Politics is what happens when humans attempt to influence each other’s behavior because they have conflicting goals. Influence can occur by violent or non-violent means, but it always occurs in the shadow of violence. Consequently, it is important that violence be viewed in relation to non-violent alternatives. States are purveyors of violence but their propensity to use it, against other states or their own or foreign citizens, varies across time and space. In this seminar we will endeavor to understand why. To this end we will explore many topics, including: human nature, interstate war, rebellion, international trade, peace-keeping, state building, ethnic rivalry, international and domestic law, and foreign interventions.

**Required Texts:**


I have argued that the modal paper in applied political economy answers five questions and that innovative papers often involve new answers to only one of those five questions. You will write three to four (you can decide, depending on your preference for feedback and your risk propensity) papers during the semester. Each of which will critically engage at least one of the readings from the preceding weeks and argue that the author’s answer to one of the five questions is inadequate. You will then be expected to provide an alternative answer to that question that constitutes an improvement over the author’s answer. For the first essay I will distribute a writing prompt that provides a few examples of how you might engage the work we have read. For the last two or three essays, you will be asked to critically engage a reading or set of readings (again, your choice) using a set of five questions that will be the central method for interrogating readings throughout the semester.

**Schedule**

**September 1**   Violence and non-Violence- An Introduction

- Blattman, Chapter 1,

**September 8**   The Relationship Between Violence and States.


Suggested:

**September 15 Uncertainty**

- Blattman, Chapters 1 and 4

**September 22 - NO Class**

**September 29 Unchecked interests**

- Blattman, Chapter 2

**October 6 Intangible incentives Part I**

- Blattman, Chapter 3

**Paper one prompt will be distributed. Due Oct 13**

**October 13 Intangible Incentives Part II**


**October 20 Commitment Problems**

- Blattman, Chapter 5
October 27 Misperceptions

- Blattman, Chapter 6.

November 3 Interdependence - “The Commercial Peace”

- Blattman, Chapter 7.

November 10 Checks and Balances

- Blattman, Chapter 8

Suggested:
November 17 Law (Part 1)

- Blattman, Chapter 9.

December 1  **Suggested Due Date for penultimate paper.**

Interventions and Alternative Explanations (Gender, Inequality, Age, Ethnicity)

- Blattman, Chapter 10 and 11.

**Due Date for all papers: December 15**