ENGL 4390.001, HONR 3390.001, PHIL 4390.001, PSYC 4390.001

Seminar in the Humanities
GENOCIDE in the 20th Century

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
TR 12:30-1:45PM, Spring 2012

Instructors:
Dr. Don Berkich
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Course Description:
This course explores the literature, philosophy, and psychology of genocide to comprehend the origins and nature of this monstrous, yet common, human wrong. Topics include the literary and artistic expressions of the impact of genocide on victims, perpetrators, and bystanders alike, the problems of evil and responsibility, and the psycho-social dimensions of mass-murder and mass-passivity.

Yale psychologist Stanley Milgram summarizes his landmark 1961 study prompted by the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann as follows:

The legal and philosophic aspects of obedience are of enormous importance, but they say very little about how most people behave in concrete situations. I set up a simple experiment at Yale University to test how much pain an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person simply because he was ordered to by an experimental scientist. Stark authority was pitted against the subjects' strongest moral imperatives against hurting others, and, with the subjects' ears ringing with the screams of the victims, authority won more often than not. The extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding
Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority.

It is not just our eagerness to blindly follow authority but our apparently common capacity for cruelty and atrocity that begs for explanation. This course explores the contributions of literature, philosophy, and psychology in seeking explanations for mass-murders and genocide in the recent history of Armenia, Cambodia, Bosnia and Kosovo, Rwanda, and the Holocaust. Although the three disciplinary perspectives of the course will not, and likely cannot, be treated in isolation from one another, the questions they raise may be framed as follows:

Questions from Philosophy:
- What is the nature of human evil?
- How is the problem of evil posed by genocide, and can it be solved in light of genocide?
- How is the moral responsibility for genocide properly assigned?
- What are our responsibilities of in terms of past and present genocidal events?

Questions from Psychology:
- What are the psychological issues involved in the creation of a national weltanschauung that allows, justifies and enshrines genocide?
- Is there truth to the argument that any person is capable and willing to commit atrocities given the right circumstance in time and history?
- What are the psychological boundaries that allow people to commit atrocities as part of their societal role and change personas to that of “everyman” after work?

Questions from Literature:
- Are there “unspeakable” evils, ones so monstrous they escape all expression?
- In what does the value of communicating and representing atrocity consist?
- What are the responsibilities of artists and authors to their subjects in exploring genocide?

Student Learning Outcomes:
Students will
1. Apply the tools appropriate to literary, philosophical, and psychological analysis in class discussions and writing assignments.
2. Evaluate the literature, philosophy, and psychology of genocide, especially in the short studies and collated paper.
3. Analyze the impact of genocide on their own lives, with its philosophical, historical, psychological, and imaginative significance.

Primary Texts:
Philosophy readings as assigned (available at http://philosophy.tamu.edu/courses)
Books on Reserve

Requirements:
Daily reading quizzes, group work, class discussions: 30%
Short papers (3): 15% each or 45% of total grade
Collated paper/research project: 25%

Short Studies: There will be three short papers, 5-7 pages minimum. Paper #1 will define the term “genocide” and trace the word’s use and development. Paper #2 will analyze one example of genocide in the 20th century (non-Holocaust), and paper #3 will analyze the Holocaust. Note that you will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of assigned course readings for each of these studies, but we recommend that also bring in research from other scholarly sources. You will submit each of the three papers to all three professors.
   Paper #1 due: Thursday, January 26th.
   Paper #2 due: Tuesday, February 28th.
   Paper #3 due: Thursday, April 12th.

Criteria for grading:
• a thesis or position that informs the essay and helps shape other features like organization, kinds of support/evidence, etc.
• critical and reflective capabilities in analysis and commentary.
• a logical flow to ideas, unified paragraphs, and effective transitions between paragraphs.
• effective and extensive incorporation of reading materials assigned for class with further research and sources as necessary.
• demonstrated mastery of revision and editing skills (few if any surface errors).
• correct documentation and adequate citation (APA or MLA acceptable).

