

**Colloquium on
State Failure, Warlords, and Pirates**

Political Science BC 3812

Spring 2017

Tuesdays 2:10-4:00pm

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Course Description

What are sovereign states, why does sovereignty matter, and how do states weaken or fail? How does state weakness affect a country's political economy, the wellbeing of its population, and international security? Is there anything that can be done to strengthen weak states—and is that even a good idea? This course examines these problems through the lenses of both social science theories and in-depth case studies. We will pay special attention to the political economy and security consequences of some of the ills associated with state weakness and failure, including organized crime, warlordism, piracy, and violent extremism.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of social science and policy debates about sovereignty, state failure, warlordism, piracy, and non-state violent extremism.
- Demonstrate factual knowledge of selected historical and current cases where these debates are reflected in real-world events.
- Read critically to assess the explanatory value of competing perspectives and theories.
- Apply contending theories from the social science literature to analyze, compare, and evaluate selected historical and current events, in class discussions and written assignments.
- Synthesize facts and arguments across cases in order to reason critically and argue creatively in class discussions and written assignments.
- Independently design, research, and write a substantial paper of 25-30 pages that explores and takes a stance on a significant debate in the social science literature on sovereignty, state failure, warlordism, or piracy.

Assignments and Expectations

Students are required to attend all course meetings, to participate regularly in class discussions, and to demonstrate through this participation that they have completed the assigned readings before class is held. If a student is not able to attend a particular course meeting, Prof. Marten must be notified in advance if at all possible, and an alternate assignment (for example, a one-page written summary and discussion of assigned course readings) must be completed in lieu of discussion participation for that day.

All written assignments will be submitted on the “assignments” page on Courseworks, which notes time and date of submission. All uploaded files must be in either Word or PDF format.

Late assignments will not be accepted, except in the case of a documented family or health emergency (usually requiring a supportive email from the student's dean).

Twice during the semester, each student will write a short (3- to 5-page) argumentative essay on some aspect of the assigned weekly readings, due before the start of class that week so that the paper is not influenced by our course discussion. A schedule will be circulated after our first class meeting, so that students may choose the subjects and dates of their critique papers.

Each student must also choose one day to lead or co-lead the opening 15 minutes of our class discussion, after Prof. Marten's introductory remarks. This discussion leadership role will be factored into the course participation grade.

Students will also write a longer research paper of at least 25 double-spaced pages on a topic chosen in consultation with Prof. Marten, due by **noon on Tuesday, April 25**, our last class session. Each set of readings on the syllabus is accompanied by a set of potential research paper topics. This list is far from exhaustive, but should give students some initial starting hints as they develop their independent research projects.

The process of writing this research paper—not merely the final result—is the heart of the course, and students should plan to spend significant time throughout the semester conceptualizing and rethinking the topic and research strategy as the semester progresses. The frustrations of rigorous research are part of the learning experience of the course. Students will turn in a carefully written and preliminarily research **topic statement** (2-3 paragraphs) for this longer paper by **5pm on Monday, Feb. 6** (we will discuss them in class on Feb. 7) and a **research proposal** (of at least 3 pages, including a revised topic statement if necessary) with an **annotated draft bibliography** of at least 15 high-quality sources by **5pm on Friday, March 10**, before the official start of spring break. (Early submissions are most welcome.) Separate handouts will describe the expectations of each of these assignments.

Senior Capstone Requirement

In addition to the above requirements, all seniors who have designated this colloquium to fulfill their Senior Capstone requirement will be assigned peer partners, with whom they are expected to consult throughout the semester about their major paper assignment. Capstone seniors will hold additional meetings in the instructor's office (mutually convenient times TBA) where peer partners will discuss and provide constructive mentoring and feedback on the topic statement and research proposal and methods. A portion of seniors' class participation grade will reflect the quality of their work as peer partners.

Capstone seniors will present their final research papers in class on the last day of class, along with a poster summarizing their research questions, arguments, and findings. A portion of seniors' final research paper grade will reflect the quality of their presentations. The poster will also be displayed at the Barnard major's senior end-of-year party (date TBA). The poster itself will not be graded, but the completion of a poster is required to receive a "Pass" for the senior requirement, and will factor into Departmental considerations for Senior Project Distinction.

