

BHP 351: GENOCIDE, HUMAN RIGHTS & LITERATURE

T /TH 9:45-11:15

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is designed to introduce students to one of the most troublesome and unnerving aspects of the modern world: the systematic cleansing and killing of populations defined by ethnicity, nationality, or race. Genocides are not the only form of political killings, and are certainly not the only form assumed by violations of human rights. They have existed in some fashion since the beginning of recorded history. But in the modern world, genocides have become more systematic, more extensive, and more deadly. In response to these and other forms of crimes against humanity, new human rights standards have arisen and the effort to define and prosecute genocides is now a major aspect of international law. Literary writers and cinematic producers and have also begun to examine the causes and effects of genocides in their work.

Genocide is a contested term, and we will explore its various meanings. Ethnicity, nationality, and race are all historically specific ways of categorizing the human population. The course will concentrate on genocides and crimes against humanity in the 20th century. We will discuss the meaning of key terms like human rights, humanitarianism, and genocide, and investigate particular cases of mass atrocities, starting with the Holocaust and a number of historic cases of genocide, e.g., the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and focus on contemporary atrocities in Rwanda, ex-Yugoslavia, and Darfur. We will also explore the historical process of establishing human rights standards, and examine critically some of the recent efforts at redress, justice, and memory through criminal tribunals, truth and reconciliation commissions, and restitution. A central question runs through the course: how are these two polar opposites, human rights and genocide, related? Do modern forms of thinking about politics and the diversity of human society enable and encourage both phenomena?

These discussions will continue as we also examine literary and cinematic representations of genocides and mass atrocities. Readings include a variety of literary and cinematic works: novels, poems, graphic novels, memoirs, and film. How have literary and cinematic writers responded to and represented these “unspeakable” events? What literary devices and forms have been used to explore the violation of human rights?

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students in this course will be able to

1. think analytically and comparatively about genocide and other atrocities and the historic and political developments that led to these events.
2. critically analyze primary and secondary sources as well as literary and cinematic texts.
3. analyze human behavior, psychology, cultures and ideas that led to mass atrocities
4. understand the influence of diverse forces—technological, military, social, political, economic, ideological—on individual, group, and institutional behaviors.
5. understand that genocide is a complex phenomenon, not a singular event.
6. grasp the key developments of human rights and understand international conventions, as the Genocide Convention
7. communicate, effectively, orally and in writing, and to demonstrate reasoned, critical thought in one's communications.
8. demonstrate the ability to research, write, and revise critical essays

University Learning Outcomes and Student Learning Outcomes

Written Communication, Critical Thinking, Information Literacy:

Demonstrate the ability to research, write, and revise critical essays

Written Communication and Oral Communication:

Demonstrate the ability to engage in intellectual discussion and articulate opinions and ideas in oral and written communications

Connected Learning and Global and Multicultural Perspectives

Analyze and compare genocide and other atrocities and the historic and political developments that led to these events

Ethics and Social Responsibility

Analyze human behavior, psychology, cultures and ideas that led to mass atrocities. Understand the influence of diverse forces—technological, military, social, political, economic, and ideological—on individual, group, and institutional behaviors.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Eric Weitz, *A Century of Genocide. Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton, 2003) 0691122717

Literary representations (memoirs, novels, graphic novel, etc.):

Anne Frank, "The Diary of a Young Girl" (Canvas)

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (Harper & Collins, 1995) 068482680

Primo. In Digital Theatre. 1 hours 28 minutes stage performance of *If This is a Man*

Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Pantheon Graphic Library 1996)

Tatiana de Rosnay, *Sarah's Key* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2008)

Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Woman* (Penguin, 1998)

Ben Mikaelson, *Tree Girl* (Harper Teen, 2005)

Loung Ung, *First They Killed My Father* (HarperCollins, 2010)

*Selected weekly readings on Canvas

GRADING:

Canvas discussion forum 20%

Oral Report: Genocide/ Human Rights in one defined area 10%

Essay, 5000 words, interdisciplinary, with references 20%

Exams: 40%

In-class participation 10%

Canvas Discussion: You will be writing weekly in the discussion forum for all members of the class, and you will be reading their entries, replying to at least two. Answer the question posed on Canvas. This is informal writing, but do spell authors' names correctly and do give page reference in parenthesis for quotations. The length is up to you. Post your first answer and reply to at least two other students no later than 1 hour before class time. In your response, courtesy and respect for others' opinions are expected. Each forum is graded on the thoughtfulness of the analysis and responses.

Essay requirements: draft of essay, oral report on essay, and 500-word prospects and a 10-item working bibliography (due 7 April). This will be graded. In essay form, your prospectus must answer:

- What is your topic? Why you are interested in this topic?
- What is your original thesis?
- Based on your research, why is your thesis original?
- What are the questions you hope to answer (list several)?
- Using an approved format for references, include a working bibliography of 10 books or scholarly articles, that you expect to read (this means they must be available to you either in the Rider Library or through interlibrary loan).

To identify these 10 articles (or books), use subscription databases accessed through the Rider Library (Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, or Project Muse). Do not use free websites found in a general search on the Internet. It is strongly recommended that you work with a research librarian, by appointment, and that you consult the instructor.

ESSAY: Write an original interdisciplinary essay (5000 words) on a topic approved by both instructors. You are expected to do library research, but this essay is not merely a summary of published scholarship. You must have an original thesis. Cite published scholarship using a format approved by the instructors (MLA, APA, Chicago,). Academic integrity is expected in all work submitted.

