Our impressions of Africa are shaped by images of violence. Yet the logics, mechanisms, and costs of conflict across the continent are shockingly absent from popular discussions. This absence allows us to normalize suffering and pathologize an entire continent as peculiarly genocidal, somehow prone to self-destruction. In this course we will look for counterbalances to common images of war-torn Africa by seeking insights into conflicts from multiple perspectives: those of soldiers, survivors, refugees, returnees, academics, and journalists. In short, this course considers the complicated logics of postcolonial violence by assembling myriad snapshots of the experience, economies, and meanings of conflict from the 1960s to the present, from Algeria to Sierra Leone, from insurgency to genocide.

Through readings and discussions we will reflect on the particularities of multiple conflicts as well as their relevance for understanding broader trends in the modern world. Our guiding question will be: how have postcolonial conflicts taken their particular forms? To this end we will consider, 1) the meanings of violence for national and local relationships, and 2) how conflicts in Africa have been connected to larger economic and political fields of interaction. Thus, we will situate African conflicts in deeper histories, those of colonial hierarchies, Cold War geopolitics, and post-Cold War international relations. This framing will focus our attention on how conflicts across the continent have both been affected by and affected global conditions.

**Required readings:**


ASSIGNMENTS:
(1) Three short papers, 5 pages in length each (*8 pages for graduate students*), will be due in my *email inbox* no later than 3pm on 23 October, 13 November, and 7 December. Each essay assignment consists of two questions: the first question asks you to consider a particular aspect of each reading; the second question urges you to synthesize insights from all three of the unit’s readings. **Each set of questions appears on this syllabus below the heading of its due date.** PLEASE *consider these questions as you read* the assigned texts. **Doing so will make it much easier to answer the questions.**

*NOTE:* All late submissions will be penalized by subtracting one half grade (i.e., from A to A-) for each day late. Plagiarism in any form is not permitted. Any plagiarized paper will receive an F and be forwarded to the appropriate university administrator.

**All written work must be checked closely for spelling and grammatical errors.**

(2) Short presentation (10 minutes) of one or more of the readings. You will be required to present the basic arguments, evidence, and conclusions of one or more of the readings, depending on the size of the class. A sign-up sheet will be circulated the first week of class.

EVALUATION:
Final grades will be calculated in the following manner

1) Papers: **70 percent** (20% 1st, 25% 2nd, 25% 3rd)
2) Active class participation (including presentations): **30 percent**

**SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS**

2 october, meeting one
introductions

*PART ONE – the social relations of violence*

9 october, meeting two

16 october, meeting three

23 october, meeting four
FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE
How does each author seek to explain the effects of violence on everyday life? Together, what do these diverse accounts reveal of how people rationalize and cope with conflict?

PART TWO – identity and genocide

30 october, meeting five
Philip Gourevitch, We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda. New York: Picador, 1999.

6 november, meeting six
film: Ghosts of Rwanda

13 november, meeting seven

SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE
How does each reading use identity as a theme for explaining violence? What general conclusions can we draw about the Rwandan Genocide from these reflections on identity?

PART THREE – perpetuating conflict

20 november, meeting eight
film: The Peacekeepers

27 november, meeting nine

4 december, meeting ten

7 december
final assignment due via email at 4pm
How does each work explain the factors contributing to the perpetuation of conflicts? How are these explanations similar and/or different?