

ANTH5535 (Spring 2012)

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Lecture time: Tuesday 2:30-4:15

Venue: NAH 213

Tutorial time: Tuesday 4:30-5:15

Venue: NAH 401

Lecturer: Dr. Antonella Diana (antonella.diana@cuhk.edu.hk)

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Consultation Hours: Tuesday 1:30 p.m. and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Course Description

How is violence used as a political instrument? How and why do governments engage in violent actions against their own citizens? What are human rights? This course examines the problems of violence and its political uses from an anthropological perspective and within a comparative framework. The range of phenomena that can be called violence is very broad and varies greatly across cultures. We focus here on violence as a political problem, and the ways in which various state and non-state actors promote their political goals through violent means, such as torture, terrorism, or genocide. We analyse the relationships between politics and violence, the emergence and use of human rights discourses and practices as a possible political remedy against mass violence, and what new forms of political authority based on human rights may entail. In this course, we will critically analyse global violence issues including genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda and mass rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We question why the spread of a human rights culture cannot stop the emergence of violence all over the world. The course intends to develop students' critical understanding of everyday violence in our society and at the international level.

Learning outcomes

- Students will be able to apply the main theoretical concepts of human rights and violence to explain the relevance of human rights in modern international politics;
- Students will be able to develop solid knowledge of the emergence of new forms of international relations centered on human rights discourses such as the Declaration of Human Rights, international justice trials, etc;
- Students will be able to analyse the key debates about the universality and relevance of human rights, and apply them in their research;
- Students will be able to critically examine political violence and human rights issues in the global and local context.

Course Structure.

Part I: The Human Rights Framework and Theoretical Approaches to Violence

This section introduces the theoretical problems surrounding violence and culture, and uses of violence for political goals by states and non-state actors. The readings introduce the contradictions between political violence and human rights, for instance in torture or terrorism. The issue of human rights cannot be understood without first giving students the tools to understand mass organized violence, i.e. what human rights aim to remedy according to the Charter of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights signed by all member states of the United Nations.

Part II: Human Rights, Universalism and Cultural Relativism

Based on the previous themes of violence and culture, this section introduces the historical and conceptual frameworks for students to analyse the emergence of discourses on human rights. It introduces the debates over the universality of human rights, which is the main source of contention for the rejection of human rights by some governments. Students will be able to analyse the question of political rationality and relativism, and apply arguments for and against the universality of human rights after this section.

Part III: Case Studies on Political Violence

Based on the concepts of violence and human rights introduced in the previous two sections, this section analyses case studies of gross denials of human rights through mass violence. These case studies underline the limits of international politics based on human rights. In these case studies of paramilitary terror, genocide, and mass rape and gendered violence against women, human rights failed to provide adequate mechanisms to bring political crisis to an end. We analyse why international human rights as a political form failed to stem these instances of large-scale, organized violence.

Part IV: From Violence to Justice? The Future of Human Rights

This last section brings the course to a conclusion by examining why and how human rights have been used to bring perpetrators of mass violence to justice, to be held accountable for their past actions in the wake of large-scale human rights violation. It will analyse the post-conflict situation in Cambodia, Rwanda and Nepal and address the questions of truth commissions, international justice trials, accountability and political transformations. The last week brings the course to a conclusion by re-analysing the discourses of human rights and the question of relativism in light of the theoretical concepts and case studies the students have analysed during the course.

Course Materials

There is *no* required textbook for this course. Students with a longstanding interest in human rights may consider purchasing *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology* edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (2003) and ethnographies like *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor* by Harri Englund (2006), Michael Taussig (2003) *Law in a Lawless Land: Diary of a Limpieza in Colombia* and, Philip Gourevitch (1999) *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: stories from Rwanda*. These works will be discussed as we go through the course.

Most required reading materials will be available in the library, on the Internet and Moodle.

Assessment.

Assignments	Percentage	Words/duration
Tutorial Participation and Presentation	15%	10/15 minutes
Mid-term Research Essay	30%	3,000 words
Take-home exam	35%	3,000 words

Tutorial Participation and Presentation 15%

Part of your responsibility is regular attendance and participation in class discussion. The awarding of high participation points comes with good attendance and active, thoughtful, consistent class participation, the kind that reveals your thorough preparation and engagement with class materials. This means contributing your own ideas as well as providing constructive responses to other students' comments.

Students should come to the Tutorial having read the Tutorial Reading.

Each student is required to attend lectures and a minimum number of 10 tutorials to pass the course. Attendance sheets will be used for tutorials. If you miss more than 2 tutorials without adequate documentation (doctor's certificate or counselling certificate), you will gain 0 mark for tutorial participation.

