

CPO 4725
COMPARATIVE GENOCIDE
Spring 2008
Tuesday-Thursday 1825-1940 (6:25-7:40)
Room: PC 428

Professor Olson¹
Ms. Hoberman

Fair Warning

This class is an in-depth exploration of the very heart of human evil: genocide. For many students this class also proves to be the most disturbing intellectual experience of their university careers. For a host of reasons therefore, this is not a class to be undertaken lightly and clearly should not be a “time of day” curriculum choice. Moreover, the course is extremely rigorous, or as one former student said, “There are so many ways to die in here.” Reading this syllabus is thus the academic equivalent of informed consent, and to this end here are some quotes from a few former students:

“This is a life altering class, but that’s not always good. I don’t sleep so well, and I fight with family, friends, and even strangers in coffee shops.”

“My friends wonder what’s happened to me, I don’t laugh at their ethnic and racial jokes anymore. But they’re like morons in a way, so it doesn’t bother me that much.”

“I am more proud of this B than many of my A grades.”

“I never worked so hard for a C in my life.”

And finally, the Instructor’s favorite from three semesters ago:

“I did so well in this class that I get to take it over.”

Overview

Genocide is a very difficult concept to wrap one’s mind around, but the essence is this: Just *being* something can get you killed—you don’t have to have committed a crime, been publicly active in some form, or even have *done* anything at all. Just being a particular category of person can put you on a list and get you killed, usually after being abused, degraded, and/or tortured. More formally, the dictionary definition of genocide—a word that did not even exist until the 1940s—is “the use of deliberate

¹ Instructor Office and Hours: Professor Olson is the Political Science department chair and is in the office much of the time. The problem is that he is often called to obligatory meetings, so please e-mail ahead of time (olsonr@fiu.edu) for an appointment.

measures to physically destroy a racial, ethnic, religious, or other similar group.” Genocide’s 1949 international legal definition as a crime, however, is broader:

- A. Killing members of [a national, ethnical, racial, or religious] group;
- B. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- C. Deliberately inflicting on the group the 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.

As you will see in the course reading, actions constituting the *complete* destruction of a group were not the “bar” for such actions to be genocidal. If that were the bar, then not even the Nazi-directed European Holocaust of the 1930s-1940s would qualify as genocide. In fact, however, the bar is lower, as the Pulitzer Prize-winning Samantha Power has clarified:

The [1949 Genocide Convention] did not require the extermination of an entire group, only acts committed with the intent to destroy a substantial part. If the perpetrator did not target a national, ethnic, or religious group as such, then killings would constitute mass homicide, not genocide (“*A Problem from Hell*,” p. 57).

In fact, as this course will develop, a more clinical but inclusive definition of genocide might be: *Actions aimed at changing the gene pool of a defined geographic area by violence and threat of violence against a defenseless population targeted for its race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality.* This definition or understanding would encompass not only so-called classic genocides (e.g., the Holocaust) and “ethnic cleansing” (e.g., Bosnia or currently, Darfur), but also (as ghastly as it is to contemplate) sustained rape and forced impregnation.

It is also worth emphasizing what genocide is *not*. It is not “war” or even “ethnic conflict” because those terms at least imply some level of armed conflict, no matter how unequal, between groups. Genocide is also not pogroms or “race riots” because the latter are usually isolated and, at least initially, the state (i.e., government) does not organize them. That is, the role of the state, of government broadly defined, is crucial to the perpetration of genocide.

To be noted in most definitions of genocide is the omission of targeting political groups for elimination. Killing members of a particular political party or ideological movement is slightly different and more properly called “politicide.” This remains a point of debate, however, because it leaves ambiguous whether targeting a socio-economic class (e.g., peasants, urban middle groups) constitutes genocide.

Frankly, not everyone was pleased to see this course designed and delivered (first at Arizona State University, then here at FIU) because it is chilling to think that we have enough cases just in the 20th century to allow a semester’s study of “comparative

genocide.” In addition to the paradigmatic Holocaust of the 1930s and 1940s in Germany and Central Europe, we can go back in time to Armenia 1915-1917 and forward in time to Cambodia in the mid-1970s and the former Yugoslavia (especially Bosnia and possibly Kosovo) in the 1990s. As if this were not enough, we must add for the 1990s Rwanda, Iraq, and East Timor. Currently unfolding cases include the Darfur region of western Sudan and the eastern parts of the Congo, so we are now moving genocide into the 21st century, and one cannot dismiss the possibility that Iraq might see genocide(s) if it were to break apart regionally.

