter 6: The Termination of Civil War and Post-Conflict Issues
- Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 9: Western Military Intervention and Ethno-Religious Conflicts: Iraq, Afghanistan, and Former Yugoslavia

#### **Module 6: Post-Conflict Reconstruction**

##### **Week 12: April 2-April 4**

- MPSA Conference
- Work on your team-based projects – Project blueprint due by Friday, April 5, 11:59pm.

##### **Week 13: April 9-April 11**

- Wolff Chapter 6: Post-Conflict Reconstruction
- Taras and Ganguly: Chapter 8: Weak States and Ethnic Conflict: State Collapse and Reconstruction in Africa

#### **Module 7: The Future of Ethnic Conflict and Civil Wars / Conclusions and Projections**

##### **Week 14: April 16-April 18**

- Reading TBA

##### **Week 15: April 23-April 25**

- DeRouen: Chapter 9: Conclusion
- Wolff: Conclusion

## **Module 8: Project Presentations and Exam Preparation**

### **Week 16: Final Week: April 30-May 2**

- Team-based research project presentations
- Exam review

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

- Team-Based Research Project due by Friday, May 3, 11:59pm
- Final Exam: Tuesday, May 7, 10:00am–12:45pm

\*This is a provisional schedule of our course. With advanced notice, I may introduce specific changes based on progress in class and/or the University guidelines. Please also note that the designated time zone for the submission of all course assignments and tasks is **Mountain Time (MT)**.