Students are expected to participate regularly in class discussions, and to demonstrate through this participation that they have completed the assigned readings before class is held.

Evaluation

Participation: 20%

Two short papers: 10% each (20% total)

Initial topic statement for longer paper: 5%

Research proposal (and revised topic statement, if necessary): 10%

Annotated bibliography: 5%

Finished 25- to 30-page paper: 40%

Barnard Honor Code

All assignments in this class are to be completed in accordance with the Barnard Honor Code, with expectations outlined in the following paragraph. Any student who violates the Honor

Code will face dean's discipline at her or his home college, and will earn a failing grade in the course.

Students affirm that all work turned in is their own, and that they have fully and accurately cited every written source, including web-based sources and unpublished sources (such as prior student papers), used in their writing. Students are encouraged to consult with each other to get feedback as they are writing their major research papers and the intermediary assignments associated with the research papers, but no collaboration is allowed when writing the short papers on the assigned readings. All students may use the Barnard Writing Center with no restrictions.

All students receive in-depth briefings on plagiarism and proper citation techniques as part of their introductory days at Barnard and Columbia; any student who has any remaining questions about proper citation technique or about how to avoid plagiarism should discuss these questions and concerns with Prof. Marten before turning in the assignment in question.

REQUIRED READINGS

Each of the books has been ordered at Book Culture, 536 West 112th Street. Each has also been put on reserve at the Barnard College Library. In addition, there are a large number of journal articles and book chapters that are required reading.

Abdel Bari Atwan, *Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015)

Diego Gambetta, *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Kimberly Marten, *Warlords: Strong-Arm Brokers in Weak States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

COURSE OUTLINE

January 17: What is "state failure"? Contending definitions and understandings.

In today's class we will talk about why definitions matter, and also about cause-and-effect (causal) relationships and research, distinguishing causal research questions from descriptive or prescriptive questions. The goal is to get students to start thinking about their research topics. Please prepare by looking at the definitions of failing states in the Marten review article, and determining whether or not (and why, in either case) Venezuela (as described in the Naím and Toro article) fits various definitions of state weakness or failure. What kinds of cause-and-effect questions could a researcher ask about Venezuela, and what kinds of evidence would be needed to make a strong case about these causal questions?

Available on Courseworks:

Kimberly Marten. "Failing States and Conflict," in *The International Studies Encyclopedia*, ed. Robert A. Denemark (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 2012-22.

Available on the open web:

Moisés Naím and Francisco Toro, "Venezuela Is Falling Apart: Scenes from Daily Life in the Failing State" theatlantic.com May 12 2016

January 24: Why did sovereign states develop in Europe and what did they really do?

In today's class we will look at two (out of many possible) arguments about why sovereign statehood developed in the first place. What purpose did states originally serve? Spruyt's book is designed as a critique of Tilly. Which of the two arguments do you find more convincing? What do the origins of statehood tell us about states and state weakness today?

Available on Courseworks:

Charles Tilly, "How War Made States, and Vice Versa," from *Coercion, Capital, and European States AD 990-1992* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 67-95.

Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), Introduction (pp. 1-7) and chapters 5-8 (pp. 77-180).

January 31: Why do weak states persist?

An interesting related research question might be: what has been the effect of the international community on the persistence of any of today's weak states (such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, or Somalia)? What have proposals been for alternate arrangements to nation-states in these cases, and why have they been non-starters? Or, international organizations like the World Bank often give assistance only to sovereign states. Has this had any unintended consequences, and if so, are there solutions for better practices going forward?

Columbia Library Web:

Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics* 35, no. 1 (Oct., 1982), pp. 1-24.

Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Introduction and chapters 1-4 and 6 (pp. 3-136, 173-97).

Feb. 7. Research discussion day. At the start of class, Prof. Marten will give an introduction to resources available through Columbia Library Web. Then each student will give a very brief summary of a proposed research topic, with the goal being to push each student to define terms clearly and think about causal, as opposed to descriptive or prescriptive, research questions.

Feb. 14. Are states just the most powerful organized crime rackets?

Interesting related research questions: is organized crime in a particular state (Mexico, Colombia, Tajikistan, China) similar to or different from the Sicilian mafia described by Gambetta? How is organized crime in the chosen state either integrated with the state, or at odds with it? What does that say about state cohesion and definitions of sovereignty?

