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Class: Monday, 2:00-4:00
Mode: Hybrid, Zoom
Office hours: by appointment only

HIST 70900: Mass Violence in Modern Europe

Fall 2021

Course Description:

This course explores instances of unprecedented mass violence in modern Europe during the twentieth century. It is based on several case studies, including events in German South-West Africa, Germany, Ukraine, the Soviet Union, and Chechnya. By analyzing some of the most recent scholarship on genocide and ethnic cleansing, the course examines the short-term and long-term causes for mass violence, assessing the extent to which, in different contexts, it resulted from political ideologies, colonialism, bureaucratic pressures, or ethnic and religious hatred. The course will also focus on the repercussions of mass violence, including acts of revenge, changes in international law and human rights, and attempts to create sites of memory in those places where atrocities were committed. Finally, this course aims at tracing how such unprecedented violence against civilians was experienced by ordinary citizens of European countries, and how it transformed and affected their everyday lives, political choices, and social attitudes during and after the events.

Learning Goals:

By the end of the course, students should be able: to demonstrate a command of major historiographical themes in the history of mass violence in modern times; to read the historical literature critically, with attention to questions, methodologies, sources, and arguments; and to put together individual works into larger interpretive frameworks.

Required Texts for this course:

- 1) Primary sources and other readings are available through Blackboard and are marked B on the syllabus.
- 2) The following books are available for purchase through www.abebooks.com and www.amazon.com, and are on reserve at GC Library: 1) Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*; 2) Anne Appelbaum, *Gulag: A History*; 3) Norman Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*. 4) Anna Politkovskaya, *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya*; 5) Elissa Bemporad & Joyce Warren, *Women and Genocide*; 6) *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*; 7) Eugene Avrutin and Elissa Bemporad, *Pogroms: A Documentary History*.
- 3) Additional readings to be downloaded as Pdfs.

Course Requirements:

Students are required to prepare the course readings and participate actively and consistently in class. One of the goals of this seminar is class discussion, and the success of the discussion depends on careful readings by all students of the assigned texts as well as attendance of all meetings. Active, informed participation in class discussions counts as 35% of your final grade.

Each week, one student will be asked to introduce the readings. As part of this responsibility, they will write 2-3 page summaries of the individual reading they have been assigned and distribute them via email to the other students and to me, in advance of that week's meeting. Summaries must include: a) an assessment of the book's place within the existing scholarship; b) summary of the argument, beginning with a 1 sentence statement of it followed by elaboration; c) mention of sources, i.e. in what ways they support the argument. Where relevant, they should also address the authors' theoretical and methodological approaches.

Students are also required to write a 20-page research paper (25 at the most), on a topic of their choice and interest whether related to the topic in general or to specific questions under consideration in this class. This paper will be grounded in the historiography of the chosen area, but the heart of the paper will involve research of primary source material available. Please start early to think about a possible subject. At some point I will ask you to provide a short description of a possible research subject and a list of the potential literature you identified to write the paper – this will be pre-circulated with the class and presented by the student. Feel free to discuss anything about preparing or writing the paper with me by email or during office hours. The final paper is due one week after the end of the semester. On the last day of classes, each student will give a presentation of the research topic and, based on pre-circulated drafts of the papers, students will provide feedback and comments to each presenter. The research paper's topic must be discussed in advance and chosen in consultation with the instructor, and must have the instructor's approval.

Grading:

Students must complete all assignments in order to receive a grade. The overall grade for this course will be composed as follows:

Class participation: 35%

Class presentations: 25%

Research paper: 40%

Code of Academic Integrity:

GC regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating on examination, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offense against the values of intellectual honesty. GC is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the GC Academic Integrity Procedure.

I will NOT tolerate any kind of plagiarism. Any paper that closely resembles material found on the internet or another student's essay will be considered plagiarism and receive

an F. Plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students and may result in an F for the course.

August 30:

- Introduction
- Defining mass violence, genocide, crimes against humanity, and human rights

Readings: <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/x1cpcpg.htm>
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/b1udhr.htm>
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/imtconst.htm>

Garbarini and Adjeman, "Mass Violence: From Experience to Knowledge":
<https://journals.openedition.org/eac/743>

September 6: NO CLASS: LABOR DAY

September 13:

- Colonialism, Imperialism, Race

Readings: Bemporad, *Women and Genocide*, "Women and the Herero Genocide"

Mark Mazower, "Violence and the State in the Twentieth Century," *AHR* (B)
Evans, Raymond, "*Plenty shoot 'em': The destruction of aboriginal societies along the Queens land frontier.* Genocide and Settler Society, 150-173 (B)
Isabel Hull, pp. 117-62, in Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan, *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective* (B)
Excerpts from Emmanuel Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment* (B)