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1: Definitions: Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, and Human Rights

1/24 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, Introduction

1/26 Martin Shaw, "Neglected Foundations," "The Maximal Standard," "The Minimal Euphemism," "Conceptual Proliferation," from *What is Genocide?** (*on Canvas)
Genocide Convention*
Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
Nuremberg Charter Sec II: Art 6**

WEEK 2: Analyzing and Historicizing the Holocaust:

1/31 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, ch. 3
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* excerpts*
Visualizing Otherness: Nazi and other use of visual representation*

2/2 Film: "Shoah," selections

WEEK 3: Literary and Cinematic Representations of the Holocaust

2/7 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*
Film: "Conspiracy"

2/9 Anne Frank, "The Diary of a Young Girl"*

WEEK 4: Literary Representations

2/14 *Maus* (graphic novel)

2/16 *Sarah's Key* (novel)

WEEK 5: The Nuremberg Tribunal, Postwar Human Rights, and the United Nations

2/21 Mark Mazower, "The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933-1950."
Historical Journal 47:2 (2004): 379-98. JSTOR
Nuremberg Charter I-VI*

2/23 Film: "Judgement at Nuremberg"

WEEK 6: The Cambodian Genocide and its Literary Representation

2/28 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, ch. 4
Ben Kieran, "The Cambodian Genocide - 1975-1979" in S. Totten et al., *Century of Genocide*

3/2 *First They Killed My Father* (memoir) by Loung Ung

WEEK 7: Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia

3/7 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, ch. 5
Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences*
Franklin Foer, "The Gangster's Paradise," How Soccer Explains the World*
Jacques Semelin, "Analysis of a Mass Crime: Ethnic Cleansing in the Former Yugoslavia, 1991-1999" in *The Specter of Genocide**

3/9 Mid-term exam

WEEK 8: Film and Fires of Hatred

3/21 Film, "Cabaret Balkan"

3/23 Film, "Before the Rain"

WEEK 9: Rwanda & Burundi

3/28 Strauss, Scott. "The Order of Genocide: The Dynamics of Genocide in Rwanda,"
Genocide Studies and Prevention 2:3 (2007): 259-64.

Wagner, Michele. "All the Bourgmestre's Men: Making Sense of Genocide in Rwanda," *Africa Today* 45:1 (1998): 25-36.

3/30 Strauss, Scott. "Rwanda and Darfur: A Comparative Analysis," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1:1 (2006): 41-55.

WEEK 10: Different Perspectives of the Rwandan Genocide: Perpetrator & Victim

4/4 Hatzfeld, Jean. *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak* (2006) excerpts*

4/6 Gourevitch, Philip. *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (1999) excerpts*

WEEK 11: Other Genocides: Literary Representations

4/11 *Comfort Woman* (novel) by Nora Okja Keller

4/13 *Tree Girl* (novel) Ben Mikaelson

WEEK 12: Conclusion & summary: An Ordinary Evil

4/18 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, Conclusion

Theriault H. Universal social theory and the denial of genocide: Norman Itzkowitz revisited. *J Genocide Res.* 2001;3(2):241-56

4/20 Arendt, H., *The Banality of Evil*, excerpts*

WEEK 13 Student Presentations

4/25 Essay Due, Student Reports

4/27 Student Reports

5/1 Final Exam (9-11 a.m.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Barkan, Elazar. "Restitution and Amending Historical Injustices in International Morality." In *Politics and the Party: On Repairing Historiographical Injustices*, ed. John Torpey, 91-102. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.

Bass, Gary. *Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunal*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

"Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations," 30 January 1923.

Evans, Raymond. "'Plenty Shoot'Em': The Destruction of Aboriginal Societies along the Queensland Frontier," in *Genocide and Settler Society*, J, ed . A. Dirk Moses, 150-73. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.

Fink, Carole. *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Green, Abigail. "Rethinking Sir Moses Monefiore: Religion, Nationhood, and International Philanthropy in the Nineteenth Century." *American Historical Review* 110:3 (2005): 631-58.

Lemarchand, Rene. "Unsimplifying Darfur," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1:1 (2006): 1-12.

Maier, Charles. *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Manda, Erez. *The Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Mazower, Mark. "The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933-1950." *Historical Journal* 47:2 (2004): 379-98.

Reynolds, Henry. "Genocide in Tasmania," in *Genocide and Settler Society*, J, ed. A . Dirk Moses, 127-49. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.

Sebarbas, William A. "Genocide and the International Court of Justice: Finally, A Duty to Prevent the Crime of Crimes," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 2:2 (2007): 101-22.

Scheffer, David. "Genocide and Atrocity Crimes," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1:3 (2006): 229-49.

Scheffer, David. "The World Court's Fractured Ruling on Genocide," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 2:2 (2007): 123-36.

Shaw, Martin. *What is Genocide?* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007.

Strauss, Scott. "The Order of Genocide: The Dynamics of Genocide in Rwanda," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 2:3 (2007): 259-64.

Strauss, Scott. "Rwanda and Darfur: A Comparative Analysis," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1:1 (2006): 41-55.

Symposium on Scott Strauss, "The Order of Genocide," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 2:3 (2007): 265-74.

Torpey, John. "Introduction: Politics and the Past," in *On Repairing Historiographical Injustices*, ed. John Torpey, 1-34. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.

Wagner, Michele. "All the Bourgmestre's Men: Making Sense of Genocide in Rwanda," *Africa Today* 45:1 (1998): 25-36.

Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (2006): 387-409.