Courseworks:

Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 169-91.

Diego Gambetta, *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), Introduction and chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-71), 7-8 (pp. 159-244).

Feb. 21. Why did organized crime dominate Russia in the 1990s?

We know that in the 2000s the Russian state came roaring back under Vladimir Putin. This book is a definitive discussion of what went wrong with the Russian state in the 1990s. What, if anything, can the Russian case tell us about other cases—and why? What are the similarities and differences?

Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), entire.

Feb. 28. What are the real effects of "state failure" in Somalia? "Governance" and "ungoverned spaces."

Interesting related research questions: How does governance in Somalia resemble or differ from governance in another weak or failed state? Why?

Columbia Library Web:

Ken Menkhaus, "Managing Risk in Ungoverned Space: Local and International Actors in Somalia," *SAIS Review* 36, no. 1 (Winter–Spring 2016): 109-120.

Aisha S. Ahmad, "The Security Bazaar: Business Interests and Islamist Power in Civil War Somalia," *International Security* 39, no. 3 (Winter 2014/15): 89–117.

March 7: Why do warlords arise, and what effects do they have?

Interesting related research questions: do warlords operate the same way all over the globe, including in a case of your choice not covered here? Does the Sicilian mafia operate like a warlord operation? Is U.S. urban gang violence just warlordism on a small scale? How does warlordism intersect with peace efforts in place like Afghanistan or Palestine?

Kimberly Marten, *Warlords: Strong-Arm Brokers in Weak States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012). Read chapters 1, 2 and the conclusion to the Marten book. Then, students will be assigned to cover two of the available historical cases (from the book—Pakistan, Georgia, or Chechnya, or the article below, on Palestine) to read in depth and compare.

Columbia Library Web:

Kimberly Marten, "Reformed or Deformed? Patronage Politics, International Influence, and the Palestinian Authority Security Forces," *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 2 (2014): 181-197.

Friday, March 10: 3-page research proposal and annotated bibliography due at 5pm on Courseworks.

March 14: Spring break, no class meeting.**March 21. What fostered piracy in Somalia, and why has it recently declined?**

Interesting research question: is piracy just warlordism or organized crime on the ocean? Why is piracy in Somalia (East Africa) similar to or different from piracy off the coast of Nigeria (West Africa)?

World Bank Regional Vice-Presidency for Africa, *The Pirates of Somalia: Ending the Threat, Rebuilding a Nation* (Washington, DC, 2015), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/182671468307148284/pdf/76713-REPLACEMENT-pirates-of-somalia-pub-11-2-15.pdf> . Entire. Pay special attention to chapters 6-8 on the political economy of piracy, and chapter 9 on international responses to overcome piracy.

March 28: Is piracy in Southeast Asia similar to, or different from, Somali piracy in its causes and effects? Will the same anti-piracy efforts work both places?

Karsten von Hoesslin, *The Economics of Piracy in South East Asia* (Geneva: Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2016), <http://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Global-Initiative-Economics-of-SE-Asia-Piracy-May-2016.pdf> . Entire.

April 4: Does state weakness cause terrorism?

Interesting research questions: what is the relationship between organized crime or warlords and terrorist groups in a particular state? What were the differences between how al Qaeda operated in Somalia and in Afghanistan, and why?

Columbia Library Web:

Marc Lynch, "Failed States and Ungoverned Spaces," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668, no. 1 (November 2016): 24-35.

Edward Newman, "Weak States, State Failure, and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19 (2007): 463–488.

Bridget Coggins, "Does State Failure Cause Terrorism? An Empirical Analysis (1999–2008)," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 3 (2015): 455-83.

April 11: Why did the self-proclaimed Islamic State rise, can it be defeated, and if so, how?

Interesting research questions: is the Islamic State beset by warlordism, and what makes it

vulnerable or not to that centripetal force? Why did the Syrian state collapse, and what would be necessary to rebuild it to prevent the rise of something like IS again in the future? Will another artificial state, like one in post-colonial Africa, also be likely to spawn a group like IS, and why or why not—how is it similar to or different from Iraq and Syria?

Abdel Bari Atwan, *Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), entire.

April 18: No class meeting. Prof. Marten available for individual office consultation.

April 25: Papers due at noon, before class. Capstone seniors will present their research projects today.

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