Again to reemphasize the role of the state, in virtually all of these cases, the state either failed structurally and/or was politically captured by a particular group. The state apparatus itself was then used to commit or at least facilitate genocide. That is, genocide and various forms of state failure (including moral failure) are often analytically inseparable. Along this line, an argument could be made for also including various famine “disasters” and conflicts in the Horn of Africa (especially Ethiopia and Somalia) since the 1970s as genocidal episodes or at least as having genocidal characteristics, especially because particular ethnic groups appeared to suffer suspiciously more than others.

It should also give pause for thought that 20th-21st century genocide cases span geographic regions (Western Europe to Asia to Africa) and levels of economic development (advanced industrial to primarily agricultural). That is, genocide has now been committed *too often in too many disparate places for it to be treated as idiosyncratic*. That fact also presents the classic question for both nations and individuals, “What to Do?”

At the very least we have a moral imperative to oppose genocide wherever it appears, in whatever guise, and for whatever “reason” or rationalization. With that in mind, the purpose of this course is not only to understand how and why genocide occurs, but also its pre-conditions and trajectory. In a sense we want to develop a type of genocide early warning pattern analysis that will allow detection before too much momentum toward genocide establishes itself in a political system—and when there is still time to do something about it.

To that end, this course will revolve around a degenerative double spiral approach to understanding and perhaps even predicting genocide. It is called “The Model,” and many students remember it for years, some willingly and positively, others not so much or so fondly.

Course Evolution: From Reading and Lecture to Discussion

As should be apparent by now, this is not a normal course. The subject matter, the reading materials, and the movies and documentaries guarantee various impacts, and the course will evolve over the semester from primarily reading, watching, and listening in the first part to more discussion toward the end.

The required readings are substantial. Again in fair warning, they have also proven depressing and even disturbing for many. It is not recommended that the reading for this class be done at night, and it is generally **not advisable** to discuss the material with parents, siblings, friends, spouses, or significant others.

The required readings—more than 2,000 pages—are as follows:

Balakian, Peter, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2003).

Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1997).

Gourevitch, Philip, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998).

Power, Samantha, "A Problem from Hell:" *America and the Age of Genocide* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2002).

Sells, Michael A., *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

Additional readings will also be put on reserve at Green Library from two different books: Chirot, Daniel and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001) and Chirot, Daniel, *Modern Tyrants: The Power and Prevalence of Evil in Our Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

And your guide to improved writing:

Hacker, Diana, *A Pocket Style Manual* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2003).

Expectations and Attendance

Careful reading and quality writing will be required to pass this course (a grade of C is quite honorable). Attendance is also important, and to give this latter dictum meaning, after the first week of class no more than three absences during the semester will be allowed: **The fourth absence automatically fails the course.**

The allowed three absences are to take care of: sick relatives, lost pets, job problems or required travel, marriages/divorces, car accidents, more sick relatives, more car accidents (this is Miami after all), being towed in South Beach, dental appointments, doctor appointments, hangovers, or "feeling bad." In other words, the instructor doesn't want to even hear an excuse—written, oral, voice mailed, e-mailed, faxed, or transmitted

telepathically. Students have three—but only three—absences and should plan and use them wisely. No absence, of course, may be used for an exam.

Class starts precisely at 6:25, and being late is the same as being absent. Students will sign in beginning in the second week, but leaving class early will count as an absence (it's also extremely rude), even if a student signs in initially. Also, no student may sign in another—that's a version of cheating and will be dealt with as such. In other words, this is a deadly serious class—in more ways than one.

In addition, there will be no exam “make-ups” or alternate/extra-credit assignments. That is, students receive the grades they earn on a level playing field.

Finally, and the logic of this is not always clear to students at the outset, the Instructor will not take questions during class the first three weeks (too much to cover just to bring the class up to conceptual speed). Should you have a burning question in the first three weeks, please send it to the Instructor (olsonr@fiu.edu). Depending upon the question, he may include it in the next lecture (but he may not).

Reading, Exam, and Briefing Memo Schedule

The Instructor has noticed that some students believe that doing the assigned readings is not really necessary, that lecture covers the readings. In this class, that will be a fatal error. Doing the reading is assumed. Lectures will at times treat or take off from events or concepts in the readings, but they will never substitute for them. To do otherwise would be a colossal waste of everyone's time.

