**Human Rights and Genocide**

Spring 2016

History 272/Public Policy 345

Monday/Wednesday 10:05-11:20, Biological Sciences 113

Professor James Chappel ([jgc23@duke.edu](mailto:jgc23@duke.edu))

Office Hours: Carr 327, Wednesday, 3-5 and by appointment

What is the relationship between human rights and genocide? Why is it, in other words, that the last two centuries have witnessed an explosion in practices and institutions designed to help (humanitarianism, international law, human rights) alongside an explosion in practices and institutions designed to harm (modern armies, modern genocide)? This course will study these twinned histories, seeking to understand the mechanisms that policymakers and concerned citizens have attempted to set up to abolish mass violence, and also why they have so frequently failed. Our interdisciplinary investigation will take us from the heights of international law to the depths of the human heart, with studies of literature, politics, and diplomacy in between. This is a history course, but we will always have an eye to the present: indeed, the course is designed around the proposition that human rights and genocide alike can only be understood historically.

The course has three units, each organized around one genocide and one form of international assistance. The first unit will discuss the birth of modern humanitarianism in the early twentieth century Middle East, and ask why it did so little to stop the Armenian Genocide. The second unit will discuss the rise of international law, particularly the minority rights protections of the 1930s, and ask why it did so little to stop the Holocaust. The third will discuss the United Nations and the modern human rights movement, asking why it did so little to stop the genocide in Rwanda. The goal is that an exploration of these three case studies will help us to understand the promise, and the limitations, of humanitarianism, international law, and human rights.

**Course Requirements**

*Attendance and participation:*This is a lecture course, but there will be a significant discussion component. I will take roll regularly and it is expected that you come to class each day. I recognize that we are all human and that tardiness or absence happens to the best of us. Nonetheless, attendance in class is not in any way optional, and it will affect your grade if there are more than two unexcused absences. If you are out sick, I require a STINF notification. It is mandatory that you bring the readings to class with you: if they are online pdf's, you must print them out; if it is a book, you must own the book in a physical copy and bring it with you.

*Plagiarism*: I take plagiarism extremely seriously. It is far better to turn in a mediocre assignment than to plagiarize: the former will hurt your grade but, if caught, the latter will jeopardize your academic career. At the very least, you will fail the paper; more likely, you will fail the course as a whole and have your case turned over to university administration. If you have any questions about this—that is, if you are not sure whether or not a certain act constitutes plagiarism—ask me before turning in your paper: you will not be penalized in any way if you check something out with me and I tell you that it needs a citation or a rewording. The basic concept is simple: do not pass off other’s ideas or words as your own. If you got a cool idea from a footnote, from a website, from Wikipedia, or from a conversation with another faculty member, you have to cite it.

*Assessment*: I will be grading equally with Erasmo Castellani, a PhD student in the history department. There will be two main forms of assessment, in addition to attendance and participation.

Quizzes: Each of three units is divided into a series of lectures/readings organized around a central question, which is written in italics. At the end of each unit, there will be a short quiz on that unit consisting of a few multiple choice questions and then one of the italicized questions from the unit, which you will be expected to answer in one developed paragraph.

Reflections: The main form of assessment will be a set of 9 reflections, most of which will be about two pages long and three of which (one per unit) will be longer (5 pages or so for the first two, 7 or so for the last). These are designed to ensure that you are thinking critically about the readings as we go along, and that you are also thinking through the moral and political issues raised by them. The most important will be the three longer ones, and there will be a rubric for each of them. These should each be in Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced, including a name and date. These should all be posted to your Sakai Dropbox as a Word file by 9 AM on the due dates, as noted in the course schedule. The best responses will show that you are grappling with the readings and thinking original thoughts about them; if you want to receive A grades you cannot simply summarize the readings in your response.

The final grade will be broken down like this:

15% for Attendance and Participation

15% for Quizzes (5% per quiz)

40% for reflections in Units 1 and 2 (5% each for the four shorter reflections, 10% each for the two longer ones)

30% for reflections in Unit 3 (5% each for the shorter reflections, 20% for the longer one)

Extensions/lateness: if you let me know at least one week in advance that you need an extension, and you have a good reason, I am lenient at granting them. Otherwise, though, I will take off one grade portion for each day an assignment is late (i.e. from an A- to a B+).

