

**Special Topics: Comparative Genocide**

IGS 380

TR 12:15-1:30 pm, Knight Hall 210

*Dr. David P. Gushee*

*Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics*

Office: Godsey Science Center 209; cell: 404-587-1216

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 11 am- 12 pm

**Course Description**

Genocide is defined by the United Nations as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

This course examines the phenomenon of modern state-sponsored genocide in three quite different contexts: 1930s-1940s Nazi Germany, 1990s Rwanda, and 1990s Bosnia. The preconditions, conduct, impact, and implications of each genocide will be considered, and then compared with other cases. Having thoroughly examined modern genocide, the settler treatment of Native Americans in North America will be considered as to whether this too should be considered an example of genocide. The course will conclude with examination of the social psychology and perversion of human morality that contribute to genocide, as well as the available means to prevent genocide.

**Course Objectives**

To enhance factual understanding of the horrific phenomenon of genocide in the abstract (as a concept/definition/category) and in historical instances.

To gain overall historical knowledge sufficient to contextualize genocide in different situations, including understanding the interaction between broad historical factors and the character and decisions of individuals, governments, and other groups.

To understand the impact of these instances of genocide on the groups and nations involved, on the world community as a whole, and in historical memory.

To gain competence in understanding what can be called the morality of genocide as well as resistance to genocide, including the full spectrum of behavior that emerges in instances of genocide and what it says about human nature, morality, and behavior.

To understand current US and global efforts to cover genocide under international law, to identify pre-genocide warning signs, to prevent genocide from occurring, and to punish perpetrators.

To respond to genocide in an integral way, with head and heart, e.g., with intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual/theological dimensions.

### **Your Professor**

I have taught for over 25 years, with a dissertation focusing on the Holocaust. This course builds on many years of teaching about the Holocaust, including at Mercer. I live in Atlanta, and teach in both Atlanta and Macon, so my availability is limited. But I will normally carve out 11-12 for office hours/early lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays if you would like to get together. I will also be happily available after class if you want to talk.

### **Textbooks and Assigned Reading**

#### *Required Reading:*

Samantha Power. *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. Basic, 2002. 9780465061518. 610 pp.

Peter Fritzsche. *Life and Death in the Third Reich*. Harvard, 2008. 9780674034655. 368 pp.

Philip Gourevitch. *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*. Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1998. 9780312243357. 355 pp.

Peter Maass. *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War*. Vintage, 1997. 9780679763895. 305 pp.

Alex Alvarez. *Native America and the Question of Genocide*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 9781442256460. 195 pp.

James Waller. *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford, 2007. 9780195314564. 316 pp.

### **Method of Instruction**

This class will be taught in seminar style. The reading is heavy but will be divided up into reasonable size units; students will present on these units in rotation, leading into class discussion of each reading. All students will need to be well-prepared for class conversation and will need to participate consistently in class. Reading notes will be submitted via Canvas each day that class meets.

### **Course Requirements and Methods of Evaluation**

Your grade for the term will be determined as follows:

Reading notes.....	(20 x 10)...	200 points (40%)
Seminar papers.....	(3 x 50).....	150 points (30%)
Final Paper.....		100 points (20%)
Participation/Attendance.....		50 points (10%)

The official Mercer University grading scale will be used in the course:

### *Grading Scale*

90-100%	A 450-500
87-89%	B+ 435-449
80-86%	B 400-434
77-79%	C+ 385-399
70-76%	C 350-384
60-69%	D 300-349
<60%	F 000-299

Here is a description of each course requirement:

*Reading Notes.* Students are to prepare reading summaries for almost all daily reading assignments via Canvas. These are content summaries that conclude with personal reflections, questions, musings, etc. (This last part is what is most important to me.) Aim for 500-750 words per selection. You will prepare 20 of these, out of a total of 28 possible sessions. If you do not post any reading notes, I will count the assignment as excused, with no penalty, *up to a total of eight misses*. After that, missed reading notes will be counted as zeros. Alternatively, if you do more than the required number of notes, I will count the extra points as extra credit.

*Seminar papers.* Three papers per student. Students are to offer a tightly focused analysis of a portion of the assigned reading for the day. These 4-5 page (1000-1250 words) papers should include brisk summary of content, description of key discoveries, critical analysis and engagement, and at least two discussion questions which will become the basis for the launch of class discussion. (Student will read paper aloud up to a 10-minute time limit.) These papers will be submitted for grading via Canvas. See rubric there.