Each student is required to give a 10-15-minute long oral presentation in one of the tutorials. Students should notify the tutor about their chosen presentation date on week 2. The presentation will be expected to provide a clear introduction to and critically engage with the week's tutorial readings. On the first tutorial week (week 2) there will be no presentations but all students should contribute to a general discussion of the readings.

Research Essay 30%

You are required to write a 3,000-word research essay. Information regarding essay topics will be available in week 2. The paper should follow the department's citation style and be in essay format (Introduction, core, conclusion)

The research essay is due on week 8, 6th March. You can hand your paper to your tutor or in the Anthropology Department.

There will be no extensions for the research essay without adequate documentation (such as a doctor's or counselling certificate) or negotiation with me. Late assignments will be penalised at 5% every working day. Papers more than 2 weeks late will not be marked.

Take-home exam 35%

This will take place during exam period at the end of the semester. You will have one week to complete two short essays that draw on readings and lecture material (there will be no requirement for further research). The take-exam paper should be 3,000 words in length. The topics of the take-home exams will be circulated on week 14. **The take-home exam will be due on 24th April.**

There will be no extensions for the take-home exam without adequate documentation (such as a doctor's or counselling certificate) or negotiation with me. Late assignments will be penalised at 5% every working day. Papers more than 2 weeks late will not be marked.

The grading scale follows the University policy.

Lecture and Tutorial Program

Part I: The Human Rights Framework and Theoretical Approaches to Violence

Week 1 10th January Introduction: Human Rights and Political Violence

Reflections on the film “The Shock Doctrine” by Naomi Klein

Week 2 17th January The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Required Readings

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR?Pages?Language.aspx?langID=eng>
- Ishay, Micheline R. (2004) *The History of Human Rights: from Ancient Times to the Globalization Era*. ‘Introduction’, Berkeley : University of California Press, pp. 1-14.

Week 3 31st January Approaching Violence

Required Readings

- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Bourgois, Philippe (2003) ‘Introduction: making sense of violence’ In Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (eds.) *Violence in War and Peace*. London: Blackwell, pp.1-31.
- Blok, Anton (2000) ‘The enigma of senseless violence’. In G. Ajimer & J. Abbink (eds.) *Meanings of Violence: A Cross Cultural Perspective*. Oxford: Berg, pp. 23-38.

Tutorial Reading

- Halbmayer, Ernst (2001) ‘Socio-cosmological contexts and forms of Violence. War, vendetta, duels and suicide among the Yukpta of north-western Venezuela’ In Bettina E. Schmidt and Ingo W. Schröder (eds.) *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*. London ; New York : Routledge pp. 49-69.

Week 4 7th February Violence and Social (Dis)order

Required Reading

- . Juris, Jeffrey S. (2005) ‘Violence performed and imagined. Militant action, the Black Bloc and mass media in Genoa’ *Critique of Anthropology* 25 (4): 413-432.
- Von Benda-Beckmann, Keebet and Fernanda Pirie (2007) ‘Introduction’ In Keebet von Benda-Beckmann and Fernanda Pirie (eds.), *Order and Disorder: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York/Oxford: Berghan Books, pp. 1-16

Tutorial Reading

- .Schwander-Sievers, Stephanie (2001) ‘The enactment of “tradition”. Albanian constructions of identity, violence and power in times of crisis’. In B. Schmidt & I. Schröder (eds.) *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*, London: Routledge, pp.97-120.

Week 5 14th February “The Body in Pain”: Torture and Political Power

In Class Film: The Road to Guantanamo Bay (2006) Part One

Required Reading

- Wisniewski, Jeremy (2010) *Understanding Torture*. 'The Persistence of Torture: An Affliction that Won't Go Away' and 'How Torture Unmakes Worlds', Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, pp. 1-12 ,72-88.

Tutorial Reading

- Hooks, Gregory, Mosher Clayton (2005) 'Outrages Against Personal Dignity: Rationalizing Abuse and Torture in the War on Terror'. *Social Forces*, 83(4), pp. 1627-1646.

Week 6 21st February Terror, Terrorism and their Imaginings

In Class Film: The Road to Guantanamo Bay (2006) Part Two

Required Reading

- Hoffman, Paul (2004) Human Rights and Terrorism, *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 26, N. 4, pp. 932-955.
- Chomsky Noam 'The New War Against Terror: Responding to 9/11' In Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (eds.) *Violence in War and Peace*. London: Blackwell, pp. 217-223.

Tutorial Reading

- Zulaika, Joseba (1995) 'The anthropologist as terrorist'. In C. Nordstrom & A. Robben (eds.) *Fieldwork under fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, Berkeley: University of California pp. 206-222.