An “A” paper will incorporate a thesis that goes well beyond description, even beyond argument, and succeeds in articulating explicit, insightful, and sophisticated insights. Such insights require a deeper than average understanding, integrative skills, and personal engagement with the course materials. In short, students are expected to reflect on the issues, events, and texts being examined.

Collated Paper:
Using your short studies, students will build a unified seminar paper that integrates those materials / arguments / issues with an additional component: research on a genocide event not covered in class. Your choices: what is happening now in Darfur, what happened in the conquest of the New World, or what happened behind the Iron Curtain. As you consider what to research, use the Jones text as an avenue to acquaint yourself with events and issues. Then you must go beyond our class texts to scholarly articles and books on your subject.

The collated paper will thus have four main parts (three previous papers plus research) that are integrated into a single, extensive exploration of genocide. This “seminar paper” will reframe your previous theses into one deep and sophisticated thesis that emerges from all of your materials.

Deadlines for the research component:
Tuesday, February 7th – A short essay identifying your event and why it qualifies as genocide.
Thursday, March 22th – Annotated bibliography of your research. You will summarize the information in each of your sources, identifying the thesis/argument in 5-6 sentences. Minimum number of scholarly sources (not including course texts): 10.

Final Exam period – A short oral report on your event. If several people are working on the same subject, you will present as a group.

Policies:
The professor assumes that students enrolled in this course are sincere student-scholars. That is, the professor will treat them with the respect due scholars, and, as scholars, they shall act as follows.

Preparation:
Scholars carefully read assignments in advance of class, take notes on their reading, explore specific issues in discussion with fellow scholars, and follow-up class by re-reading portions of the required readings and exploring suggested readings.

Participation:
Scholars are eager to respectfully, openly, and critically discuss arguments and issues raised by the readings. Scholars are adept at following a line of reasoning wherever it may lead. Most importantly, scholars welcome the insights and criticisms of their peers: A scholar understands that it is possible to entertain a proposition without believing it, just as it is possible to present an argument without personally endorsing the argument.

Assignments:
Scholars fully immerse themselves in assignments and never assume that an assignment is only legitimate if it will be covered on a test. Scholars are naturally curious and see every assignment as an opportunity to explore new issues, see old issues in new light, and hone their formidable skills.

Attendance:
Scholars always attend class barring serious injury, illness, or disaster. Scholars view class-time as rare and valuable for the thought it evokes and the opportunities it presents. Scholars arrive early for class and never leave class early without obtaining prior approval from the professor. If you miss three classes you must meet with the teachers.

Cheating:
Scholars are very careful to give proper credit and maintain the highest standards of scholarly conduct. Thus, subject to university guidelines, any instance of cheating (including plagiarism) will result in a grade of ‘F’ for the course.

Additional Notes:
Any change in the above will be announced in class. No change will be made which would be detrimental to the student's grade.
Any student missing an assignment must provide a documented, acceptable reason according to university guidelines for his/her late paper to be accepted. Students with a proper excuse for missing a due date will be given a reasonable extension. **Important note:** If you miss class or come unprepared, you cannot make up the daily reading quiz.

**Academic Advising:** As soon as students are ready to declare a major, they should meet with an Academic Advisor. The Academic Advisor will guide the student through the requirements of the major, including developing and maintaining the student’s degree plan and directing the student to an appropriate Faculty Mentor. Specific requirements to complete degrees differ from college to college (including signatures needed, timetables to follow, examinations to take, etc.), so each student should consult an Academic Advisor in the college that houses his or her chosen major:

- College of Business: O’Connor Building 122, 825-2653
- College of Education: Faculty Center 201, 825-2662
- College of Liberal Arts: Driftwood 203E, 825-3466
- College of Nursing & Health Sciences: Island Hall 321, 825-2461 / 825-3748
- College of Science & Technology: Center for Instruction 350, 825-6094

**Students with Disabilities and Veterans**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Driftwood 101.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.htm](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.htm). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

By accepting this syllabus the student indicates that the syllabus has been read, all requirements are understood, and all policies are acknowledged.
Class Schedule:

Week #1 (January 11-13)
Thursday: Introduction to the course – the approaches of psychology, philosophy, and literature.

