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## **ANTH 2530/ UGED2622 (Spring 2011) POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Lecture: Fridays 9:30 am to 11:15 am, classroom: NAH 8  
Tutorial: Fridays 2:30 pm to 3:15 pm, classroom: NAH 8  
Consultation: Fridays 3:30 to 4:30, room 411 Dep. of Anthropology

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

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 and comparative perspective. 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, mass rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina and state terror in Colombia. We question why the spread of a human rights culture cannot stop the emergence of violence all over the world. Also, throughout the course, recent human rights issues will be discussed in lectures and tutorials. The course intends to develop students' critical understanding of everyday violence in our society and at the international level.

The course is structured in 4 sections.

Part I: Theoretical Approaches to Violence (Week 1-2-3 5-6)

Part II: Universal Human Rights and Relativism (Week 7-8)

Part III: Political Violence (Week 9-10-11)

Part IV: From Violence to Justice? The Future of Human Rights (Week 13-14)

### **Aims**

The course aims are:

- 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 in 1948, 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.

<b>CAUTION: This course deals at times with material that may be potentially disturbing or distressing</b>
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## **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 (book chapters, journal articles and newspaper articles) will be available in the library and on the Internet.

## **Assessment**

The assessment of this course will be a mixture of written work and participation. There are 5 components: tutorial participation, oral presentation, a reading reaction paper, a research essay, and a take-home exam. Students must complete all assessment components to pass the course.

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Word length/time duration</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Tutorial Participation	5%	-----	On-going
Oral Presentation	10%	10-15 minutes	Chosen tutorial week
1 Reading Reaction Paper	20%	1,000 words	Chosen tutorial week
Research Essay	35%	2,000 words	4 <sup>th</sup> March
Take-home exam	30%	1,500 words	7 <sup>th</sup> May

### ***Tutorial Participation***

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.

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.

### ***Tutorial Oral Presentation***

Each student is required to give a 10-15-minute long oral presentation in one of the tutorials. At each tutorial there will be a two-student presentation followed by a general discussion in which all other students are required to take active part. 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 critical engagement with all the week's required readings (and supplementary if you wish). The presentation grade will be given by the tutor the week following the presentation.

### ***Reading Reaction Paper***

To help you prepare for tutorials, stay up with the readings, and share ideas. You are required to write 1 reading reaction paper worth 20% of the total grade. The paper should be 1,000 words in length and should be written in an essay writing style (introduction, body and conclusion), including full citation and in typed format. This component requires you to reflect critically on *the required readings* for the chosen week. You may choose any week's readings as the focus of your reaction paper, except those from the week of your presentation. As a 'reaction paper', I am seeking foremost a thoughtful consideration of the two required week readings in juxtaposition with each other. Do

they have a relation? How do the concerns/analysis of each author speak to those of the others? This can be reflective and personal, and the use of the first person is entirely acceptable. The paper should capture your reaction to the readings, the ideas they contain and those they provoke. Providing an exhaustive account of the content of each reading is not the purpose of the exercise; but the key concepts in all papers should be included.

The paper needs to be submitted **within seven days** following the tutorial (i.e. at some stage before the next tutorial occurs). No late reaction papers will be accepted. On **week 2** you should notify the tutor about the week you intend to submit the reading reaction paper.

### **Research Essay**

You are required to write a 2,000-word research essay, worth 35% of the total grade. Information regarding essay topics will be available in week 2. The paper should follow the department's citation style and be in essay format as indicated for the reading reaction paper.

**The research essay is due on week 8, Friday 4<sup>th</sup> 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**

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 1,500 words in length. The topics of the take-home exams will be circulated on week 14. **The take-home exam will be due on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May.**

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: 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.

#### **Week 1      14<sup>th</sup> January      Introduction to Human Rights**

This lecture introduces the course to students and provides a brief overview of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the concept of Human Rights

**Tutorial:** No tutorial is scheduled for this week; instead course assessment and tutorial dynamics will be clarified.

### **Required Reading**

**Week 2      21<sup>st</sup> 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.

**Supplementary Reading:**

- Fanon, Frantz (1968) 'Concerning Violence', in *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, pp.27-83.

**Week 3                      28<sup>th</sup> January                      Violence and Social (Dis)order**

**Required Readings**

- . 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.
- .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

**Supplementary Reading:**

- Della Porta, Donatella (1995), 'Comparative Research on Political Violence' in *Social Movements, political violence, and the state: a comparative analysis of Italy and Germany*. Cambridge [England] ; New York : Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-22.

**Week 4                      4<sup>th</sup> February                      (Spring Holiday, No Lecture/tutorial this week)**

**Week 5                      11<sup>th</sup> February                      "The Body in Pain": Torture and Political Power**

**Required Readings**

- Asad, Talal (1997) 'On torture, or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment', in Richard A. Wilson (ed.) *Human rights, culture and context: anthropological perspectives*. London: Pluto Press, pp. 111-133
- Scarry, Elaine (1985) 'Chapter 1: The structure of torture: the conversion of real pain in the fiction of power', in *The body in pain: the making and unmaking of the World*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.27-59

**Supplementary Reading:**

- Foucault, Michel (1979) 'Chapter 1: The body in the condemned', in *Discipline and punish: the Birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979

**Week 6                      18<sup>th</sup> February                      Terror, Terrorism and their Imaginings**

## Required Readings

- Kirtsoglou Elisabeth (2006) 'Unspeakable Crimes: Athenian Greek Perceptions of Local and International Terrorism'. In A. Strathern, P. Stewart & N. Whitehead (eds.) *Terror & Violence. Imagination and the Unimaginable*, London: Pluto Press pp.61-88.
- 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.

