

## **Anth 701: The Anthropology of Political Conflict: Violence, Terror, Power, Order**

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Semester I, 2002-03 George Washington University  
Office Hours: TBA  
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### Description and Objectives:

This course explores how socio-cultural anthropology can contribute to a critical understanding of the causes, characteristics, and effects of violent political conflict as a ubiquitous feature of the current global landscape. It will critically review theories and discourses purporting to explain the world's numerous "local" violent political conflicts and the use of violence within them, addressing how a variety of global and local processes interact in their production and organization. How do transnational political and economic forces interact with culturally authored understandings of "power", social identities, and a variety of other forms of socio-political struggle and life-projects in constituting grounds and terms for, and meanings of violent political conflict? The course will also examine how some processes are emphasized at the expense of, or in isolation from, others in the construction of conventional understandings of purportedly "local" conflicts and explore some consequences of these constructions. For example, how are "ethnic conflicts" often explained primarily with reference to highly bounded histories of economic and political interaction and essentialized cultural differences that ignore the role of larger international involvement? How do such characterizations frame conflicts as objects for particular forms of international engagement (or disengagement)?

Throughout the course key concepts such as "violence", "order", "resistance" and their interrelationships will also be subjected to critical scrutiny. The course will review debates over what violence is, what its purposes are, and what forms it may take—acute, structural, or symbolic—and will discuss the analytical and political consequences of emphasizing the relatedness or the distinctiveness of these forms.

The course will also examine how social and political orders legitimize particular acts and conditions while de-legitimizing others in ways that affect how acts are or are not regarded as "violent" and/or "violating". Particular attention will be played to the role of the state and of a hegemonic state-centered geopolitical discourse in the legitimization of violence—for example in defining what acts constitute "security" as opposed to which proliferate "terror". It will also examine how such hegemonic definitions are contested, the social conditions of such resistance, and the "cultural groundings" from which such challenges are mounted. The course will also take a critical look at how different types of violence and conflict become characterized as "political" or "non-political" and the consequences of this dichotomy, examining this question in particular from a gendered perspective.

Finally, the course will also examine the effects of violent political conflict—particularly prolonged conflict—and of its prominent effects—such as displacement—on social organization and interaction, on culture, and on gendered and other social and political identities. It will examine how social and cultural worlds are constructed in the context of violent political environments. It will also explore the ethical and analytical consequences of different approaches and levels of social scientific attention to violent political conflict. Although the course concentrates on conflicts in Africa (such as in Rwanda/Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, and in the greater Horn of Africa) it also draws heavily on comparative material from other non-African cases such as Afghanistan and Northern Ireland.

The course will expose students to multiple ethnographic accounts of political conflict. This course is appropriate for students, particularly upperclassmen, majoring in the social sciences who have had previous coursework in their disciplines and preferably already taken at least one course in anthropology that has exposed them to the basic concepts in the field.

### Course Organization:

**Critical Reading Review Papers:** Students will produce 4 critical reading review papers approximately once every 3 weeks starting with the first one due at the beginning of class on the last day of week 4. These short 1000-1500 page papers should critically reflect on and integrate assigned reading material around a specific question and should show careful consideration of how different readings relate to each other.

**Final Research paper:** A final research paper of approximately 15 pages (double-spaced; approximately 4000 words) will be due on the last day of regularly scheduled classes. A one page proposal of a research topic must be presented on October 23<sup>rd</sup> for approval by the instructor before class on week 6. Four or five special guest lectures will also be scheduled for the class.

Team Class Presentation: Students will also be responsible for preparing a team presentation with their classmates once during the semester during one of the weeks in which choices of ethnographies of conflict are provided. Students will work with colleagues to prepare a 30 minute presentation that: outlines the basic history and causes of the conflict; establishes the author's basic argument about the various levels of causation of the conflict; and pose a set of questions to be raised in class discussion.

Grading: 4 reading reaction/synthesis papers -----60% (15% each).  
Final Paper-----25%  
Team In-Class Presentation-----15%

**Papers are due at the beginning of class on the Monday of the week assigned in hardcopy format, double-spaced, and stapled. No electronic submissions and no late papers will be accepted.**

**Required Texts:**

Coursepack of readings. Note: A copy of the coursepack will be put on reserve in the library

Sluka, Jefferey A.(eds.) 2000. Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Uvin, P. 1998. Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda. Bloomfield ,CT::Kumarian Press.

Taylor, C.C. 1999. Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994. Oxford:Berg.

