Thoughts about Genocide

Dr. Shmuel Lederman

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Course Description:

In this course, we discuss several thinkers who made lasting contributions to genocide studies. We begin with Raphael Lemkin, the Jewish-Polish jurist who coined the term genocide, and explore his understanding of the concept and the distinctive loss he thought was involved in genocide. We then turn to discuss Hannah Arendt’s reflections on themes from the attempt at total domination in the concentration camps to the banality of evil, highlighting the many misinterpretations of her thought in Holocaust historiography. We continue with Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, Tzvetan Todorov's reconstruction of the encounter of Europeans with the Native American Other and Catharine MacKinnon's observations into the meaning of the assaults on women, so common in cases of genocide and other mass atrocities. Finally, we discuss the relations between genocide and modernity analyzed by the school of Critical Theory as well as anthropologist Alex Hinton.

Course Requirements:

Full attendance.

Weekly reading assignments: Students are required to read the assigned items for every week.

Response papers: Students are required to submit two response papers, each three pages long. Each paper should address one of the main themes/thinkers discussed in class integrating at least three sources from the syllabus.
The final grade is determined by attendance, participation in class that reflects engagement with the reading materials, and the response papers.

Final paper: Students may submit a final paper: a short, ten pages long paper or a seminar paper. Short papers are to be submitted by September 30, 2017. Seminar papers are to be submitted by the end of March 2018.

Reading List:

1. What is Genocide?


Additional reading:


2. **Evil: Radical or Banal?**


   Additional reading:


3. **Genocide and the Making of the Other**


   Additional reading:


4. **White Victims, Black Victims, Or: When Genocide Comes Back Home**

Additional reading:


5. Gendered Genocide


Additional reading:


6. Genocide, Modernity and the Question of Ourselves
