

# POLITICS of GENOCIDE

**Political Science/SJ 313; 3 credits**  
**TTh, 11:30am-1:00pm in Sage 2215**

*"There aren't just bad people that commit genocide; we are all capable of it. It's our evolutionary history."*

-James Lovelock, British scientist

## BASIC COURSE INFORMATION

Professor Tracy Hoffmann Slagter  
Ph.D., University of Iowa

**Office Hours:** M, 9-11am; T, 9-10am

**Office Location:** Sage Hall 4626

**Email:** [slagtert@uwosh.edu](mailto:slagtert@uwosh.edu)

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

The following book is available at the university bookstore or via online retailers.

**Jones, Adam.** *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 4e. New York: Routledge, 2024.

Additional readings will be available to you on Canvas or via Polk Library's online databases. *Please bring your textbook and readings to class with you each meeting.*

## BULLETIN COURSE DESCRIPTION

*"In this course, we examine the sad phenomenon of genocide from two distinct perspectives in our discipline: comparative politics and international relations. In the beginning of the course, we look inside the state to get an idea of the social, economic and political situations that make a state more susceptible to genocide and see if there are indicators common to most genocides. The second part of the course examines several genocides in detail. In the final section of the course, we attempt to figure out why preventing and punishing genocide and other crimes against humanity is so difficult, and evaluate the methods used for prosecution and punishment to date."*

## SPRING 24 COURSE DESCRIPTION

Would we know genocide when we see it? In the beginning of the course, we look inside the state to get an idea of the social, economic and political situations that make a state more susceptible to genocide and see if there are indicators common to most genocides. The second part of the course looks at several genocides in detail. In the final section of the course, we attempt to figure out why preventing and punishing genocide and other crimes against humanity is so difficult, and evaluate the methods used for prosecution and punishment to date.

I want to be clear that this course is NOT a reflection on what happened in these various genocides; it is not a tour of history's tragic events. Instead, it is an honest look at the nature of states and the individuals who run them in order to determine why this particular event seems to happen with some regularity. If we know what makes genocide more likely to happen, why can't we prevent it? If we know what it is when we see it, why can't we punish those who bring it about?

## PREREQUISITES

Although I am willing to sign interested students from any discipline into this course, students who have completed Political Science 101, 115 or 308 may find that those courses provide a useful foundation for concepts and issues addressed in this course. It is my strong preference that political science majors *complete their introductory courses* before enrolling in upper-division courses I teach.

## COURSE FORMAT

This is an upper-division course in Political Science, and as such it will be taught in a seminar style as much as is practical. This means that lecturing will be minimal and that student input is required for the course to be successful. As such, I expect that students will attend class each week prepared to discuss and critique.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to do the following:

- *Develop* an effective, respectful relationship with a group of colleagues working toward a common goal;
- *Explain* the many definitions of genocide and why such definitions are important for the detection, prosecution, and punishment of this crime;
- *Understand* the difference between genocide and other crimes against humanity;
- *Compare* different historical genocides as well as contemporary instances to search for patterns of violence;
- *Assess* the changing nature of sovereignty when looking at international responses to this crime; and
- *Integrate* accumulated knowledge into a coherent set of arguments about a current government's behavior.

The course readings and assignments have been chosen in pursuit of these outcomes.

## GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

I use a **93/90/87** grading scale in this course (which means that 93 is the cut-point for an A, 90 for an A-, 87 for a B+, etc.). Your grade will be determined as follows:

- *Participation (10%):* This grade includes answering and asking questions, showing up to office hours, and offering insight into group discussions. If you show up for class every session but never say a word, you can expect, at maximum, a C for this portion of your grade.
- *Discussion Primers (15%):* You'll have short prompts to respond to the readings for the day on Canvas. More details will be given in class.
- *Take-Home Midterm Essay (30%):* You will receive the essay prompt

one week before the paper is due, and your response must be 4-6 pages in length. It will require no additional reading but close analysis of what we have read in the first part of the course.

- **Genocide Trial (45%):** The defining project of this course is a mock trial in which students serve as prosecution and defense teams for an individual indicted on the charge of genocide. A panel of students will also serve as judges for the case. This is a project that requires an extensive time commitment and involves cooperative group work. Please note, however, that *this project replaces a research paper and final examination*; allocate your time and effort accordingly.

### FEELING SICK?

If you are feeling sick, please do not come to class. Please let me know if you will not be in class due to illness.

### LAPTOPS & HEADPHONES

It is my very strong preference (and research supports me on this) that you do not use laptops or tablets for taking notes in this class. Additionally, when you enter our classroom *please remove your earbuds/headphones* and engage with classmates instead of your phone or computer.

### ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

A college education is intended to develop your skills, knowledge, and confidence. Graded assignments are designed to work on these items. Thus, to gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence of a college-educated

person all graded work is to be your own. When you are directed to work alone, an assignment or test must be done by you, its primary ideas are to be your own, and any outside materials should be dealt with properly (quoted when using someone's words and cited when quoting or referencing them in any other way). When your instructor directs you to work in teams, the work is to be done by the team. More information can be found here: <https://uwosh.edu/politicalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/08/Academic-Honesty.pdf>

### GRIEVANCES

The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom or online experience, and we take your feedback very seriously. If you have concerns about anything related to this course, assignments, or teaching method, you are encouraged to first speak with your instructor directly. If you are not comfortable speaking with the instructor, you are invited to speak with the Chair of the Department of Political Science. Since I am currently the Chair, you are invited to speak with our Associate Chair, Dr. James Krueger. He can be reached at [kruegerj@uwosh.edu](mailto:kruegerj@uwosh.edu). Should he be unable to resolve your concerns, he will guide you to appropriate resources within the College of Letters and Science.

### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have or think you may have a learning difference or a disability—a mental health, medical, or physical

impairment—that would limit your access to learning or demonstrating your knowledge in this course, please contact the Dean of Students Office. If you already have an accommodation, please let me know in the first week of class. Note that this class *may* be recorded for accommodation purposes.

### STUDENT RIGHT TO KNOW ACT (1990)

Students are advised to see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Student Right to Know Act of 1990:

<https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/>

### POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJORS

If you are currently a Political Science major or if you think you might be one of our majors in the future, it is important that you save your graded coursework from this class. Seniors in our department are required to take Political Science 401, a seminar in which students' progress through the major is surveyed and a professional digital presentation of their work is created. This portfolio can then be used to showcase your work to graduate/professional schools or employers.

### CHANGES

I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time in order to accommodate the needs, interests, and pace of this particular group.

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## Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

February 6	<p>Never again?</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Narea, Nicole. "A Timeline of Israel and Palestine's Complicated History" (<a href="https://www.vox.com/world-politics/23921529/israel-palestine-timeline-gaza-hamas-war-conflict">https://www.vox.com/world-politics/23921529/israel-palestine-timeline-gaza-hamas-war-conflict</a>) <b>and also</b> Novo, Lisandra, "Five Questions and Answers about South Africa's Genocide Case Against Israel" (<a href="https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/five-questions-and-answers-about-south-africas-genocide-case-against-israel">https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/five-questions-and-answers-about-south-africas-genocide-case-against-israel</a>)</p>
February 8	<p>"Lemkin's Law"</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 1, pages 3-39 (stop at "What is Destroyed...")</p> <p><b>WATCH:</b> <i>Watchers of the Sky</i> (available on Canvas)</p>
February 13	<p>Intent   <i>Dolus Specialis</i></p> <p><b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 1, pages 39-65 <b>and also</b> Lewy, Guenter. 2007. "Can there be genocide without the intent to commit genocide?" <i>Journal of Genocide Research</i> 9: 661-674. (Canvas)</p>
February 15	<p>Is genocide just part of state-building?</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 2 (all)</p>
February 20	<p>Not genocide, but often mistaken for it</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Mann, Michael. "Explaining Ethnic Cleansing" and Semelin, Jacques, "Massacres"<sup>i</sup></p>
February 22	<p>Crimes Against Humanity (CAH)</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Schabas, William. "Crimes Against Humanity"</p>
February 27	<p>Explanations   Intergroup Animosity</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Staub, Ervin. "The Origins of Genocide and Mass Killing" and Stanton, Gregory. "The Eight Stages of Genocide"</p>
February 29	<p>Explanations   Psychological Approaches</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 10 (all, with particular focus on pgs. 461-480)</p>
March 5	<p>Explanations   Psychological Approaches</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Darley, John M. 2004. "Social Organization for the Production of Evil." Chapter 21 in Jost and Sidanius, eds., <i>Political Psychology: Key Readings</i>. New York: Psychology Press. (Canvas)</p>
March 7	<p>Explanations   Political Science Approaches</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 12 <b>and also</b> Valentino, Benjamin A. 2004. "The Strategic Logic of Mass Killing." Chapter 3 in <i>Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century</i>. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. (Canvas)</p>
March 12	<p>Explanations   Gendered Genocide</p> <p><b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 13 <b>and also</b> Sharlach, Lisa (2000), "Rape as Genocide: Bangladesh, the Former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda." <i>New Political Science</i> 22:1, 89-102. (Canvas)</p>

March 14	Case Studies   Indigenous Peoples and Armenia <b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapters 3 and 4. <b>Midterm Examination prompt released</b> (due 3/22, which is a Friday)
March 19	Case Studies   The Holocaust <b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 6 <b>WATCH:</b> <i>Night and Fog</i> (Canvas)
March 21	<b>Trial project assignment released and explained;</b> do not miss today!
March 22	👑 <b>Midterm Examination DUE at 11:59pm (submit on Canvas)</b>
March 26-28	<b>SPRING BREAK</b> (Please don't think about genocide this week.)
April 2	Case Studies   Former Yugoslavia <b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 8
April 4	Case Studies   Rwanda and The Great Lakes Region <b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 9
April 9	Picking Up the Pieces   Prosecution? <b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 15
April 11	Can We Prevent Genocide? <b>READ:</b> Jones, Chapter 16
April 16	Trial Group Meetings
April 18	Precedent from Genocide Proceedings <b>READ:</b> excerpts from key rulings in the ICTY and ICTR (TBA)
April 23	International Criminal Court (ICC) <b>WATCH:</b> <i>Prosecutor</i> (see Canvas) We will discuss this film in class and outline the history and procedures of the ICC
April 25	ICC vs. ICJ in International Law <b>READ:</b> excerpts from <i>South Africa v. Israel</i> and <i>Bosnia v. Serbia</i>
April 30	Trial Group Meetings/Meetings with Dr. Slagter Finalize arguments, briefs, etc. Be sure everyone knows the plan moving forward.
May 2	Trial: final preparations, questions, last team meetings, rules 👑 <b>Prosecution and Defense Papers DUE</b> ATTENDANCE REQUIRED
May 7	Trial: Day 1 👑 <b>Judges' Papers DUE</b> ATTENDANCE REQUIRED

May 9	Trial: Day 2 ATTENDANCE REQUIRED
May 14	Trial: Day 3 ATTENDANCE REQUIRED
May 16	Trial: Day 4 ATTENDANCE REQUIRED

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<sup>i</sup> Mann and Semelin excerpts, and many others in this syllabus, are taken from Samuel Totten and Paul R. Bartrop, eds., *The Genocide Studies Reader* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2009). When there is not a full citation given for an article, that means it is taken from this volume.