Week #2 (January 16-20)
Tuesday: Definitions of Genocide
    Reading due: Jones pp. 3-29, including notes
Thursday: The Problem of “extraordinary evil”
    Reading due: Waller pp. 3-31

Week #3 (January 23-27)
Tuesday: Ideology and Genocide
    Waller pp. 33-58: Jones 29-50
Thursday: Forché (handout of poems about Armenian experience)
    **First short paper due: Definition of Genocide: A History of the Term**

Week #4 (January 30-Feb 3)
Tuesday: Armenia
    Reading due: Jones pp. 149-187
Thursday: Cambodia
    Reading due: Jones pp. 283-310

Week #5 (February 6-10)
Tuesday: Psychopathology and Genocide
    Reading due: Waller pp. 59-97
    **Writing due: Your choice of research project and why your event can be termed “genocide.”**
Thursday: Determinism and Free Will

Week #6 (February 13-17)
Tuesday: Bosnia and Kosovo
    Reading due: Jones pp. 317-339
Thursday: Demonization
    Reading due: Waller pp. 98-134

Week #7 (February 20-24)
Tuesday: Rwanda
    Reading due: Jones pp. 346-368
Thursday: The Existence of God and Extraordinary Evil
    Reading due: Richard Swinburne, “The Program of Evil” and Flew, Hare, Mitchell, “A Debate on the Rationality of Religious Belief”

Week #8 (February 27-March 2)
Tuesday: Introduction to the Holocaust
    Reading due: Tuesday: Readings due: PDF file by Botwinick, “The Genocide” and “Holocaust Timeline” from the History Place (<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/)
Short paper #2 due: An Example of Genocide in the 20th Century
Thursday: Ordinary People and Genocide
Reading due: Waller pp. 137-169

Week #9 (March 5-9)
Tuesday: The Holocaust
Reading due: Jones pp. 233-282
Thursday: How is the moral responsibility for genocide properly assigned?
Reading due: J. L. Austin: “A Please for Excuses” and “Three Ways of Spilling Ink”

Week #10 (March 12-16)
Spring Break

Week #11 (March 19-23)
Tuesday: The Construction of Worldviews
Reading due: Waller 171-195
Thursday: Construction of the Other
Reading due: Waller pp. 196-229
Writing due: Annotated Bibliography for research project

Week #12 (March 26-30)
Tuesday: Representing the Holocaust
Reading due: Martel 3-85
Thursday: Representing the Holocaust
Reading due: Martel 85-126

Week #13 (April 2-6)
Tuesday: Representing the Holocaust
Reading due: Martel 126-170
Thursday: Representing the Holocaust
Reading due: Martel 170-end

Week #14 (April 9-13)
Tuesday: Moral responsibility
Thursday: Further reading (recommendations by faculty)
Short paper #3 due: The Holocaust

Week #15 (April 16-20)
Tuesday: Cruelty
Reading due: Waller 230-271
Thursday: Freedom

Week #16 (April 23-27)
Tuesday: Moral Responsibility
Readings due: Jones pp, 501-351 on Memory, Forgetting, and Denial
Thursday: Solutions?
Reading due: Waller pp. 281-303

Week #17 (April 30-May 1)
Tuesday: Peer Reviews: draft of research topic

Final paper will be due on the day/time of the final exam.

**Recommended websites:**
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: <http://www.ushmm.edu/>
Cybrary of the Holocaust (Michael Dunn): <http://remember.org/>
The Nizkor Project (Ken McVay): <http://www.nizkor.org/>
Simon Wiesenthal Center: <http://www.wiesenthal.org/>
Yad Vashem: <http://www.yadvashem.org/>
Remembering the Holocaust: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~aragorn/holocaust.htm>
Survivors of the Shoah, Visual History Foundation (Steven Spielberg): <dornsiefse.usc.edu/vhi/>
The Holocaust\Shoah Page (Ben Austin): <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~baustin/holo.html>
Literature of the Holocaust (Al Filreis): <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/

Holocaust/holhome.html>
Women and the Holocaust (Judy Cohen): <http://www.theverylongview.com/WATH/>
Yale Law Library: Avalon Project: <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/imt.asp>