*Final Paper.* A 15-page (3750-word) final paper that digs deeper on one aspect of a particular genocide or pursues an issue of student interest related to genocide in general. Due by Canvas on December 10. This is intended to be a carefully researched term paper of upper-level undergraduate quality that is written over the course of half a semester or more. **Research Question due by October 6. Preliminary bibliography due by October 29.**

*Participation/Attendance.* In all Mercer classes, the expectation is that students will attend each day unless an emergency or university obligation prevents your attendance, with either you or a university official informing the professor if such occasions arise. Excellence in participation looks like active but non-dominative conversational involvement, reflecting close reading and attention to

the comments of other students, advancing the conversation constructively. Excellence in participation looks like missing no more than one class, unexcused.

## College of Liberal Arts Policies

### *Academic Honesty*

Mercer recognizes honesty and integrity as being necessary to the academic function of the University. Upon enrolling at Mercer each student automatically subscribes to the Honor Code. A violation of the [Mercer Honor Code](#) involves [cheating, plagiarism, academic negligence or dishonesty](#). Any suspected violations of the University Honor Code may be forwarded to the Honor Council.

### *Electronic Submission of Assignments*

Students bear sole responsibility for ensuring that papers or assignments submitted electronically to the instructor are received in a timely manner and in the electronic format(s) specified by the instructor. Students are therefore obliged to have their email client issue a receipt verifying that the document has been received. Students are also strongly advised to retain a copy of the dated submission on a separate reliable storage device. Faculty members are encouraged, but not required, to acknowledge receipt of the assignment.

### *Documented Disabilities*

Students requiring accommodations or modifications for a disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. The instructor will refer you to the ACCESS and Accommodation Office to document your disability, determine eligibility for accommodations under the ADA/Section 504 and to request a Faculty Accommodation Form. Disability accommodations or status will not be indicated on academic transcripts. In order to receive accommodations in a class, students with sensory, learning, psychological, physical or medical disabilities must provide their instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form to sign. Students must return the signed form to the ACCESS Director. **A new form must be requested each semester.** Students with a history of a disability, perceived as having a disability, or with a current disability who do not wish to use academic accommodations are also strongly encouraged to register with the ACCESS and Accommodation Office and request a Faculty Accommodation Form each semester. For further information, please contact Katie Johnson, Director and ADA/504 Coordinator, at 301-2778 or visit the ACCESS and Accommodation Office website at [www.mercer.edu/stu\\_support/swd.htm](http://www.mercer.edu/stu_support/swd.htm).

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Tentative Course Schedule, Fall 2020

8/18 Course Organization and Requirements  
Selection of Seminar Papers/Class Logistics

**INTRO: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND TO THE CONCEPT OF GENOCIDE**

8/20 Power, chs. 1-3. Paper: Gushee

8/25 Power, ch. 4-5. Papers:

**UNIT ONE: THE HOLOCAUST**

8/27 Fritzsche, introduction—ch. 1. Papers:

9/1 Fritzsche, ch. 2. Papers:

9/3 Fritzsche, ch. 3. Papers:

9/8 Fritzsche, ch. 4. Papers:

**UNIT TWO: BOSNIA (and KOSOVO)**

9/10 Power, ch. 9. Papers:

9/15 Maass, ch. 1-2. Papers:

9/17 Maass, ch. 3. Papers:

9/22 Maass, ch. 4. Papers:

9/24 Maass, ch. 5-6. Papers:

9/29 Maass, ch. 7, epilogue. Papers:

10/1 Fall Break

10/6 Power, ch. 11-12. Papers:

**UNIT THREE: RWANDA**

- 10/8 Power, ch. 10. Papers:
- 10/13 Gourevitch, chs. 1-4. Papers:
- 10/15 Gourevitch, chs. 5-8. Papers:
- 10/20 Gourevitch, chs. 9-11. Papers:
- 10/22 Gourevitch, chs. 12-15. Papers:
- 10/27 Gourevitch, chs. 16-18. Papers:
- 10/29 Gourevitch, chs. 19-22. Papers:

**UNIT FOUR: NATIVE AMERICA & GENOCIDE**

- 11/3 Alvarez, chs. 1-2. Papers:
- 11/5 Alvarez, chs. 3-4. Papers:
- 11/10 Alvarez, chs. 5-6. Papers:
- 11/12 Alvarez, chs. 7-8. Papers:

**UNIT FIVE: UNDERSTANDING AND PREVENTING GENOCIDE**

- 11/17 Waller, chs. 1-3.
- 11/19 Waller, chs. 4-6.
- 11/24 Class Cancelled
- 12/1 Waller, chs. 7-9.
- 12/3 Power, chs. 13-14.
- 12/10 Final Paper Due.