## Supplementary Reading:

- Feldman, Allen (1991) *Formations of Violence: the narrative of the body and political terror in Northern Ireland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1 and Chapter 4

## Part 2: Human Rights, Cultural Relativism and Rationality

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.

### Week 7                      25<sup>th</sup> February                      Human Rights and "Western" Culture

#### Required Readings:

- James, Stephen (1994). 'Reconciling International Human Rights and Cultural Relativism: The Case of Female Circumcision', *Bioethics*, vol. 8, no.1, pp.1-26.
- 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.

#### Supplementary Readings:

- United Nations. (1994) 'Universal declaration of human rights', in *Twenty-Five human rights documents*. Center for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University. New York: Columbia University Press. pp.6-9
- United Nations. (1994) 'International covenant on economic, social and cultural rights. 16 December 1966', in *Twenty-Five human rights documents*. Center for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 10-16

### Week 8                      4<sup>th</sup> March                      Universalism and Cultural Relativism. The Case of China

#### Research Essay due

#### Required Readings:

- Dong and Liu (2008) Human Rights in China: The Chinese Perspective  
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/taiwanProgramme/Lecture2008DongandLiu.pdf>

- American Anthropological Association (1947) 'Statement on human rights', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 49, no. 4 (Oct-Dec 1947), pp. 539-543.
- Cassese, Antonio. (1999) 'Are human rights truly universal?', in Obrad Savic (ed) *The politics of human rights*, London and New York: Verso, pp. 149-165.

#### Supplementary Reading:

- Cohen, Ronald. (1991) 'Human rights and cultural relativism: the need for a new approach', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 91, no. 4 (Dec 1991), pp. 1014-1017.

### Part III: Political and State 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 right 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.

#### Week 9      11<sup>th</sup> March      Fear as a Way of life

##### In Class Film: Ghosts of Rwanda (2004)- Part I

##### 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.

##### Supplementary 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      18<sup>th</sup> March      Genocidal Violence in Rwanda and Cambodia

##### In Class Film: Ghosts of Rwanda (2004)- Part II

##### Required Readings:

- Taylor, Christopher C. (2002) 'The Cultural face of terror in the Rwandan genocide of 1994', in A Hinton (ed) *Annihilating Difference: the Anthropology of Genocide*. London: Blackwell, pp. 254-280.
- Alexander L. Hinton. (2005) 'Introduction: in the shadow of genocide'; Ch2 'A head for an eye: disproportionate revenge', in *Why did they Kill? Cambodia in the shadow of Genocide*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-35; 45-95.

##### Supplementary Reading:

- Fein, Helen. (2002) 'Genocide: a sociological perspective', in *Genocide: an anthropological reader*. Alexander L. Hinton. Malden (eds), Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, pp.74-90.

**Week 11                    25<sup>th</sup>    March                    Gendered Violence**

**Required Readings:**

- McKinnon, Catherine A. (1994) ‘Rape, genocide, and women’s human rights’, in Alexandra Stiglmyer (ed) *Mass rape: the war against women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 183-196.
- Peteeet, Julie (1994), ‘Male gender and rituals of resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: a cultural politics of violence’, *American Ethnologist*, 21 (1), pp. 31-49.

**Supplementary Reading:**

- Turshen, Meredith.(2001) ‘The political economy of rape: an analysis of systematic rape and sexual abuse of women during armed conflicts’, in Caroline O.N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark (eds) *Victims, perpetrators, or actors? Gender, armed conflict and political violence*. London and New York: Zed Books, pp. 55-68.

**Week 12                    1st<sup>th</sup>    April    (Lecturer on leave, No lecture/ tutorial this week)**

**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. Week 13 on the post-genocide situation in Rwanda and post-war in Nepal introduces the questions of truth commissions, international justice trials, accountability and political transformations. Week 14 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.

**Week 13                    8<sup>th</sup>    April                    After War: Rwanda, Cambodia and Nepal Revisited**

**Required Readings:**

- Gourevitch, Philip. (1999) Ch 1-2-3, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: stories from Rwanda*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.
- BBC News (2009) ‘Growing fragility of Nepal’s peace process’  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8417031.stm>
- Nytimes (2009) ‘Moving Beyond Lhmer Rouge’s Ghosts’  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/30/world/asia/30cambodia.html?ref=cambodia>

**Supplementary Readings**

- Gourevitch, Philip. (1999) Ch 4-5, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: stories from Rwanda*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.

**Week 13                    15th    April                    Truth Commissions, Trials and Democratic Transformation**

**Required Readings**

- Hayner, Priscilla B. (2001) *Unspeakable truths: confronting State terror and atrocity*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 1-49

- Wilson, Richard A. (2001) Ch 2, '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.

### Supplementary Reading

- Rotberg, Robert (2000) 'Truth Commissions and the provision of truth, justice, and reconciliation, in Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (eds.) *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-21.

<b>Week 14</b>	<b>22<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
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### Required Readings:

- 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
- Turner, Terence. (1997) 'Human rights, human difference: anthropology's contribution to an emancipatory cultural politics', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp.. 272-292.

### Supplementary Reading

- Rorty, Richard. (1999) 'Human rights, rationality and sentimentality,' in *The politics of human rights*. Edited by Obrad Savic. London and New York: Verso, pp. 67-84.
- Englund, Harri. (2006) '*Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*' University of California Press, Ch 7 and Ch 8.

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**6<sup>th</sup> May:** Take-home exam due