September 20:

- The Ottoman Empire and the Mass Murder of the Armenians

Readings: Bemporad, *Women and Genocide*, "Women and the Armenian Genocide."
Ronald Suny et al., *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks* (available through Z Library: <https://it1lib.org/book/2531382/a9c60a>)
Taner Akcam, "Anatomy of a Crime" (B).
Report on the treatment of Armenian Children
(www.armenian-genocide.org/sampledocs/us-7-20-15-text.htm)
Report on the deportation of Armenians from Zeitun
(www.armenian-genocide.org/sampledocs/us-7-21-15-text.htm)
Revisiting the Armenian Genocide, by Guenter Lewy
(www.meforum.org/748/revisiting-the-armenian-genocide)
Sample Archival Documents on the Armenian Genocide
(www.armenian-genocide.org/sampledocs.html)
Richard Kloian, *The Armenian Genocide: News Accounts From The American Press: 1915-1922* (www.teachegenocide.org/newsaccounts/index.htm)

September 27: IN PERSON

- Anti-Jewish Violence Across Time and Space
- Pogroms and anti-Black violence: A comparative perspective

Readings: Avrutin and Bemporad, *Pogroms: A Documentary History*
 Messer et al. "The Destruction of Black Wall Street: Tulsa's 1921 Riot":
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ajes.12225>

October 4:

- The Soviet Experiment 1
- The Holodomor and the Case of Ukraine

Readings: Bemporad, *Women and Genocide*, "Women and the Holodomor."
 Lev Kopelev, *The Education of a True Believer*, excerpts (B)
 Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*.
 Holodomor sources (B)

October 11: NO CLASS, COLUMBUS DAY

October 18:

- Nazi Genocide: The Holocaust, Part 1
- Nazi policies of sterilization, "euthanasia," and extermination

Readings: Bemporad, *Women and Genocide*, "Romani Girls during the Holocaust."
 Doris Bergen, *War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*
 Friedlander, *Deadly Medicine and Step by Step* (B)
 Gellately and Stolyfusz, *Social Outsiders* (B)
 Roma Testimony (B)

October 25:

- The Soviet Experiment 2
- The Great Terror and the Gulag

Readings: Nicolas Werth on the Great Terror, in *The Specter of Genocide*.
 Anne Appelbaum, *Gulag: A History*.
 Amir Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia," AHR,
<https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/104.4.1114>

November 1: IN PERSON

Pre-circulate among your peers a bibliography and a two-page synopsis of the research paper. Each student will present and discuss the main research questions, arguments, and methodological approach chosen for the paper. The class will offer extensive feedback.

November 8:

- Nazi Genocide: The Holocaust, Part 2
- Persecution and extermination of the Jews

Readings: Bemporad, *Women and Genocide*, “Women in Nazi Germany.”
Christopher Browning, “German Killers” (B) and Omer Bartov (Z Library, *Hitler’s Army*, excerpts).
Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth*.

November 15:

- Yugoslavia

Readings: Bemporad, *Women and Genocide*, “Women in the Bosnian Genocide.”
Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy* (excerpts on Yugoslavia, Z Library <https://it1lib.org/book/961510/28e28a>)
Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, pp. 1-16, 139-184; Jaques Semelin in *Specter of Genocide*, pp. 353-370.
Biljana Plavsic on “defective gene” among Muslims (B)

November 22:

- Resisting Mass Violence

Readings: Vasily Grossman, *The Hell of Treblinka* and Zalmen Gradowski (B)
Semelin et al., *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (excerpts) (B)

November 29: IN PERSON

- Welcome to Chechnya!
- State Violence against the LGBTQ minority

Readings: Anna Politkovskaya, *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya*
<https://www.welcometochechnya.com/>
<https://www.welcometochechnya.com/about>
Masha Gessen, *Forbidden Lives*, New Yorker
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/07/03/the-gay-men-who-fled-chechnyas-purge>

December 6:

- Collective Memories of Mass Violence and Genocide
- The Politics of Memory: Vengeance and Retribution

Readings: Bartov, “White Spaces and Black Wholes” (B)
Selma Leydesdorff, *Sasha Pechersky* (Z Library <https://it1lib.org/book/3518656/bae1d8>)
Oleksander Melnyk, “Stalinist Justice as a Site of Memory” (B)
Bemporad on cannibalism in Lviv (B)

December 13:

- Student presentations, and feedback based on pre-circulated paper drafts!