This graduate seminar examines a long neglected topic: the role of territory in group politics. The goal is to build a basic understanding of why, when, how and which territory becomes contested. We will read from a broad range of disciplines and students are required to read at least 250-300 pages a week.

Territorial conflicts are often viewed as the most contentious and intransigent in international politics. Territorial conflict is also one of the most frequent causes of interstate—and intrastate—war. But why is it that states (or sub-national actors) fight over territory? Is it because they seek economic benefits to be gained by additional territory, because they identify with specific territory, because they fear a rival taking over the territory, or for some other reason? In this class, we will focus on various perspectives that suggest causes of territorial conflict. We will evaluate these arguments in terms of both their logical consistency and the empirical record of territorial conflict.

Each student is expected to write two short papers for two different sessions, which are not to exceed 1500 words. Each paper should provide an independent commentary on some aspect of that week’s readings. It is neither desirable nor necessary that you try to be comprehensive. Rather, you should select issues or angles that interest you, and develop your own thoughts about them. These papers are to be circulated to the class via e-mail not later than Wednesday evening at 8:00 p.m. These papers then form the background against which we will discuss the readings in class.

In addition, each student is required to write a 20–25 page research paper, which focuses in depth on one of the discussed emerging research agendas. (Or, in exceptional cases, on an emerging research agenda of the student’s choosing.) This paper is due at the end of the first week of April. In the last sessions we will try to organize some time to discuss drafts and/or outlines of these papers.

I will call on students and expect each student to be prepared to begin the discussion of each reading with a short description of the central question, central argument and competing explanations. If discussion does not arise naturally, I will assign students responsibility for leading a discussion of particular works.
Course Requirements

Participation in the seminar comprises 25% of your grade. The short papers count for each 15%—for a total of 30%—of your grade, and the final paper counts for 45%.

Academic Integrity

Be familiar with the University’s policies on academic integrity and disciplinary action (http://www.rochester.edu/living/urhere/handbook/discipline2.html#XII). Violators of University regulations on academic integrity will be dealt with severely, which means that your grade will suffer, and I will forward your case to the Chair of the College Board on Academic Honesty.

Provisional outline

Course Outline

Thursday September 2

CLASSES CANCELLED: Annual APSA Convention

Thursday September 9

1. Introduction: Why study territory?


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**Thursday September 16**

### 2. Territoriality


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**Thursday September 23**

### 3. Does Conquest Pay?


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**Thursday September 30**

### 4. Identity


Thursday October 7

5. **Identity**


Thursday October 14

6. **Identity**

- Hassner, Ron E. “To Halve and to Hold: Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility.” *Security Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Summer 2003), pp. 1–33.

Thursday October 21

7. **Conflict over Territory**

Thursday October 28

8. Conflict over Territory

- Walter, Barbara F. “Reputation and War: Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict.” Manuscript (University of California, San Diego).

Thursday November 4

9. The Size of States


Thursday November 11

10. A Case: China

  [http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/taiwan/index.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/taiwan/index.htm)

Thursday November 18

11. Norms


Thursday November 25

Thanksgiving Recess

Thursday December 2

12. Focal Points

• Me! “Territoriality and Conflict.” Unpublished manuscript, University of Rochester.

Wednesday December 8

13. Papers

• You!

Henry Kissinger once wrote: “It would have occurred to no one in the eighteenth century that the legitimacy of a state depended on linguistic unity. It was inconceivable to the makers of the Versailles settlement that there might be any other basis for legitimate rule” (1973, p.145).
Questions to consider in formulating and evaluating social science research

1. **What is the central question?**
   - Why is it important (theoretically, substantively)?
   - What is being explained (what is the dependent variable and how does it vary)?
   - How does this phenomenon present a puzzle?

2. **What is the central answer?**
   - What is doing the explaining (what are the independent variables and how do they vary)?
   - What are the hypotheses, i.e., what is the relationship between independent and dependent variables, what kind of change in the independent variable causes what kind of change in the dependent variable?
   - What are the causal mechanisms, i.e., why are the independent and dependent variables so related?
   - How do the independent variables relate to each other?
   - What assumptions does your theory make?
   - Is the theory falsifiable in concept?
   - What does this explanation add to our understanding of the question?

3. **What are the possible alternative explanations?**
   - What assumptions are you making about the direction of causality?
   - What other explanations might there be for the phenomenon of study, and to what degree do they conflict with the central answer?
   - Could the hypothesized relationships have occurred by chance?

4. **Why are the possible alternative explanations wrong?**
   - What is the logical structure of the alternative explanations (compare 2)?
   - What is the empirical evidence?

5. **What is the relationship between the theory and the evidence?**
   - What does the research design allow to vary, i.e., in this design are the explanations variables or constants?
   - What does your research design hold constant, i.e., does it help to rule out the alternative competing explanations?
   - How are the theoretical constructs represented empirically, i.e., how do you know it when you see it (measurement)?

6. **How do the empirical conclusions relate to the theory?**
   - How confident are you about the theory in light of the evidence?
   - How widely do the conclusions generalize, i.e., what might be the limitations of the study?
   - What does the provisionally accepted or revised theory say about questions of broader importance?