SOC 142: Paradoxes of Genocide

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Office Hours:
FR 4PM-5PM
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Spring 2022
170 Social Sciences Building
MW 4-5 PM

Course description

In this course we will examine one of the most destructive, evil and perplexing forms of social breakdown: genocide - i.e. the on a large scale organized exclusion and killing of populations defined by race, ethnicity, nationality, political affiliation or religion. The class draws attention to the paradoxical nature of genocide. While genocide might seem far removed from our daily activities, it is closely intertwined and made possible by the same social processes that structure our lives. Embracing this paradox enables us to define the undefinable and understand the incomprehensible.

After defining genocide, the first section of this class will provide a brief introduction to 4 cases of genocide: the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, the violent dissolution of Bosnia and the Rwanda Genocide. This section will provide the required background for revealing the roots of genocide during the remainder of the class. In section 2 and 3 we will try to make genocide comprehensible. 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.

In section 2, we will look at how large scale processes that we commonly associate with civilization such as modernization, democratization and rationalization cause barbaric mass violence (macro level). In section 3, we will look at why individuals, both victims and non-victims, accept or even participate in mass killings (micro level). This section will reveal that a lot (but not all) causes of killing are quite banal and ordinary. In section 3 we will also 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*).

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 via the course web site (BCOURSES). Readings are organized by week or topic. To reduce the reading load and costs, we often read carefully thought out selections of books and papers. You should therefore always do the readings as posted on BCOURSES and not look for reading yourself. Let me know immediately if you do not have access to BCOURSES.

**Requirements and Grades**

You will take a midterm, final and write a paper. To keep everyone on track we divide the writing process up in 2 ungraded assignments. The formal requirements and grade calculation are as follows:

- Midterm: 30% of grade.
- Paper 40% of grade.
- Final: 30% of grade

In addition, there will be 2 pass fail assignments to structure the writing process.

**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 **2/16**.
2. You will submit a first 1 page schematic overview of your paper on **4/4**.

**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.

You have to submit your case selection on 1/31. To guarantee sufficient vari-
ation in case selection, we will 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 via the
library website (marked as EBOOK) or have been put on BCOURSES in files-
>Reference works (marked as BCOURSES), 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
- Ben Kiernan. *Blood and soil: A world history of genocide and extermination
  from Sparta to Darfur*. Yale University Press, 2008. EBOOK.
  BCOURSES.
- Donald Bloxham and A Dirk Moses. *The Oxford handbook of genocide
  studies*. Oxford University Press, 2010. EBOOK.
- Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan. *The specter of genocide: Mass murder

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 prestigious academic 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 2/16.

**Paper**

You will write a 10 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. The writing process is divided up in 8 steps. In your paper you will:

1. Summarize the 5 academic 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).
4. Explain whether this episode qualifies as a genocide or not. This requires you to apply a definition (1 page).
5. Deploy three 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 2 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. The final paper is due on 5/16.

**Plagiarism**

We will use software and other techniques to detect plagiarism and fraud. Even the most minor case of plagiarism or fraud can result in a F for the entire course. We will discuss plagiarism in lecture. Contact your instructor if you are still unsure about what plagiarism is after these discussions.
Office Hours

My office hours will be held weekly on Fridays between 3 and 5 pm. Please sign up for office hours in advance via https://www.wejoinin.com/robert.braun. You can come to my office (440 Social Sciences Building) or meet me via zoom (https://berkeley.zoom.us/j/93947932140).

Contingency

We intend for this class to take place in person. However, in case of emergency (forest fires, pandemics etc.) we will switch over to zoom. A zoom link for this class will be provided during the first week of class. Classes will be recorded via course capture.

INTRODUCTION

1/19: Paradoxes of genocide

- Read syllabus.
- https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/burmas-path-to-genocide/chapter-1

1/24: Defining the undefinable

- Reread the paper assignment. If you have any questions ask them at the start of lecture.
- Questions:
  - 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: Slavery, aerial bombing, UN sanctions against Iraq, 9/11. Why or why not?

PART I: CASES OF GENOCIDE

1/26: Explaining the inexplicable Holocaust I


- Questions:
  – Why the Jews?
  – Why the Germans?

1/31: Explaining the inexplicable Holocaust II

- Submit your case on BCOURSES->Assignments.


- Questions:
  – Why then (and not XX years earlier or later)?
  – Why mass murder?

