

PSC 551: State Building and Conflict

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:40 - 10:55

Instructor

Bethany Lacina
Harkness 334

Important note

This is a preliminary syllabus posted so that students can see the structure of the class and obtain course materials.

Course Requirements

1. Students must attend every class. Reading for the week must be completed by all students before class.
2. Leading class discussions on assigned days.
3. A research proposal.

Academic honesty

Students and faculty at the University must agree to adhere to high standards of academic honesty in all of the work that we do. The College Board on Academic Honesty provides further information on our policies and procedures: www.rochester.edu/college/honesty.

In this course the following additional requirements are in effect: You are encouraged to discuss course readings and assignments with your fellow students. However, all written work must be done independently and not in collaboration with another. All written work must properly format quotations, use citations, and include a bibliography where necessary. Cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Academic Honesty Board.

Required books

1. Vansina, Jan. 2012. *How Societies Are Born: Governance in West Central Africa before 1600*. University of Virginia.
2. Geertz, Clifford. 1980. *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*. Princeton University.

3. Kollman, Nancy Shields. 1999. *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia*. Cornell University.
4. McNamee, Lachlan. 2023. *Settling for Less: Why States Colonize and Why They Stop*. Princeton University.
5. Tilly, Charles. 1992. *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1992*. Blackwell.
6. Spryut, Hendrick. 1994. *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change*. Princeton University.
7. Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. *States and Power in Africa*. Princeton University.
8. Stasavage, David. 2011. *States of Credit: Size, Power, and the Development of European Polities*. Princeton University.
9. Cox, Gary W. 2016. *Marketing Sovereign Promises: Monopoly Brokerage and the Growth of the English State*. Cambridge University.
10. Meng, Anne. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship: From Personalized Rule to Institutionalized Regimes*. Cambridge University.
11. Dahl, Robert A. 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. Yale University.
12. Popkin, Samuel L. 1979. *The Rational Peasant*. University of California.
13. Sobrevilla-Perea, Natalia. 2025. *Armed Citizens and Citizens in Arms: The Military and the Creation of the State of Peru, 1800–1860*. Cambridge University.
14. Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.
15. Sun, Yan. 2020. *From Empire to Nation State: Ethnic Politics in China*. Cambridge University.
16. Lacina, Bethany. 2017. *Rival Claims: Ethnic Violence and Territorial Autonomy under Indian Federalism*. University of Michigan.
17. Lyall, Jason. 2020. *Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War*. Princeton University.
18. Alesina, Alberto, and Enrico Spolaore. 2005. *The Size of Nations*. MIT.

Class schedule

Jan 20 Introduction to the course

Jan 22 Cooperation under anarchy I

Axelrod, Robert and W. D. Hamilton. 1981. "The evolution of cooperation." *Science*, 211(4489).

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 1996. "Explaining interethnic cooperation." *American Political Science Review*, 90(4).

Jan 27 Cooperation under anarchy II

Cao, Yiming, Benjamin Enke, Armin Falk, Paola Giuliano, and Nathan Nunn. 2021. "Herding, armed conflict, and a culture of honor: Global evidence," NBER Working Paper 29250. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w29250>.

Ostrom, Elinor, James Walker, and Roy Gardner. 1992. "Covenants with and without a sword: Self-governance is possible." *American Political Science Review*, 86(2).

Jan 29 Cooperation under anarchy III

Jha, Saumitra. 2013. "Trade, institutions and ethnic tolerance: Evidence from South Asia." *American Political Science Review*, 107(4).

Greif, Avner and Guido Tabellini. 2017. "The clan and the corporation: Sustaining cooperation in China and Europe." *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 45(1).

Feb 3 Stateless societies I

Horton, Robin. 1972. "Stateless societies in the history of West Africa." *History of West Africa*, Vol. 1. Columbia University. Distributed by instructor.

Mauss, Marcel. 1967 [2016]. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Translated by Jane Guyer. Hawoo Publishing Company. Translation appears as Part II in: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rochester/detail.action?docID=5510779>.

Feb 5 Stateless societies II

Vansina, Jan. 2012. *How Societies Are Born: Governance in West Central Africa before 1600*. University of Virginia.

Feb 10 Primary states

Spencer, Charles S. 2010. "Territorial expansion and primary state formation." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(16).

Honeychurch, William. 2013. "The nomad as state builder: Historical theory and material evidence from Mongolia." *Journal of World Prehistory*, 26(4).

Feb 12 Leviathans

Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Dictatorship, democracy, and development." *American Political Science Review*, 87(3).

Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War-making and state-making as organized crime." In Peter Evans et al., eds., *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge University. Distributed by instructor.

Konrad, Kai A. and Skaperdas, Stergios. 2012. "The market for protection and the origin of the state." *Economic Theory*, 50(2).

Feb 17 Non-Leviathan states

Geertz, Clifford. 1980. *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*. Princeton University.

Kollman, Nancy Shields. 1999. *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia*. Cornell University.

Feb 19 State proliferation and expansion

Kopytoff, Igor. 1987. "The internal African frontier: The making of African political culture." In Igor Kopytoff, ed., *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Indiana University. Distributed by instructor.

McNamee, Lachlan. 2023. *Settling for Less: Why States Colonize and Why They Stop*. Princeton University.

Feb 24 The territorial state system I

Tilly, Charles. 1992. *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1992*. Blackwell.

Spryut, Hendrick. 1994. *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change*. Princeton University.

Feb 26 The territorial state system II

Acharya, Avidit and Alexander Lee. 2018. "Economic foundations of the territorial state system." *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(4).

Abramson, Scott. 2017. "The economic origins of the territorial state." *International Organization*, 71(1).

Mar 3 The state system and weak states

Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. *States and Power in Africa*. Princeton University.

Queralt, Didac. 2019. "War, international finance, and fiscal capacity in the long run." *International Organization*, 73(4).

Meyer, John M., John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco O. Ramirez. 1997. "World society and the nation-state." *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(1).

Mar 5 Institutional constraints I

North, Douglass C. and Barry R. Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and commitment: the evolution of institutions governing public choice in seventeenth-century England." *The Journal of Economic History*, 49(4).

Blaydes, Lisa and Eric Chaney. 2013. "The feudal revolution and Europe's rise: Political divergence of the Christian west and the Muslim world before 1500." *American Political Science Review*, 107(1).

Mar 10 No class

Mar 12 No class

Mar 17 Institutional constraints II

Stasavage, David. 2011. *States of Credit: Size, Power, and the Development of European Politics*. Princeton University.

Cox, Gary W. 2016. *Marketing Sovereign Promises: Monopoly Brokerage and the Growth of the English State*. Cambridge University.

Mar 19 Institutional constraints III

Meng, Anne. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship: From Personalized Rule to Institutionalized Regimes*. Cambridge University.

Mar 24 Interests and institutions I

Luebbert, Gregory M. 1987. "Social foundations of political order in interwar Europe." *World Politics*, 39(4).

Stephens, John D. 1989. "Democratic transition and breakdown in Western Europe, 1870-1939: A test of the Moore thesis." *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(5).

Mar 26 Interests and institutions II

Dahl, Robert A. 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. Yale University.

Mar 31 Interests and institutions III

Weir, Margaret and Theda Skocpol. 1985. "State structures and the possibilities for 'Keynesian' responses to the Great Depression in Sweden, Britain, and the United States." In Peter Evans et al., eds., *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge University. Distributed by instructor.

Weiner, Myron. 1962. *The Politics of Scarcity*. University of Chicago. Selections: Distributed by instructor.

Apr 2 Rebellion

Scott, James C. 1972. "The erosion of patron-client bonds and social change in rural Southeast Asia." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 32(1).

Popkin, Samuel L. 1979. *The Rational Peasant*. University of California.

Kuran, Timur. 1991. "Now out of never: The element of surprise in the East European revolution of 1989." *World Politics*, 44(1).

Apr 7 Rebellion and state-building

Sobrevilla-Perea, Natalia. 2025. *Armed Citizens and Citizens in Arms: The Military and the Creation of the State of Peru, 1800–1860*. Cambridge University.

Apr 9 Nationalism

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.

Apr 14 Nationalism and state-building I

Sun, Yan. 2020. *From Empire to Nation State: Ethnic Politics in China*. Cambridge University.

Apr 16 Nationalism and state-building II

Lacina, Bethany. 2017. *Rival Claims: Ethnic Violence and Territorial Autonomy under Indian Federalism*. University of Michigan.

Apr 21 Nationalism and state-building III

Lyall, Jason. 2020. *Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War*. Princeton University.

Apr 23 No class

Apr 28 Centralization and decentralization

Alesina, Alberto, and Enrico Spolaore. 2005. *The size of nations*. MIT.

Garfias, Francisco and Sellars, Emily A. 2022. “When state building backfires: Elite coordination and popular grievance in rebellion.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 66(4).

Apr 30 In-class presentation of research designs