**Texts to Purchase**

*These are available at the Duke Textbook Store. You may buy them online if you like; the ISBN numbers are included.*

Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda*(0801488672)

Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*(0060995068)

Kennedy, *Rights of Spring: A Memoir of Innocence Abroad*(9780691141381)

Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (9780684826806)

Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (9780674064348)

Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (9780520279322)

**Course Schedule**

13 Jan: Introduction

18 Jan: MLK Day, no class

20 Jan: Primo Levi and the Heart of the Twentieth Century

*How do we think historically about evil and humanity?*

Primo Levi, “The Gray Zone”\*

**Unit 1: Humanitarianism, Media, and the Armenian Genocide**

25 Jan: Pity, Literature, and Neurology

*Why do we care when we see a picture of a suffering child?*

Lynn Hunt, “Torrents of Emotion”\*; “Literature and the Human”\*

*ASSIGNMENT: By 9 AM on the morning of class, write about two pages, with a thesis statement, about how these two literary selections are different and, drawing on Hunt, why that matters to the history of humanitarianism. The best answers will draw on specific elements (with citations) of all three texts. Post this to your Sakai dropbox with the title “Reflection 1.”*

27 Jan: The Origins of Humanitarianism

*What is humanitarianism, and how does it choose which suffering to address?*

Watenpaugh, pages 1-19 and chapter 2

Primary source: McGilvary selection, print out and bring to class

1 Feb: The Armenian Genocide

*What was the Armenian Genocide, and why did it happen?*

Adam Jones, “The Ottoman Destruction of Christian Minorities”\*; selection from Balakian, *Armenian Golgotha\**

3 Feb: Humanitarianism's First Encounter with Genocide

*Why did the world care about the Armenian Genocide, and what did it do?*

Watenpaugh, ch. 3; Bryce report (1915)\*

8 Feb: The Aftermath of Genocide

*What lessons did the international community learn from the Armenian Genocide, and why is it controversial to this day?*

Watenpaugh, Ch. 6; “A Century After Armenian Genocide”\*; find and read the 1933 “Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees” online [no need to print it out]

*ASSIGNMENT: By 9 AM on the morning of class, post on Sakai a Word document called “Reflection 2” with two sections. The first, at least a paragraph in length, should explain what is significant about the 1933 convention, including at least one strength and one weakness (remember, nothing like it had ever existed before). In the second, which should be at least a page and a half, you explain why Watenpaugh thinks the humanitarian response to the Armenian genocide was a “failure.” Is he right?*

10 Feb: The Militarization of Humanitarianism

*What happened to humanitarianism during and after World War II?*

Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide*, ch. 1

15 Feb: SNOW DAY

17 February: The Limits and Prospects of Humanitarianism After a Century of Genocide

*How should we think about humanitarianism today?*

Easterly, “Foreign Aid for Scoundrels”\*; Singer, “The Logic of Effective Altruism”\*; Srinivasan, “Stop the Robot Apocalypse”\*

<Reflection 3 assignment handed out>

**Unit 2: The Genocide Convention, International Law, and the Holocaust**

22 Feb: International Law, Genocide, and Empire

*What is international law and why didn't it stop genocide in the years it was first put into force? Doesn't genocide violate the Geneva Conventions?*

Dominik J. Schaller, “From Conquest to Genocide: Colonial Rule in German Southwest Africa and German East Africa”\*

<Quiz on Unit 1>

24 Feb: Minority Rights and the Limits of International Law

*What efforts were made to legally ensure that mass atrocities like the Armenian Genocide would not happen again, and how well did they work?*

1919 Minorities Treaty\* <the readings this week are short: start reading Browning and Levi for next week, and remember that each of them needs a reflection>

*ASSIGNMENT: By 9 AM on the morning of class, post on Sakai a Word document called “Reflection 3,” in which you follow the directions handed out last week*

29 Feb: The Holocaust, Genocide, and Empire

*What was the Holocaust? How did it happen, and why did nobody put a stop to it?*