Part II: Human Rights, Universalism and Cultural Relativism

Week 7 28th February Human Rights and "Western" Culture

Required Reading

- James, Stephen (1994). 'Reconciling International Human Rights and Cultural Relativism: The Case of Female Circumcision', *Bioethics*, vol. 8, no.1, pp.1-26.
- American Anthropological Association (1947) 'Statement on human rights', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 49, no. 4 (Oct-Dec 1947), pp. 539-543.

Tutorial Reading

- Merry, Sally Engle (2001) 'Changing rights, changing culture' in Jane K. Cowan, Marie-Benedicte Dembour, and Richard A. Wilson (eds.) *Culture and rights: anthropological perspectives*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp.31-55.

Week 8 6th March Universalism and Cultural Relativism. The Case of China

Required Reading

- Zhou, Qi (2005) 'Conflicts over Human Rights between China and the US' *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 27, N. 1, pp. 105-124.
- Link, Perry 'China's Charter 08', *The New York Review of Books* Jan 2009
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/jan/15/chinas-charter-08/?pagination=false>

Tutorial Reading:

- Pils, Eva (2009) 'The Dislocation of the Chinese Human Rights Movement', in Mosher and Patrick Poon (eds) *China's Human Rights Lawyers*. China Human Rights Lawyer Concern Group, pp. 141-159.

Part III: Case Studies on Political Violence

Week 9 13th March Fear as a Way of Life

Required Readings

- Taussig, Michael. (2003) 'Author's Note'; 'The First Week' (May 5-6-7-8) in *Law in a Lawless Land: Diary of a Limpieza in Colombia*. New York/London: New Press, pp. xi-xii; 1-19.
- Linda Green (1995) 'Living in a state of fear', In C. Nordstrom & A. Robben (eds.) *Fieldwork under fire: contemporary studies of violence and survival*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 105-127.

Tutorial Reading

- Pettigrew Judith (2004) 'Living between Maoist and Army in Rural Nepal', in M. Hutt (ed) *Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*, London: Hurst & Company, pp. 261-284.

Week 10 20th March Genocidal Violence in Rwanda

Required Readings

- Gourevitch, Philip. (1998) *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: stories from Rwanda*. Ch 1-2-3, New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, pp. 1-42.
- Eller, Jack David (c 1999). *From culture to ethnicity to conflict: an anthropological perspective on international ethnic conflict*. "Rwanda and Burundi: When Two Tribes Go to War?" Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, pp. 195-242.

Tutorial Readings

- Taylor, Christopher C. (2002) 'The Cultural face of terror in the Rwandan genocide of 1994', in Alexander Hinton (ed) *Annihilating Difference: the Anthropology of Genocide*. London: Blackwell, pp. 254-280.

Excerpts from the film *Ghosts of Rwanda* (2004)

Week 11 27th March Genocidal Violence in Cambodia

Required Readings

- Hinton, Alexander L. (2005) *Why did they Kill? Cambodia in the shadow of Genocide*. 'In the Shadow of Genocide', Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-35.

Excerpts from the film *The Killing Fields* (1991)

Tutorial Reading

- Alexander L. Hinton. (2005) 'A head for an eye: disproportionate revenge', in *Why did they Kill? Cambodia in the shadow of Genocide*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 45-95.

Week 12 3rd April Gendered Political Violence

Required Reading

- McKinnon, Catherine A. (1994) 'Rape, genocide, and women's human rights', in Alexandra Stiglmayer (ed) *Mass rape: the war against women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 183-196.

Tutorial Reading

- Khon, Elisabeth A. (1994) 'Rape as a Weapon of War: Women's Human Rights during the Dissolution of Yugoslavia' *Golden Gate University Law Review*, Vol 24, Issue 7, pp. 199-221.

Part IV: From Violence to Justice? The Future of Human Rights

Week 13 10th April Truth Commissions, Trials and Democratic Transformation

Required Reading

- Hayner, Priscilla B. (2001) 'Five Illustrative Truth Commissions', *Unspeakable truths: confronting State terror and atrocity*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 32-49.

Tutorial Reading

- Wilson, Richard A. (2001) 'Technologies of truth: the TRC's truth-making machine', in *The Politics of truth and reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 33-61.

Week 14**17th April****Conclusion****Required Reading**

- Engle, K.(2001) From skepticism to embrace: human rights and the American Anthropological Association from 1947-1999', *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 23, pp.536-559.

Tutorial Reading

- Englund, Harri. (2006) '*Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*' University of California Press, Ch 7.