Course description

In this course we will examine one of the most destructive, evil and perplexing phenomena haunting society: genocide - i.e. the on a large scale organized exclusion and killing of populations defined by race, ethnicity, nationality, political affiliation or religion. In the first section of this course students will be introduced to ideational, rational and psychological explanations of genocide. Causes of genocide can be found at different levels of analysis. We will focus on theories at three different levels. First, we will look at how national and international processes such as modernization and political leadership cause genocide (macro level). Second, we will look at why individuals, both victims and non-victims, accept or even participate in mass killings (micro level). Third, we will look at what role subnational groups such as religious congregations, organizations, informal groups, local communities and militias play in linking micro and macro forces (meso level). In the second part of this course, we will assess the validity of different explanations through the comparative study of four particular cases: the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, Cambodia and Rwanda. Students will explore and present a fifth case on their own.

Students will improve their analytical skills by drawing connections between social science theory, historical monographs, journalistic accounts and policy documents. Upon completing the course, students will not only be acquainted with the main types of explanations offered for genocide, but they will also be able to evaluate the evidence supporting the various explanations. In turn, this
should help students to develop and evaluate proposals to end and prevent mass killing and recognize opportunities for resistance against genocide.

Required Text

The following book is available for purchase at the Norris bookstore (and most other vendors):


Other texts are available on CANVAS or via the library website as EBOOKS or EJOURNALS.

Documentaries

Weekly readings are accompanied by recommended documentaries. These documentaries will help you with but are not formally part of your examinations. Documentaries are available via CANVAS, YOUTUBE or KANOPY. Watching these documentaries is not required.

Requirements and Grades

The formal requirements and grade calculation are as follows:

- In class midterm: 30% of grade.
- Open Book take home essay: 30% of grade.
- Final paper: 40% of grade.

In addition, two short assignments graded as pass/fail will help you write your final paper.

Case Selection

For the assignments as well as for the final paper you need to work on a particular episode of mass killing not discussed in class. You can choose the episode yourself but the Ottoman destruction of other christian minorities and other victims of the Nazi’s cannot be studied as they are too closely related to the cases discussed in class. Examples of cases you could choose are:

- Stalin’s genocides against national minorities.
- Mao’s Cultural revolution.
• Killing of Herero’s in Namibia.
• East Timor Genocide
• Darfur Genocide
• Guatamala Genocide
• Many others.

To guarantee sufficient variation in case selection, I will circulate a case selection sheet on 4/13 and reserve the right to assign you, in consultation, a different case.

For your assignments and paper you will have to collect and read additional literature on your own. You will have to read at least 5 academic sources. Your Professor and TA can be consulted for help. As a first step you might want to look at what the following reference works, which have been put on course reserve in the main library, have to say about your case:

• Donald Bloxham and A Dirk Moses. The Oxford handbook of genocide studies. Oxford University Press, 2010

Academic books can be recognized by the fact that they are published by academic presses (e.g. Cambridge University Press). Non-exhaustive lists of academic generalist journals, most of which publish high quality research on genocide, can be found below:

• History: AVAILABLE ONLINE HERE.
• Sociology: AVAILABLE ONLINE HERE.
• Political science: AVAILABLE ONLINE HERE.
• Anthropology: AVAILABLE ONLINE HERE.
• Psychology: AVAILABLE ONLINE HERE.
• Economics: AVAILABLE ONLINE HERE.

In addition, there are three high quality journals dedicated to the study of genocide -the Journal of Genocide Research, Genocide Studies and Prevention and Holocaust and Genocide Studies- that you might want to consult.

Paper

You will write a 15 page paper (Times New Roman, 12pt, double-spaced, 1 inch margins all around) providing a causal explanation of the episode of mass killing you choose. In your paper you will:

1. Use the 5 sources you collected.
2. Give a general overview of how the violence unfolded.
3. Explain why this episode qualifies as a genocide. This requires you to apply a definition.
4. Deploy four explanations introduced in this class to explain why this episode of mass killing took place OR explain why none of the perspectives are useful.
5. Use these explanations to draw out similarities between your case and at least 3 cases discussed in class OR explain why you think your case is incomparable OR analyze a negative case.
6. The final paper is due the first Wednesday after reading week before 5pm and needs to be submitted hard copy to your TA. (6/13).

Two Small Assignments

To facilitate the writing process we will require you to submit two short assignments:

1. You will submit a list with your 5 academic sources on 5/9.
2. You will submit a first 2 page overview of your paper on 5/23.

You will these assignments hard copy to your TA. Your TA will provide feedback and grade the assignments as pass/fail. Late, incomplete and failing submissions will however affect the final paper grade.
4/3 Northwestern Genocide

- Report of the John Evans Study Committee, Northwestern University, Chapter 4. AVAILABLE ONLINE HERE.
- University of Denver John Evans Study Report, pp. iii-V, 3-16 and 88-97. AVAILABLE ONLINE HERE.

4/4 Definitions and Origins

- DOCUMENTARY: Watchers of the sky (Belzberg 2014). KANOPY.

4/9 Macro-level Explanations 1


4/11 Macro-level Explanations 2

4/16 Micro and Meso-level Explanations 1

- Case selection due in class!
- DOCUMENTARY: The Stanford Prisoner Experiment (BBC). AVAILABLE ONLINE HERE.

4/18 Micro and Meso-level Explanations 2

- Alex Alvarez. *Genocidal crimes*. Routledge, 2009, Chapter 4. CANVAS.

4/23 How to investigate your case?

- Start reading for next week!!!
- Meet in B234 (main library).

4/25 Holocaust Macro


4/30 Holocaust Micro and Meso


5/2 Midterm

• Prepare for id and essay questions.

5/7 Armenia Macro and Comparisons

• DOCUMENTARY: The Armenian Genocide (Goldberg 2006). CANVAS.


5/9 Rwanda Macro and Negative Cases

• Reference list due in class!

• DOCUMENTARY: PBS Frontline: Ghosts of Rwanda (Barker 2004) KANOPY.


5/14 Rwanda Micro and Meso

5/16 Bosnia Macro


5/21 Bosnia Micro and Meso


5/23 Resisting Genocide

- Two page overview paper due in class!

- Listen to two testimonies available at this USHMM link.


5/28 Memorial Day

- No class!!

5/30 Take-home essay (Open book)

- Review 4 cases.

6/4 One-on-one meetings about papers

- Meet in 1808 Chicago ave, room 103.