

# POLITICS OF GENOCIDE

84:313 | Spring Semester 2017 | 3 credits

TTh, 9:40-11:10am in Clow 220

*"There aren't just bad people that commit genocide; we are all capable of it. It's our evolutionary history."* – James Lovelock, British scientist

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Would we know genocide when we see it? In the beginning of the course, we will look inside the state to get an idea of the social, economic and political situations that make a state more susceptible to genocide and see if there are indicators common to most genocides. The second part of the course will look at several genocides in detail. In the final section of the course, we will attempt to figure out why preventing and punishing genocide and other crimes against humanity is so difficult, and evaluate the methods used for prosecution and punishment to date.

I want to be clear that this course will NOT be a reflection on what happened in these various genocides; it will not be a tour of history's tragic events. Instead, it will be an honest look at the nature of states and the individuals who run them in order to determine why this particular event seems to happen with some regularity. If we know what makes genocide more likely to happen, why can't we prevent it? If we know what it is when we see it, why can't we punish those who bring it about?

## PREREQUISITES

Although I am willing to sign interested students from any discipline into this course, students who have completed Political Science 101 (Introduction to Comparative Politics), 115 (Introduction to International Relations) or 374/308 (International Law) may find that those courses provide a useful foundation for concepts and issues addressed in this course. I do not intend to cover material from these courses extensively here, so some knowledge will be assumed. Students who are struggling with the course because of the lack of background knowledge should see me for background readings and feel free to discuss them with me at any time.

It is my strong preference that political science majors *complete their introductory courses* before enrolling in upper-division courses I teach.

## BASIC COURSE INFORMATION

Professor Tracy H. Slagter  
Ph.D., University of Iowa (2006)

**Office Hours:** T 11:30-1:30; F 10:30-11:30

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## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Totten, Samuel & Paul R. Bartrop, eds.  
2009. *The Genocide Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Other readings will be available to you on D2L or via Polk Library's online databases. *Please bring your textbook and readings to class with you each meeting.*

## COURSE FORMAT

This is an upper-division course in Political Science, and as such it will be taught in a seminar style as much as is practical. This means that lecturing will be minimal and that student input is required for the course to be successful (and fun). As such, I expect that students will attend class each week prepared to discuss the readings — completing the readings ahead of time is essential.

## OUR CLASSROOM

This class is held in one of the University's "active learning" classrooms. This is to our benefit, but if you've not been in one before it can take some getting used to. For example, there is no "front" of the room. Be prepared to sit in different seats throughout the semester, move around to talk with colleagues, write all over the walls, and share information. You may bring your laptop to class with you and use it. Note, however, that it is *extremely distracting* in this type of classroom if you're using your devices to play games, peruse Facebook, etc. during our class time.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to do the following:

- *Initiate and sustain* a prolonged group discussion that has value to and includes all participants;
- *Explain* the many definitions of genocide and why such definitions are important for the detection, prosecution, and punishment of this crime;
- *Understand* the difference between genocide and other crimes against humanity;
- *Compare* different historical genocides as well as contemporary instances to search for patterns of violence;
- *Assess* the changing nature of sovereignty when looking at international responses to this crime; and
- *Integrate* accumulated knowledge into a coherent set of arguments about a current government's behavior.

The course readings and assignments have been chosen in pursuit of these outcomes.

## GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

I use a **93/90/87** grading scale in this course (which means that 93 is the cut-point for an A, 90 for an A-, 87 for a B+, etc.). Your grade will be determined as follows:

- *Participation (5%)*: This grade includes answering and asking questions, showing up to office hours, and offering insight into group discussions. If you show up for class every session but never say a word, you can expect, at maximum, a C for this portion of your grade.
- *Group Discussions (20%)*: The class will be divided into four large groups, and each of these groups will have multiple opportunities to lead and sustain a discussion. You will see a group notation (in **bold**) for nearly every day we have assigned readings; be sure you know which group you are in. In these discussions, each participant will earn the same grade for the day. More details will follow on the first day of class.
- *Take-Home Midterm Essay (30%)*: You will receive the essay prompt one week before the paper is due, and your response must be 6-8 pages in length. It will require no additional reading but close analysis of what we have read in the first part of the course.
- *Genocide Trial (45%)*: The defining project of this course is a mock trial in which students serve as prosecution and defense teams for an individual indicted on the charge of genocide. A panel of students will also serve as judges for the case. This is a project that requires an extensive time commitment and involves cooperative group work. Please note, however, that *this project replaces a research paper and final examination*; allocate your time and effort accordingly.

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

I will not tolerate plagiarism of any kind. All students should familiarize themselves with the University's policies on academic dishonesty and know the consequences of plagiarism or cheating. In this course, plagiarism on any assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

If you require accommodations to be successful in this course, please notify me as soon as possible after the first day of class.

## A NOTE TO POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJORS

If you are currently a Political Science major or if you think you will be one of our majors in the future, it is important that you save your graded coursework from this class. You should save your work in your Google Drive or in your D2L ePortfolio. Your written work in this class will also be submitted to the D2L Dropbox. Seniors in our department are required to take Political Science 401, a seminar in which students' progress through the major is surveyed and a portfolio of their work is created. If you have questions, please see me after class.

## CHANGES

I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time in order to accommodate the needs, interests, and pace of this particular group.

## Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

- January 31 Introduction to course and assignments  
READ: Taub, Ben. "The Assad Files." *New Yorker*, April 18, 2016  
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/04/18/bashar-al-assads-war-crimes-exposed>. Also, read this syllabus all the way through!
- February 2 "Lemkin's Law" **(Group A)**  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Articles 1.1 (Lemkin), 1.2 (LeBlanc), 1.4 (UNGC)
- February 7 Alternative Definitions: What's in a Name? **(Group B)**  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Articles 2.1 (Charny), 2.2 (Smith), and 2.3 (Fein)
- February 9 Not Genocide **(Group C)**  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Articles 3.1 (Bell-Fialkoff), 3.2 (Mann), 3.3 (Harff)
- February 14 Crimes Against Humanity (CAH) **(Group D)**  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Articles 3.4 (Schabas), 3.5 (Semelin), and 5.3 (Sharlach)
- February 16 Intent **(Group A)**  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Article 1.3 (Bergsmo); *and also*  
Lewy, Guenter. 2007. "Can there be genocide without the intent to commit genocide?"  
*Journal of Genocide Research* 9: 661-674. (Project MUSE)
- February 21 Explanations | Intergroup Animosity  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Articles 4.1 (Staub) and 4.4 (Stanton) **(Group B)** *and also*:  
Harff, Barbara. 2003. "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of  
Genocide and Political Mass Murder Since 1955." *American Political Science Review* 97: 57ff.  
(JSTOR) **(Group C)**
- February 23 Explanations | The Goldhagen/Browning Debate  
READ: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "The 'Willing Executioners'/'Ordinary  
Men' Debate." April 8, 1996. [https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication\\_OP\\_1996-01.pdf](https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication_OP_1996-01.pdf) (read only the Goldhagen and Browning contributions) **(Group D)** *and also*:  
Darley, John M. 2004. "Social Organization for the Production of Evil." Chapter 21 in Jost  
and Sidanius, eds., *Political Psychology: Key Readings*. New York: Psychology Press. (D2L)  
**(Group A)**
- February 28 Explanations | Role of Elites and Strategy **(Group B)**  
READ: Valentino, Benjamin A. 2004. "The Strategic Logic of Mass Killing." Chapter 3 in *Final  
Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.  
(D2L)
- March 2 Explanations | Purity and the "Political Imaginary" **(Group C)**  
READ: Semelin, Jacques. 2007. "The Imaginary Constructs of Social Destructiveness."  
Chapter 1 in *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*. New York:  
Columbia University Press. (D2L)
- March 7 Group Meetings for the Trial Project: ATTENDANCE REQUIRED  
Midterm Examination prompt distributed
- March 9 Armenia **(Group D)**  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Articles 6.1 (Melson) and 6.2 (Kiernan)

Boghossian, Paul. 2010. "The concept of genocide." *Journal of Genocide Research* 12: 69-80.

- March 14                    Holocaust (**Group A**)  
📅 Midterm Examination DUE  
READ: Bartov, Omer. "Seeking the Roots of Modern Genocide." Chapter 4 in Gellately and Kiernan, eds., *The Spectre of Genocide*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- March 16                    Holocaust  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Article 5.2 (Niewyk) (**Group B**); *and also*  
Gellately, Robert. 2003. "The Third Reich, the Holocaust, and Visions of Serial Genocide." Chapter 11 in Gellately and Kiernan, eds., *The Spectre of Genocide*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (**Group C**)
- March 21                    Spring Break
- March 23                    Spring Break
- March 28                    Ukraine (**Group D**)  
READ: Mace, James E. 2009. "Soviet Man-Made Famine in Ukraine." Chapter 3 in Totten, Samuel and William Parsons, eds., *Century of Genocide*. New York: Routledge.
- March 30                    Former Yugoslavia (**Group A**)  
READ: Mennecke, Martin. 2009. "Genocidal Violence in the Former Yugoslavia: Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo." Chapter 16 in Totten, Samuel and William Parsons, eds., *Century of Genocide*. New York: Routledge.
- April 4                      Rwanda (**Group B**)  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Article 6.3 (Levene); *and also*  
Lemarchand, René. 2002. "Disconnecting the threads: Rwanda and the Holocaust reconsidered." *Journal of Genocide Research* 4: 499-518.
- April 6                      Darfur and Changing Notions of Sovereignty (**Group C and D**)  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Article 5.5 (Totten); 7.2 (Maogoto), 7.3 (Jentleson) and 7.4 (ICISS)
- April 11                    Syria (**Group A**)  
(I am waiting until a week or two prior to this discussion to post a reading. Since this situation is evolving, I want to find something as current as possible for us to discuss.)
- April 13                    Nürnberg and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Articles 10.1 (Ball), 11.1 (Akhavan and Johnson), 11.2 ("Krstic")  
[Do yourself a favor and read page 462 out loud. Really.] (**Group B**)
- April 18                    ICTY  
Film: *Milosevic on Trial* (2006)
- April 20                    International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) (**Group C**)  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Articles 12.1 (Uvin and Mironko), 12.3 (Lyon and Drumbl) and 12.4 ("Historic Judgement")
- April 25                    The International Criminal Court (ICC) (**Group D**)  
READ: Totten and Bartrop, Chapter 14 readings (all)

- April 27 Trial—preparations  
👑 Prosecution and Defense Papers DUE  
ATTENDANCE REQUIRED
- May 2 Trial  
👑 Judges' Papers DUE  
ATTENDANCE REQUIRED
- May 4 Trial  
ATTENDANCE REQUIRED
- May 9 Trial  
ATTENDANCE REQUIRED
- May 11 Trial—final decision delivered by judges; reactions  
👑 Written final judgment from judge panel DUE  
ATTENDANCE REQUIRED