Colloquium on
State Failure, Warlords, and Pirates
Political Science BC 3812
Spring 2012
Class meeting time: TBA

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
What are sovereign states, and why do they fail? Does their failure matter, either for the well
being of their domestic populations or for international security concerns? Is there anything that
the international community can do to remedy state failure? This course examines these
problems through the lenses of both social science theories and in-depth historical case studies.
We will pay special attention to the political economy and security consequences of two forms of
state failure: warlordism and piracy.

The course’s primary goals are to use the problem of state failure to develop students’ ability to
analyze and critique competing cause-and-effect arguments, and to pose their own causal
arguments based on independent research of the existing secondary-source literature. The course
is designed to help prepare Barnard students to write the senior thesis in the political science
major.

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, and piracy.
- 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 expected to participate regularly in class discussions, and to demonstrate through
this participation that they have completed the assigned readings before class is held.
By 9pm on each evening before class, each student will post a brief response to one of the assigned readings (or to one argument of a longer book reading) on the Courseworks discussion page. This response should start with a very brief paragraph that summarizes in a few lines the reading in question—what was the major argument that the author tried to make? Then the response should list one or two brief questions provoked by the reading that the student would like to discuss in class the next day. Students are expected to have looked at each other’s postings before class, and to come prepared to talk about the issues that are raised in them. (The regularity and quality of email postings will be included in the student’s course participation grade.) Students who are nervous or reluctant about speaking up in class should come and talk to Prof. Marten to get help and encouragement.

Twice during the semester, each student will also write a short (3- to 5-page) essay on the assigned weekly reading, due at the start of class on the assigned day. Each student will select two weeks for this at our second class meeting.

Each student will also write a substantial research paper of at least 25 pages on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. This paper will be due at the start of class on the last day of our course (Week 13). Students will turn in a carefully written, well thought-out one-page topic statement for this longer paper at the start of class in week 4 of the semester, and an annotated draft bibliography (of at least 15 sources) for this paper at the start of class in week 7 of the semester. For week 10, no group meeting will be held, but each student will bring a 3-page outline to go over with Prof. Marten in her office, to discuss progress on the paper.

**EVALUATION**

Participation (including email postings and in-class discussion) that reflects independent engagement with the assigned readings: 20%

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

Major research paper: (60% total)
  - Topic statement: 5%
  - Annotated bibliography: 5%
  - Outline: 5%
  - Final paper: 45%

Late turn-ins will be heavily penalized, except in the case of illness or family emergency. Students who must miss a class session should consult with Prof. Marten about writing a one-page response to the assigned readings as a substitute for participation that day.

**BARNARD HONOR CODE**

All assignments in this class are to be completed in accordance with the Barnard Honor Code. 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, used in their writing. Students are encouraged to consult with each other to get feedback as they are designing, researching and writing their major research papers, but no collaboration is allowed.
when writing the short papers on the assigned readings. Students may use the Barnard Writing Center with no restrictions.

**REQUIRED READINGS**

Each of the five published 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, as well as the professor’s book page-proofs, that are required reading and have been placed on electronic reserves for this class.


**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1: Introduction. What is state failure, and does it matter?**


**Week 2: The European state in theory: Hobbes and his contemporaries, and Weber.**


**Week 3: Why were states built in Europe, and what did sovereignty really mean?**


**Week 4: European colonialism and artificial statehood.**


*Please note: topic statement due at the start of class today.*

**Week 5: When statehood collapses: the example of post-Soviet Russia.**


**Week 6: Warlords and the state.**


**Week 7: When warlords are the state.**


*Please note: annotated bibliography due at the start of class today.*

**Week 8: The political economy of warlordism: the Afghanistan example.**


**Week 9: The political economy of piracy: the Somalia example.**


**Week 10: Individual student meetings.**

*Please note: 3-page paper outline due at the start of class today.*

**Week 11: Is neo-trusteeship a solution to state failure?**


**Week 12: Is an international compact with local citizens a solution to state failure?**


**Week 13: Papers due; open discussion about policy problems and solutions.**