2/2: Armenia and comparing unique cases


- Questions:
  – What were the most important preconditions for the Armenian genocide?
  – Compare and contrast the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust. What can we learn from doing this? What not?
2/7: Rwanda and negative cases I


- Questions:
  - What were the most important preconditions for the Rwanda genocide?
  - Differences and similarities with Armenian genocide and the Holocaust?

2/9: Rwanda and negative cases II

- Submit 5 academic sources!

- Questions:
  - According to Straus what are negative cases?
  - What can we learn from them?

2/14: The illusion of Bosnian harmony


- Questions:
  - How did Bosnia break down so fast?
  - Differences and similarities with Rwanda genocide, Armenian genocide and the Holocaust?

2/16: Professor travelling

- Submit 5 academic sources on BCOURSES->ASSIGNMENTS
- Perhaps no class (assuming a return to normal travel situation).

2/21: President’s day

- No class!
PART II: MACRO-LEVEL EXPLANATIONS

2/23: Civilized barbarity

- Questions:
  - How do Weitz and Bauman link modernity to genocide?
  - Do their arguments help explain the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, the Rwanda genocide and the Bosnian genocide? What parts? What not?

2/28: Ancient fault lines contemporary violence

- Questions:
  - How do Goldhagen and Kiernan explain violence?
  - Do their arguments help explain the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, the Rwanda genocide and the Bosnian genocide? What parts? What not?

3/2: The dark side of democracy

- Questions:
  - How do Mann and Snyder link democracy to genocide?
  - Do their arguments help explain the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, the Rwanda genocide and the Bosnian genocide? Why? Why not?
3/7: Unreasonably rational

- Benjamin Valentino. Final solutions: the causes of mass killing and genocide. *Security Studies*, 9(3):1–59, 2000, Valentino distinguishes between different forms of mass killing. During class and for exams we will be focussing on dispossessive mass killing. However, I kept the discussion of other types in as they might be relevant for your paper.

- Questions:
  - What does Valentino mean when he says that mass killing is a final solution?
  - Why and when is mass killing strategic?
  - Does Valentin’s take on dispossesive mass killings apply to the Holocaust, Armenian genocide, the Rwanda genocide and the Bosnian genocide? What parts? What not?

3/9: Predictably irrational


- Questions:
  - What drives genocide according to Midlarsky?
  - Apply this approach to the Holocaust, Armenian genocide, the Rwanda genocide and the Bosnian genocide. Does it work? Why? Why not?

3/14: Review session

- Review readings and prepare questions!

3/16: Take-home exam (open book)

- Prepare for essay questions!
- During normal class time.

3/21 & 3/23: Spring break

- No class!
3/28: Guest lecture on intervention

• Dr. Aruqaj (FU Berlin)
• Readings tba

PART III: MICRO- AND MESO-LEVEL EXPLANATIONS

3/30: Guest lecture

• Dr. Aruqaj (FU Berlin)
• Readings tba

4/4: Ordinary killers

• Submit 1 page overview of paper on BCOURSE->ASSIGNMENTS


• Questions:
  – Why did the police officers start to kill?
  – Why does Browning consider these killers ordinary men?
  – What implications does this have for the likelihood of genocide?

4/6: Anti-social identities


OR


• Questions:
  – According to Maček/McDoom what role does ethnic identity play in the mobilization of violence?
4/11: Private motives, public violence


OR


Questions:

- What can we learn from studying local level politics?
- Why do we overestimate the importance of macro-level cleavages and obedience?

4/13: The banality of organized violence I


Questions:

- Why does Mueller call ethnic war banal?
- What role do militias play in the production of genocide?
- How did Hatzfeld’s respondents change overtime?

4/18: The banality of organized violence II

- Testimony Herak


Questions:

- How does power shape individual decision making?
- Compare Herak, Hatzfeld’s respondents and Browning’s police officers. Similarities? Differences?
4/20: Unforeseen, yet unavoidable with hindsight


Questions:

- What according to Somer explained the rapid polarization in Yugoslavia?
- Why do we sometimes fail to foresee outbursts of violence that appear unavoidable with hindsight?

4/25: Deviant heroes


Questions:

- What are the differences and commonalities between the rescuers that Ternon, Viret and Tec discuss.
- What implications does this have for the assistance for victims of mass persecution?

4/27: Review session

- Review and prepare questions?

5/13: Take-Home Exam (Open Book)

- Prepare for essay questions!
- 8-11am!

The final paper is due on 5/16.