Snyder, “Holocaust: The Ignored Reality”\*

2 March: Humanity at the Limit

*How should we think about the victims of genocide?*

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* <entire>

*ASSIGNMENT: By 9 AM on the morning of class, post on Sakai a Word document called “Reflection 4,” in which you explain what the “takeaway” is from Levi's book, in your opinion (and based on citations from the text). We know that the Holocaust was bad -- how does Levi help us to think in more complex ways about the experience of genocide victims?*

7 March: Who is to blame for the Holocaust?

*If the Holocaust was the worst genocide in human history, we need to understand who is to blame. Who was it?*

Browning, *Ordinary Men* <entire>

*ASSIGNMENT: By 9 AM on the morning of class, post a Sakai a Word document called “Reflection 5,” in which you give your judgment, in about two pages, of Browning's argument. Include three sections: What is his argument? Is it convincing? How might you criticize his argument?*

9 March: <NO CLASS TODAY>

<SPRING BREAK>

21 March: Adjudicating the Holocaust: Nuremberg and the Genocide Convention

*How did the international community respond to the greatest tragedy of the twentieth century?*

Robert Jackson, Opening statement at Nuremberg Trials <selection>\*; Douglas, “Ivan the Recumbent”\*; UN Genocide Convention\*

23 March: The State of International Law and the Genocide Convention Today

*How successful have the genocide convention, and international law more broadly, been in the decades since the Holocaust?*

Ehrenreich, “Cambodia's Walking Dead”\*; Tor Krever, “Dispensing Global Justice”\*

<Reflection 6 assignment handed out>

**Unit 3: The United Nations, the Human Rights Movement, and the Rwandan Genocide**

28 March: The Long History of Rights?

*Have humans always believed in “human rights”?*

Moyn, The Last Utopia, Ch. 1; “Bentham on rights”\*

<Quiz 2>

30 March: The United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

*Where does our contemporary notion of “human rights” come from, and how transformative was it at first?*

Moyn, The Last Utopia, Chs 2-3; “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” [read over this online, no need to print it out]

*ASSIGNMENT: By 9 AM on the morning of class, post on Sakai a Word document called “Reflection 6,” in which you follow the directions handed out last week.*

4 April: The Birth of the Human Rights Movement in the 1970s

*Where does the “human rights movement” come from, and why was it born?*

Moyn, The Last Utopia, Ch 4; Benenson, “The Forgotten Prisoners”\*

*ASSIGNMENT: By 9 AM on the morning of class, post on Sakai a Word document called “Reflection 7,” in which you, in about two pages, answer this question, with a thesis statement: do human beings naturally have “rights”? Why or why not?*

6 April: Background to Rwanda

*What is Rwanda, why were ethnic tensions so high there, and how involved was the UN?*

Barnett, Chs 2-3; Dallaire cable 1994\*

11 April: The Rwandan Genocide

*What happened in Rwanda in the spring of 1994, and why did nobody stop it?*

Barnett, Ch. 4; Rwanda survivor testimonies\*

*ASSIGNMENT: By 9 AM on the morning of class, post on Sakai a Word document called “Reflection 8,” in which you explain, in about two pages and based on our readings, why you think the international community did so little to halt the massacres in Rwanda. Use your own knowledge of history to think analytically, using Barnett as evidence and not simply summarizing his answer.*

13 April: The Aftermath of Rwanda

*What happened to the survivors, and what sorts of scars remain in Rwandan society?*

“The Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath”\* [report prepared by UN High Commission on Refugees]; Gourevitch, “The Life After”\*

<Reflection 9 assignment handed out>

18 April: Library visit <one-half of the class will go to library, the other half can work on reflection 9>

19 April: Evening film screening, *Hotel Rwanda* <room and time to be announced>

20 April: Library visit <one-half of the class will go to library, the other half can work on reflection 9>

25 April: The State of the Human Rights Movement Today

Moyn, Epilogue; David Kennedy, *The Rights of Spring* <entire>

27 April: Evaluations, Final Quiz, and Final Discussion

*ASSIGNMENT: By 9 AM on the morning of class, post on Sakai a Word document called “Reflection 9,” in which you follow the directions handed out two weeks ago.*