The Instructor has FIU-approved 2007-2008 obligations to the U.S. State Department's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and may have to shift the targets during the semester, but here are the projected marker dates:

Week One (January 8 and 10)

In Class: Orientation and “Informed Consent”

Read: Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, Preface and Part One

Week Two (January 15 and 17)

In Class: Definitions, Terms, and Concepts – and “the Model”

Read: Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, Part Two

Distribution of NSL #1 (January 17)

Week Three (January 22 and 24)

In Class: *Ghosts of Rwanda* documentary

Read: Prunier, Gérard, “Genocide in Rwanda,” from Daniel Chirot and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001). On GL Reserve.

Week Four (January 29 and 31)

In Class: *Ghosts of Rwanda* and applying the Model to Rwanda

Read: Power, Samantha, “A Problem from Hell,” Preface and Chapters 1-10

Exam #1 (January 31)

Week Five (February 5 and 7)

In Class: The film *The Killing Fields*

Read: Power, Samantha, “A Problem from Hell,” Chapters 11-14 and the “PS”

Read: Kiernan, Ben, “The Ethnic Element in the Cambodian Genocide,” from Daniel Chirot and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001). On GL Reserve.

Read: Chirot, Daniel, “Imagined Egalitarian Hells: Maoism and the Khmer Rouge,” from Daniel Chirot, *Modern Tyrants: The Power and Prevalence of Evil in Our Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). On GL Reserve.

Distribution of NSL #2 (February 7)

Week Six (February 12 and 14)

In Class: Diagramming Samantha Power and applying the Model to Cambodia

Exam #2 (February 14, Happy Valentine’s Day)

Week Seven (February 19 and 21)

In Class: *The Armenian Genocide* documentary

Read: Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, Preface and Chapters 4, 5, 9, and 11-16

Week Eight (February 26 and 28)

In Class: Applying the Model to the Ottoman Empire/Turkey

Read: Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, Chapters 17-27 and Epilogue

Read: Adanir, Fikret, “Armenian Deportations and Massacres in 1915,” from Daniel Chirot and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes,*

Consequences, and Possible Solutions (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001). On GL Reserve.

Distribution of NSL #3 (February 28)

Distribution of “Taskings” for the Briefing Memo (February 28)

Week Nine (March 4 and 6)

In Class: Constructing a “Briefing Memo”

Read: Sells, Michael A., *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

Exam #3 (March 6)

Week Ten (March 11 and 13)

In Class: Applying the Model to the Former Yugoslavia

Read: Oberschall, Anthony, “From Ethnic Cooperation to Violence and War in Yugoslavia,” from Daniel Chirot and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001). On GL Reserve.
Read: Glenn, Misha, “The Yugoslav Catastrophe,” from Daniel Chirot and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001). On GL Reserve.

Distribution of NSL #4 (March 13)

SPRING BREAK (March 17-22)

Week Eleven (March 25-27)

In Class: The film, *Conspiracy* and/or *The Last Days* documentary

Read: Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, Introduction and Chapters 1-9

Read: Chirot, “Moderation Abandoned,” “In the Beginning Was the Word,” and “Death, Lies, and Decay” from Daniel Chirot, *Modern Tyrants: The Power and Prevalence of Evil in Our Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). On GL Reserve.

Exam #4 (March 27)

Week Twelve (April 1 and 3)

In Class: The film, *Conspiracy* and/or *The Last Days* documentary

Read: Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, Chapters 10-16 and Epilogue

Week Thirteen (April 8 and 10)

In Class: Understanding Goldhagen and “the Controversy”

Read: Suedfeld, Peter, “Theories of the Holocaust: Trying to Explain the Unimaginable,” from Daniel Chirot and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001). On GL Reserve.

Distribution of NSL #5 (for the “Final”)

Briefing Memo due in class April 10 no later than 6:25pm (not 6:26 or later). In the outside world, this is often called the drop-dead moment or “Close of Business” (COB).

Week Fourteen (April 15 and 17)

In Class: Understanding Suedfeld and applying the Model to Germany and the Holocaust

Read: Open for catch-up

Exam #5 (“Final”): To Be Determined via FIU Finals Schedule

Grading: five exams and a “briefing memo” (total: 700 points)

There will be four in-class examinations and a non-cumulative final (that is, five exams total). All will be in a combined identification and essay format. Each of the five exams will count 100 points (500 points total). The exam questions will be drawn from “No Secrets Lists” (NSLs) of 60-80 items distributed one to two weeks prior to the exams. That is, the Instructor guarantees that nothing on any of the exams will be a surprise. Another fair warning, however: Items for the exams will be chosen *randomly* from the NSLs (although we do tweak them a little).

