Aims
We will familiarize ourselves with the main facts about modern war and, to a lesser extent, terrorism. In parallel we will develop broadly applicable empirical tools to help us measure key phenomena and drive our analysis. Specific topics include the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Rwandan genocide, the human impact of war and the possible long-run decline of war. This course, and EC3320, will prepare students for a lifetime of critical data consumption beyond the particular world of war and terrorism.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course students should:

- Have substantial knowledge of the facts about armed conflict.
- Be able to apply theoretical and empirical economic analysis to the study of conflict and beyond
- Be conversant with the research frontier in conflict economics
- Have developed and well-articulated views on policy toward conflicts
- Understand key data issues that arise in studying conflict

Course Delivery
The course will be delivered through ten two-hour lectures and nine one-hour seminars. I will present the more difficult conceptual issues in lectures while seminars will be reserved for practice.

The seminars will be structured discussions organized around problem solving worksheets. IT IS CRUCIAL FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE COURSE THAT STUDENTS PREPARE FOR EACH SEMINAR BEFORE THE ACTUAL SEMINAR. Seminar preparation will sometimes include a very short reading or video clip but will mostly focus around a worksheet. The questions on the exams (midterms and finals) will resemble the worksheet questions.

I will be available for consultation (either by you individually, or in small groups) during office hours. Office hours are Tuesday, 11:00 – 12:00, Thursday 11.00 – 12.00. If you cannot make the office hours feel free to just knock on my door at any time. I will also be very available by email at all times (m.spagat@rhul.ac.uk). There will be a course blog on which I will post emailed questions and my
answers (after removing the identity of the emailing student). The blog has been a big success over the years so you definitely will want to make use of it. I’m always happy to meet students in person but there are definite advantages to having a written record of your questions and my answers so email is my favourite means for communicating with students.

**Assessment**

- There will be a sit-down midterm exam worth 20% of the final mark. This will be given on **Thursday, November 21**. It will be in BOURNEAX-290 and also in BOURNEAX-280 if we have DDS students.
- There will be a short essay worth 20% of the final mark. This will be due on **Tuesday, January 14**. There will be a maximum of 1,200 words on the essay.
- There will be a 2-hour unseen examination worth 60% of the final mark. This will be taken during the summer term.

**Reading**

I give links to all of the articles in the reading list below. I have tested all the links on my office computer and they all worked for me as of mid-September. It is possible, however, that some of these links require you to be working through RHUL subscriptions to get through. So you may only be able to access some of the resources from campus or using a campus VPN. Please let me know if you have problems with a particular reading. I will also post a few things on the Moodle web site to smooth access. Again, let me know if you encounter any problems and I will fix them straight away.

**Weekly Timetable**

**Week 1.** Induction Week, no class

**Week 2.** Overview of the course, Iraq Body Count (IBC), central tendency

**Reading**


Optional Background

VOX (2014), *Iraq Explained -- ISIS, Syria and War*

VOX (2014), *A Brief History of ISIS and the conflict in Iraq*

**Week 3.** The costs of counter-terrorism, value of a statistical life, dispersion, estimating an average from a sample, statistical bias, confidence intervals

**Reading**


**Seminar –** The weapons that kill, incomplete data, central tendencies.

Spagat, Michael (2015), *The 22 Kunduz deaths aren’t surprising. These two tables show why there will be another devastating attack on civilians soon,* *Monkey Cage.*

**Worksheet**

**Week 4.** Counting, documenting and estimating violent war deaths, sample surveys, types of errors

**Reading**


**Seminar –** The costs of counter terrorism, summary statistics, calculating means and confidence intervals from random samples

Mueller, John (2015), *Are we spending too much fighting terrorism?*

Mathews, Dylan (2016), *The TSA is a waste of money that doesn’t save lives and may actually cost them,* *Vox*

**Worksheet**
Week 5 – Excess deaths, counterfactuals, statistical significance, p values


Seminar – Bias, estimating violent deaths, confidence intervals

Worksheet

Week 6 – Cross-Country Conflict Data, decline of war debate, linear regression

Reading


Seminar – Excess deaths, counterfactuals, statistical significance, p values

Worksheet

Week 7. Reading Week, no class

Week 8. More on the decline of war debate, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; A cycle of violence?, logistic regression

Reading


Optional Background – "Everything you need to Know about Israel-Palestine," VOX.

Seminar – Conflict data, decline of war debate, linear Regression

Worksheet

Week 9. The Rwandan Genocide, rare events

Reading


Optional Background – Beauchamp, Zack “Rwanda's Genocide — what Happened, why it Happened, and how it Still Matters,” VOX.

Seminar – Revision for the midterm exam and preparing for writing your essays

Revision Worksheet

- MIDTERM EXAM – THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, BEGINNING AT 6:30 IN THE EVENING. It covers lectures 1-5 and seminars for weeks 3 – 8. It will be in BOURNEAX-290 and also in BOURNEAX-280 if we have DDS students.

Week 10. The costs and benefits of peace in Northern Ireland, differences in differences

Reading


McKee, Doug (2015), “An Intuitive Introduction to Differences in Differences.”

Optional Background – "Quick Guide: Conflict in Northern Ireland," BBC.

Seminar- First midterm, logistic regression, rare events
Feedback on the midterm using the answer key plus a short worksheet

Week 11. Health costs of conflict, event studies, matching

Reading


Optional Background – "Ivory Coast Profile," *BBC*.

Optional Background – "Biafra: Thirty Years On," *BBC*.

Seminar – Israeli Palestinian conflict, the peace dividend in Northern Ireland, differences in differences

Worksheet

Week 12. Economic development, asset markets, essays

Readings


Guidolin, Massimo and Eliana La Ferrara (2007), "Diamonds are Forever, Wars are not: Is Conflict Bad for Private Firms?" *American Economic Review*, 97 (5).


Optional Background – "Angola Profile," *BBC*.

Optional Background – Oosterhuis, Gert (2012), "The Basque Conflict.avi"

Seminar – Differences in differences, event studies, matching
Worksheet

ESSAY DUE TUESDAY JANUARY 14