Description of the Course

The twentieth century has witnessed an unprecedented upsurge of state sponsored and ideologically driven violence against civil populations. What sets genocide aside from all other internationally punishable crimes is the intent physically to destroy a defined population group. The ‘Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide’ adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1948 defined genocide as follows:

...genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

a. killing members of the group  
b. causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;  
c. deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part  
d. imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group  
e. forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

The convention was drafted very much with the experience of Nazi genocidal policies in mind and has been criticized as both too broad – how does one define to ‘destroy...in part’ – and too narrow, since it does not include mass murder for political objectives or action against a class or social group, like the kulaks in the Soviet Union. To us, there seem to be two different paths to mass murder and genocide in the twentieth century. One is derived from the desire of states for ethnic and political uniformity – here ethnic cleansing or counter insurgency tends in extreme cases to become genocide. The other is the use of terror as a political weapon in the totalitarian states – whether Nazi or communist – which on occasion develops into mass murder. These regimes shared certain characteristics which led them to have a propensity for genocidal actions. These have been well described by Eric D. Weitz:

1. An ideological utopianism promoted the belief that the current regime could indeed create the perfect society that would be the end point of history. 2. The utopia necessitated population purges...Aside from carefully cultivated gender distinctions, utopia would be a leveled, homogenized society...  
3. The creation of utopia required massive popular mobilization. 4. A breakdown of pre-existing norms of behavior and reworking of the rules of social interaction...
included the promotion of political violence as the method of progress towards utopia.

The course will start by examining the theory of genocide and then look at examples of genocide before the twentieth century. This will be followed by an examination of the Armenian genocide and mass killing in the Soviet Union. The Holocaust has become the paradigmatic genocide and we will devote two weeks to an analysis of the Nazi regime and the mass killings it perpetrated during the Second World War. We will then examine at mass killing in China, South Asia, Yugoslavia and Africa. The course will conclude with a discussion of the attempts to prevent, prosecute and memorialize genocide.

**Learning Goals**

This course has three main objectives. Firstly, you will learn how to identify genocide, its causes and preconditions, its dynamics, and its consequences. Secondly, you will learn about individual historical and contemporary case studies of genocide, mass murder and ethnic cleansing. Thirdly, you will become acquainted with different scholarly approaches towards genocide and mass murder. The study of genocide poses the essential questions for human history: How can human beings commit crimes of such magnitude? What provokes the destructive impulse? When should obligation before a group give way to responsibility for an individual? By the end of this course you should be able to provide answers to these questions.

**Course Requirements**

1. Serious and consistent class participation (this means attendance is essential because your participation is part of your grade)
2. Regular introductions of the homework readings
3. Three written assignments of 4-5 pages
4. A midterm exam
5. A final exam

**Grading**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
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**Late work policy**

Unless there are legitimate reasons (e.g., serious illness or personal circumstances), work will not be accepted more than one week past the due date. Work turned in late will be docked 5 percent per day.

**Preparation Time**
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

**Academic Honesty**

You must complete all assignments alone. In your writing, you must follow rules of attribution, meaning that you must cite all sources consulted in preparing your papers. As stated in the *Student Handbook*, “Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. A student shall not receive credit for work that is not the product of the student’s own effort.” Examples of penalties for a student found responsible for an infringement of academic honesty are no credit for the work in question, failure in the course, and the traditional range of conduct sanctions from disciplinary warning through permanent dismissal from the University.

**Students with Documented Disabilities**

Students with disabilities certified by the Coordinator of Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs and First Year Services will be given reasonable accommodations to complete required assignments. Disabilities that are not documented and approved by the Office of Academic Affairs will not be given accommodations.

**Required Reading**

All students should, if possible, purchase the following books:


Weekly Topics and Reading Assignments

Week 1

INTRODUCTION

January 10, 2018


January 11, 2018

**What is Genocide?**


Week 2

THE DEFINITION OF GENOCIDE

January 15, 2018

Martin Luther King Day—No Class

January 17, 2018

**Pre-Modern Precedents**


January 18, 2018

**A Crime without a Name?**

Samantha Power, *‘A Problem From Hell’: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York, 2002), 17-60.


Week 3

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY GENOCIDES

January 22, 2018

**Genocide before the First World War: The Herero Case**

January 24, 2018  Genocide during the First World War: The Armenian Case


January 25, 2018  Reading Historical Sources


Week 4  MASS KILLING IN THE SOVIET UNION

January 29, 2018  The Great Terror


January 31, 2018  Man-Made Famine

Yaroslav Bilinsky, ‘Was the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933 Genocide?’ in: Journal of Genocide Research Volume 1, Number 2 (June 1999), 147-156.


February 1, 2018  Reading Historical Sources


**Week 5 GENOCIDE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR: THE HOLOCAUST AND OTHER MASS KILLINGS**

February 5, 2018  **Nazi Racial Utopias**


February 7, 2018  **Nazi Murder of the Disabled and the “Gypsies”**


February 8, 2018  **The Nazi “Final Solution to the Jewish Question”**


February 12, 2018  **Holocaust Uniqueness Debates**


February 14, 2018  **Reading Historical Sources**
February 15, 2018    Review for Midterm Exam

February 19-23, 2018    No Class—Spring break

February 26, 2018    Midterm Exam

Week 7    JAPAN AND CHINA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

February 28, 2018    Japanese Atrocities in the Sino-Japanese War


March 1, 2018    China’s Secret Famine


Week 8    ETHNIC CLEANSING AND GENOCIDE IN SOUTH ASIA

March 5, 2018    East Timor


March 7, 2018    Cambodia

March 8, 2018   Reading Historical Sources

Week 9   THE WARS OF THE YUGOSLAV SUCCESSION

March 12, 2018   Bosnia


March 14, 2018   Srebrenica and Kosovo


March 15, 2018   Reading Historical Sources

Week 10   ETHNIC CLEANSING AND GENOCIDE IN AFRICA

March 19, 2018   Burundi and Rwanda


Frank Chalk and Kurt Johassohn, The History and Sociology of Genocide, 384-393.


March 21, 2018   Central African Republic


March 22, 2018   Reading Historical Sources
Week 11  CONTROVERSIES ABOUT THE CHARACTERIZATION OF GENOCIDE

March 26, 2018  Genocide Denial?


March 28, 2018  The Nakba – A Genocide?


March 29, 2018  Crimes against Humanity in Bangladesh – A Genocide?


March 30-April 6, 2018  No Class—Passover Recess

Week 12  THE PROSECUTION OF GENOCIDE

April 9, 2018  Difficult Beginnings


April 11, 2018  
**The Nuremberg Trial Legacy**


April 12, 2018  
**Do Trials Work?**


April 15, 2018  
**Film Review is due!**

**Week 13  MEMORIALIZATION AND PREVENTION**

April 16, 2018  
**Memorialization**


April 18, 2018  
**Military Intervention?**

April 19, 2018  Taking Action


Week 14  SUMMING UP

April 23, 2018

Samantha Power, ‘A Problem From Hell’, 475-516.


April 26, 2018  Review for Final Exam

May 2, 2018  Final Exam 6-9 pm