The remaining 200 points of the course grade will be accounted for by the production of a “briefing memo” of no more than 6 double-spaced pages with standard margin and using 12-font. This memo is an extremely serious exercise. It must follow standard executive or government-style policy memo format (To, From, Date, Subject) and will have **no, repeat no, quoted or excerpted material**, only a list of references at the end (which will not count as part of the 6 page limit).² That is, it will comprise entirely original writing and will respond specifically to specific taskings distributed to students on February 28.

The reason for the briefing memo exercise is that sooner or later students will find themselves in often highly competitive environments where they will have to provide their employers or superiors with flawless, clear, and concise backgrounders or briefing

² Be apprised that the Instructor has registered this course at “turnitin.com” and reserves the right to send or have sent any briefing memo through that service.

memos. The assumption is that such memos are written for individuals who are intelligent and educated broadly but not deeply in the particular topic, question, or issue. The further assumption is that such individuals will only have 10 minutes or so to read a memo. In fact, the usual situation is that “it has to go in the boss’s briefcase for reading on the plane before arriving at [blank].” For junior to middle level staff in highly competitive private or public sector environments, this is a very common experience.

Proper grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation, and correct writing in general simply expected of professionals on the outside, which explains the listing of the Diana Hacker’s *Pocket Style Manual* in the course’s required reading. Indeed, and be fully aware, 10 points will be deducted off the top for *each* grammatical, spelling, punctuation, form, or other similar error in the memo. Therefore, to illustrate, it only takes six writing or form errors to make the *highest possible* grade on a memo effectively a C/C+; it only takes 10 such errors for an automatic F. *Only after those writing deductions are made will the Instructor read the memos for content.*

For the record, students should understand that 6 perfectly written pages are more difficult to prepare than a meandering, verbose, and error filled 20-page paper—much more difficult.

The FIU rules on cheating, plagiarism, and classroom comportment will be strictly enforced (i.e., zero tolerance) in all aspects of this class. Please read relevant portions of the *Student Handbook* and visit the following website for specifics:

<http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/unitinstructions.htm>

In particular, please note the Code of Academic Integrity adopted by the FIU Student Government Association, which states that:

*I will be honest in my academic endeavors.
I will not represent someone else’s work as my own.
I will not cheat, nor will I aid in another’s cheating.*

Grading will be rigorous, but that is essential for the preparation of truly competitive students. The following are this course’s performance thresholds:

630-700 points: A (floor is 90%)
560-629 points: B (floor is 80%)
490-559 points: C (floor is 70%)
420-489 points: D (floor is 60%)
419 or below: F

To reinforce the seriousness of this entire endeavor, please remember that a grade of C is required for Political Science majors to count this course toward graduation. A grade of C, however, is not that easily attained.

FIU has now also approved a grade of F-0, which is permanent on a student record. Under the stipulated conditions, the Instructor will use it.

Students should also be aware of a concept that is particularly apt to this course: the “train wreck.” A rigorous university course that requires substantial reading and reflection entails a time commitment that does not coexist harmoniously with full time employment and, God forbid, a full or nearly full time class load. For many students, usually around the 10th week, it becomes obvious that to pass this course, performance in other courses will have to be sacrificed. Alternately, to save the other courses, this course will have to be sacrificed. Either way, it becomes a train wreck—the only issue being how big (one class versus several). Several prior students went from full time employment to half time during the semester that they took this course.

Classroom Civility

1. Class starts on time. Late arriving students will be shot (sorry, just checking to see if you’re reading the syllabus).
2. Attendance will be taken each class. The time, however, will vary.
3. Once class has started, students will not leave class under any circumstances except imminent death (which will require subsequent documentation). Not only is such behavior extremely rude, it will count as an absence.
4. Students will absolutely turn off cell phones and pagers during class.
5. No laptops allowed in class (the honor system did not work).
6. Students will *not* talk in class except when invited by the Instructor to ask questions. The Instructor finds this a strange requirement to have to put into a syllabus. He has taught in universities for 30 years, and it is only lately that he has felt the need to make this a rule of classroom civility. If that is the way it must be, however, then so be it.