

SOC 190: Understanding Genocide

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104 Barrows Hall
M 6-8 PM

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, Former Yugoslavia 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.

Readings

All required readings are available digitally via the library website (marked as EBOOKS) or in the files section of the course web site (marked as BCOURSES).

Class participation

Each week, you will do the required readings before coming to class. Those readings form our shared core of knowledge about the week's subject matter. But, it will be our discussion in the course that really helps us to integrate, critique, and extend these readings. I expect each of you to be a regular and constructive participant in these discussions and ask that you engage with one-another seriously and respectfully.

Requirements and Grades

You will take a midterm, participate in class discussions and write a paper. To keep everyone on track we divide the writing process up in 3 graded assignments. The formal requirements and grade calculation are as follows:

- In class midterm: 25% of grade.
- Class participation 15% of grade.
- Assignment 1: Case description: 10% of grade.
- Assignment 2: Presentation of paper 10% of grade.
- Assignment 3: Final paper 40% of grade.

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 **2/10** 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 can be consulted for help. As a first step you might want to look at what the following reference works, which are available online (marked as EBOOK) or have been put on course reserve (marked as COURSE RESERVE) in the Undergraduate library, have to say about your case:

- Paul R Bartrop and Steven Leonard Jacobs. *Modern Genocide: The Definitive Resource and Document Collection [4 volumes]: The Definitive Resource and Document Collection*. ABC-CLIO, 2014 EBOOK
- Dan Stone. *The historiography of genocide*. Springer, 2008 COURSE RESERVE
- Leo Kuper. *Genocide: Its political use in the twentieth century*. Yale University Press, 1983. COURSE RESERVE.
- Ben Kiernan. *Blood and soil: A world history of genocide and extermination from Sparta to Darfur*. Yale University Press, 2008. COURSE RESERVE.
- Adam Jones. *Genocide: A comprehensive introduction*. Routledge, 2006. COURSE RESERVE.
- Donald Bloxham and A Dirk Moses. *The Oxford handbook of genocide studies*. Oxford University Press, 2010. COURSE RESERVE.
- Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan. *The specter of genocide: Mass murder in historical perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. COURSE RESERVE

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. If you have a source you are unsure about consult your professor. You have to submit your list of references on **2/24**.

Paper

You will write a 10 page paper (Times New Roman, 10pt, double-spaced, 1 inch margins all around) providing a causal explanation of the episode of mass killing you choose. The writing process is divided up in 8 steps. In your paper you will:

1. Summarize the 5 sources you collected for yourself.
2. Write an introduction in which you preview what you will do (.5 page).
3. Give a general overview of how the violence unfolded (*4 pages* ALSO GRADED ASSIGNMENT DUE ON **3/30**).
4. Explain whether this episode qualifies as a genocide or not. This requires you to apply a definition (*1 page*).
5. 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.
6. 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 (*point 5 & 6 together 4 pages*).
7. Write a conclusion (.5 page).
8. Give a brief 10 minute presentation on your paper in class (ALSO GRADED ASSIGNMENT DUE ON **4/20** or **4/27**).
9. The final paper is due the first Monday after RRR week.

1/27 California Genocide

- Read syllabus. BCOURSES.
- Benjamin Madley. *American Genocide: The California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873*. 2017. Conclusion. BCOURSES.

2/3 Definitions and Origins

- Adam Jones. *Genocide: A comprehensive introduction*. Routledge, 2006. Selection. BCOURSES.
- Samantha Power. *A problem from hell: America and the age of genocide*. Perseus Books Group, New York, NY, 2013, 61-70. BCOURSES.
- Helen Fein. A sociological definition. *The Sociology of genocide*. BCOURSES.
- John M Cox. *To kill a people: Genocide in the twentieth century*. Oxford University Press, 2016 Chapter 1. BCOURSES.
- **For discussion:**
 - Compare the UN convention (p. 12-13) with the definitions provided in Jones box 1.1. (p. 16-20) What are the differences, similarities, weaknesses and strengths for the study of genocide?
 - Closely read the UN convention and a few definitions from box 1.1. When using these definitions, do you think the following episodes of mass killing are genocides: Atlantic Slavery, aerial bombing, UN sanctions against Iraq, 9/11. Why or why not?
 - Why is the Armenian genocide a genocide?
 - What caused the Armenian genocide?
 - Contrast and compare the Armenian genocide with the California Genocide.
 - Is genocide ever justified?