Marsden, P. 2002. The Taliban: War and Religion in Afghanistan. London: Zed Books.

Richards, P. 1996. Fighting For the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Anderson, M. 1999. Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace-Or War. London: Lynne Rienner

Choose one of following two:

Besteman, Catherine Unraveling Somalia: Race , Violence, and the Legacy of Slavery. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

-or-

Bornstein, A.S. Crossing the Green Line: Between the West Bank and Israel. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Choose one of following two:

Ellis, S. 1999. The Mask of Anarchy: the Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War. NY: NYU Press.

-or-

Feldman. Allen. 1991. Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Choose one of following two:

Donham, D.L. 1999. Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution. Oxford: James Currey.

-or-

Hutchinson, S. 1996. Nuer Dilemmas: Coping With Money, War, and the State. Berkeley: University of California Press

## **Schedule:**

### ***Week 1 Introduction to Topic and Class Structure***

### ***Week 2: -Studying Political Conflict and Violence: Theories, Approaches, and Concerns-Whither Anthropology?***

\*McCament, John, F. 1984. "Governance Without Blood: Social Science's Antiseptic View of Rule; or, The Neglect of Political Repression." In Michael Stohl and George Lopez (eds.) The State as Terrorist: The Dynamics of Government Violence and Repression. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

\*Davis, J. 1992. "The Anthropology of Suffering" *Journal of Refugee Studies* 5 (2): 149-161

\*Riches, D. 1986. "The Phenomenon of Violence." Pp 1-27 in D. Riches (ed.) The Anthropology of Violence. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

\*Krohn-Hansen, Christian 1994. "The Anthropology of Violent Interaction" *Journal of Anthropological Research* Vol.50: 367-381.

\*Blok, A. 2000. "The Enigma of 'Senseless' Violence." Pp 23-38 in G. Aijmer and J. Abbink. (eds.) Meanings of Violence: A Cross-Cultural Perspective. Oxford: Berg.

Warren, K. 2000. "Death Squads and Wider Complicities: Dilemmas for the Anthropology of Violence." Pp 226-248 in J.A. Sluka (ed.) Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

### ***Week 3: The Politics of "Legitimate" and "Illegitimate" Violence:***

Sluka, J.A. 2000. "Introduction: State Terror and Anthropology" pp 1-45 in J.A. Sluka (ed.) Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

McKenna, T.M. 2000. "Murdered or Martyred: popular Evaluations of Violent Death in the Muslim Separatist Movement in the Philippines." Pp189-203 in J.A. Sluka (ed.) Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mahmood, Cynthia, K. 2000. "Trials By Fire: Despair of Terror in Punjab and Kashmir." Pp70-90 in J.A. Sluka (ed.) Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

\*Arextaga, B. 1993. "Striking With Hunger: Cultural Meanings of Political Violence in Northern Ireland." Pp 219-254 in K. Warren (ed.) The Violence Within: Cultural and Political Opposition in Divided Nations. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

### ***Week 4: What Makes violence "Political"? Engendering Political Conflict and Violence***

\*Capelon, R. 1995. "Gendered War Crimes: Reconceptualizing Rape in Times of War." in J. Peter and A. Wolpe (eds.) Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives. New York: Routledge.

\*Charlesworth, H. 1995. "Human Rights as Men's Rights" in J. Peter and A. Wolpe (eds.) Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives. New York: Routledge

\*Rao, A. 1995 The Politics of Gender and Culture in International Human Rights Discourse." in J. Peter and A. Wolpe (eds.) Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives. New York: Routledge

\*Maitse, T. 2000. "Revealing Silence: Voices from South Africa." Pp 199-214 in S. Jacobs, R. Jacobson and J. Marchbank, (eds.) States of Conflict: Gender, Violence, and Resistance. London: Zed books

\*White, Luise 1990. "Separating the Men From the Boys: Constructions of Gender, Sexuality, and Terrorism in Central Kenya, 1939-1959." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol.23 no.1

Selections from Taylor, C.C. 1999. Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994. Oxford: Berg.

### ***Weeks 5 and 6: The Social Organization of Contemporary Conflicts-Chaos and Primordialisms?***

\*Kaplan, R. D. "The Coming Anarchy" *Atlantic Monthly* February 1993

\*Keen, D. 1998. "The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars." *Adelphi Papers* No.320 Oxford: International Institute for Strategic Studies.