2/10: Macro-Explanations

- **Case selection due in class**
- Robert D Kaplan. A readers guide to the balkans. *New York Times Book Review*, page 1, 1993. BCOURSES.
- Ben Kiernan. Twentieth-century genocides: Underlying ideological themes from armenia to east timor. *The Genocide Studies Reader*, 2009. BCOURSES
- Barry R Posen. The security dilemma and ethnic conflict. *Survival*, 35(1):27–47, 1993. **Only till pp. 35**. BCOURSES.
- Jens Meierhenrich. *Genocide: A reader*. Oxford University Press USA, 2014. Selection.
- **For discussion:**

- You will be reading a wide range of explanations for Genocide. Identify the key actors and causal logic in each of them. How do they compare?
- Which explanations do you find most compelling?
- Would you be able to combine the different explanations? If so how?

2/17: Micro- & Meso-Explanations

- James Waller. *Becoming evil: How ordinary people commit genocide and mass killing*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, Selection. BCOURSES.
- Murat Somer. Cascades of ethnic polarization: Lessons from yugoslavia. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 573(1):127–151, 2001. Only p. 128-134. BCOURSES.
- Stathis N Kalyvas. The ontology of political violence: action and identity in civil wars. *Perspectives on politics*, 1(3):475–494, 2003. Selected pages. BCOURSES.
- Alex Alvarez. *Genocidal crimes*. Routledge, 2009, Selection. BCOURSES.
- **For discussion:**
 - You will be reading a wide range of explanations for killing. Identify the causal logic in each.
 - Would you be able to combine the different explanations? If so how?
 - Why does Somer think killing is both unexpected and inevitable in hindsight?
 - How does Kalyvas link the micro and macro levels of analysis.

2/24 Holocaust Macro

- 5 references due in class
- Doris L Bergen. *War and genocide: A concise history of the Holocaust*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 1-101. EBOOK.
- **For discussion:**
 - Compare and contrast Bergen’s explanation of the Holocaust with the macro-level explanations introduced in week 3.

3/2: Holocaust Micro & Meso

- Jan Tomasz Gross. *Neighbors: The destruction of the Jewish community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton University Press, 2001. pp 3-23, 33-41, 54-79, 90-122. BCOURSES.
- Daniel J. Goldhagen. *Hitler's willing executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. Knopf, New York, NY, 1996, Selection. BCOURSES.
- Christopher R. Browning. *Ordinary men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the final solution in Poland*. Harper Perennial, New York, NY, 1993, Chapter 8 & 9. BCOURSES.
- **For discussion:**
 - Compare and contrast these readings with the micro-level explanations provided during week 4.
 - Browning and Goldhagen partly study the same group of people. How do their accounts of what happened compare?

3/9: Midterm

- Prepare for short answer questions.

3/16 Rwanda Macro and Negative Cases

- Helen M Hintjens. Explaining the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37(2):241–286, 1999 BCOURSES
- Scott Straus. Retreating from the brink: Theorizing mass violence and the dynamics of restraint. *Perspectives on Politics*, 10(2):343–362, 2012 **ONLY pp. 351-355** BCOURSES
- **For discussion:**
 - Compare and contrast Hintjens explanations with causes of the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide and your own case.
 - Straus introduces the idea of a negative case. What does he mean by that? Could you think of a negative case for your own research paper?

3/23 & 3/25: Spring Break

3/30 Rwanda Micro and Meso

- **Case description due in class**

- Scott Straus. *The order of genocide*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2006, chapter 4, 5 & 6 BCOURSES.
- **For discussion:**
 - Look at all the statistical tables in the book. How do they relate to the Overall argument Straus is trying to make.
 - Compare and contrast his argument to the micro theories we have been discussing as well as the readings by Gross, Browning and Goldhagen.

4/6: Balkans I

- Guest lecture Dr. Bujar Aruqai (FU Berlin)
- Readings tba.

4/13: Balkans II

- Guest lecture Dr. Bujar Aruqai (FU Berlin)
- Readings tba.

4/20: Presentations

4/27: Presentations