O'Brien, Kevin A. 2000. "Private Military Companies and African Security 1990-98." Pp 43-76 in Musah, Abdel-Fatau and Fayemi, J.'Kayode (eds.) Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma. London: Pluto Press.

Pettigrew, J. 2000. "Parents and their Children in Situations of Terror: Disappearances and Special Police Activity in the Punjab." Pp 204-225 in J.A. Sluka (ed.) Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Choose between:

Besteman, Catherine Unraveling Somalia: Race, Violence, and the Legacy of Slavery. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

-or-

Bornstein, A.S. Crossing the Green Line: Between the West Bank and Israel. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

### ***Week 7 and 8: The "Cultural Grammar" of Political Violence: Violence as Discourse***

\*Robben, A.C.G.M. 2000. "State Terror in the Netherworld: Disappearance and Reburial in Argentina." Pp91-113 in J.A. Sluka (ed.) Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

\*Wilson, K.B. 1992. "Cults of Violence and Counter-Violence in Mozambique." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18:527-582.

Selections from Taylor, C.C. 1999. Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994. Oxford: Berg.

Choose between:

Ellis, S. 1999. The Mask of Anarchy: the Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War. NY: NYU Press.

-and-

Feldman, Allen. 1991. Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

***Week 9: Aspects of the Global in Local Conflicts I: “Vernacular Modernities”***

Richards, P. 1996. Fighting For the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

***Week 10: Aspects of the Global in Local Conflicts II: Transnational Dimensions of “Local Political-Economies of Violence” –Development***

Uvin, P. 1998. *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*. NY: Kumarian Press.

***Week 11: Aspects of the Global in Local Conflicts II: State and Society***

Choose between:

Donham, D.L. 1999. Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution. Oxford: James Currey.

-or-

Hutchinson, S. 1996. Nuer Dilemmas: Coping With Money, War, and the State. Berkeley: University of California Press

***Week 13: Psychological Effects of Violent Conflict and Social Re-organization:***

\*Robben, A.C.G.M. “The Assault on Basic Trust: Disappearance, Protest, and Reburial in Argentina.” Pp 70-101 in A.C.G.M. Robben and M.M. Suarez-Oroco, (eds.) Cultures Under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

\*Marx, E., 1990. “ The Social World of the Refugee: A Conceptual Framework.” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 3: 189-203.

\*Abdulrahim, D. 1993. “Defining Gender in a Second Exile: Palestinian Women in West Berlin” pp55-81 in Buijs, G. (ed.) Migrant Women. New York: Berg.

\*Lubkemann, S. 2000. “Other Motives, Other Struggles: Gender Politics and the Shaping of Wartime Migration in Mozambique. Pp343-368 in Rethinking Refuge and Displacement: selected Papers on Refugees and Immigrants VIII. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association.

***Week 14: Violence and Social Change: Displacement, Diaspora and Socio-Political Identity:***

\*Shahrani, M.N. 1995. “Afghanistan’s Muhajirin (Muslim ‘Refugee Warriors’): Politics of Mistrust and Distrust of Politics.” pp 187-206 in E.V. Daniel and J.C. Knudsen (eds.) Mistrusting Refugees. Berkeley: University of California Press.

\*Wilson, K.B., 1994. “Refugees and Returnees as Social Agents.” pp237-250 in T. Allen & H. Morsink (eds.) When Refugees Go Home. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

\*Warren, K. 1993. “Interpreting La Violencia in Guatemala: Shapes of Mayan silence and Resistance” pp 25-56 in K. Warren (ed.) The Violence Within: Cultural and Political Opposition in Divided Nations. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Marsden, P. 2002. The Taliban: War and Religion in Afghanistan. London: Zed Books.

***Week 15: The Anthropology of Response to Conflict: Humanitarian Action and Peace-building***

Anderson, M. 1999. Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace –or War. London: Lynne Rienner

\*Nordstrom, C. 1999. "Girls and War Zones: Troubling Questions." Pp 63-81 in D. Indra(ed.) Engendering Forced Migration: Theory and Practice. New York: Berghahn.

\*El-Bushra, J. 2000. "Transforming Conflict: Some Thoughts on a Gendered Understanding of Conflict Processes."pp 66-86 In S. Jacobs, R. Jacobson and J. Marchbank, (eds.) States of Conflict: Gender, Violence, and Resistance. London: Zed books

\*Enloe, Cynthia. 1987. "Feminists Thinking About War, Militarism, and Peace." Pp 526-547 in Beth Hess and Myra M. Foiree (eds.) Analyzing Gender. London: Sage.