

Department of Psychology, Syracuse University

THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF GENOCIDE AND MASS KILLING

PSY 775 (M002), Seminar in Social Psychology, Spring, 2014
Monday, 2:15 –5:05, Huntington Hall, 530C (The Allport Room)

Professor: Leonard S. Newman

Office: 515 Huntington Hall

Phone: 443-4633

Email: lsnewman@syr.edu

Office hours: Monday 10:00-12:00, and by appointment

Course Overview and Objectives

The last century was called “Age of Genocide” by some observers. Not surprisingly, then, organized mass murder has been the subject of quite a bit of scholarly inquiry. The prominence of the topic is due in part to the fact that mass killing is never long absent from the headlines (e.g., the killings in Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s and the ongoing tragedies in the Congo and in Darfur). In addition, over the last decade or two, a number of books on the topic (e.g., Suzanne Power’s *A Problem from Hell*, Daniel Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, Jan Gross’s *Neighbors*, Iris Chang’s *The Rape of the Nanking*, and Phillip Gourevitch’s *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*) have received a great deal of media attention and inspired quite a bit of public debate. Curiously, though, social psychologists have not played a particularly prominent role in this debate.

The silence of social psychologists is ironic, because as discussed by Ned Jones in his classic 1985 *Handbook of Social Psychology* chapter on the history of the field, for many years the research agenda of social psychologists was profoundly influenced by the mass killings of Jews and other groups during World War II. Many classic programs of research (e.g., Stanley Milgram’s obedience studies, Adorno et al.’s work on the authoritarian personality) were launched in order to shed light on the behavior of the perpetrators of the Holocaust. In recent decades, though, why people might become perpetrators of genocide has not been so obviously an important issue for social psychologists. That is unfortunate, because among social scientists, social psychologists would seem to be especially well-positioned to shed light on the processes that lead individuals and groups to become mass murderers. Typical definitions of social psychology are usually very similar to the one offered by Brehm and Kassin (1996, p. 6), who stated that social psychology is “the scientific study of the way individuals think, feel, desire, and act in social situations”. One would hope, then, that social psychological principles could be applied to the thoughts, feelings, desires and actions of people in social situations involving the systematic murder of other human beings.

The premise of this class is that social psychologists do in fact have a great deal to offer to people seeking a way to make sense of the behavior of people who plan, participate in, or passively observe genocide. Many of the assigned readings will be from the social psychological literature, and very often, they will *not* directly concern genocide. By the end of the semester,

though, it is hoped that class members will have an appreciation for how the psychological processes covered in those readings might play a role in the horror and evil of genocide.

Course Requirements and Grading

As in all of your graduate classes and seminars, the most basic course requirement is attendance and participation (20% of the final grade). To contribute to the discussion in a meaningful way, you will need to do the assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned. Readings will be made available (at least a week in advance) on-line via the class's Blackboard site. Twice during the semester, each student in the class will prepare a 10-minute introduction to one of the readings for the class.

Students will be required to write two papers. One of these will be a paper of approximately 10 pages in length that describes an empirical study that could be conducted to address an issue covered in the course (35% of the final grade). The topic must be selected and approved by the instructor by the end of Week 11 of the semester (April 4) and it is due on the last day of the Spring 2014 semester (Tuesday, April 29). In addition, for the last class meeting, each student will prepare a 15-20 minute long class presentation on his or her topic.

As noted above, by the end of the semester students should have developed an appreciation for how social-psychological processes can be used to explain the planning, initiation, and maintenance of genocide. Another goal of this course is to enhance your ability to share that appreciation with non-psychologists. Therefore, as a second writing assignment, students will write 750-word (newspaper editorial length) essays focusing on one of the social-psychological processes or variables covered in the course. These essays should make the case that these concepts or phenomena shed light on the causes of genocide, and they should be written with intelligent laypeople as the intended audience. These papers are due on April 14.

Summary of grading:

1. Quantity and quality of class participation	20%
2. Paper introductions	10%
3. Brief "Editorial"	25%
4. Presentation of final paper	10%
5. Final paper	35%
	<hr/>
	100%

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>, located at 804 University Avenue, Room 309, or call 315-443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities "Accommodation Authorization Letters," as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs although I cannot arrange for disability-related accommodations.

Syracuse University's religious observances policy, found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

Week 1 (January 13): Introduction

Moshman, D. (2005). Genocidal hatred: Now you see it, now you don't. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *The psychology of hate* (pp. 185-209). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

No class on January 20, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Week 3 (January 27): Bad people, bad cultures?

Waller, J. (2002). *Becoming Evil* (Chapter 3, pp. 55-87). New York: Oxford University Press.

Newman, L. S. (2007). Beyond situationism: The social psychology of genocide and mass killing. In H. Kramer (Ed.), *NS-Täter aus interdisziplinärer Perspektive*. München, Germany: Meidenbauer

Chang, I. (1997). *The rape of Nanking: The forgotten holocaust of World War II* (Chapter 1, pp. 19-34). New York: Basic Books.

Browning, C. R. (1998). Ordinary men or ordinary Germans. In R. R. Shandley (Ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate* (pp. 55-73). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Oyserman, D., & Lauffer, A. (2002). Examining the implications of cultural frames on social movements and group action. In L. S. Newman & R. Erber (Eds.), *Understanding Genocide: The social psychology of the Holocaust* (pp. 162-187). New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 4 (February 3): Triggers of Genocide and the Broader Context

Balakian, P. (2003). *The burning Tigris: The Armenian genocide and America's response*. (Chapter 13, "The Balkan Wars and World War I: The road to genocide," pp. 159-173). New York: Harper Collins.

Baumeister, R. F. (2002). The Holocaust and the four roots of evil. In L. S. Newman & R. Erber (Eds.), *Understanding Genocide: The social psychology of the Holocaust* (pp. 241-258). New York: Oxford University Press.

Kruglanski, A. W., Pierro, A., Manetti, L., & De Grada, E. (2006). Groups as epistemic providers: Need for closure and the unfolding of group-centrism *Psychological Review*, 113, 84-100.

Bergen, D. L. (2003). *War & Genocide: A concise history of the Holocaust* (Chapter 1, pp. 1-28). Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield.

Week 5 (February 10): Who are the targets of Genocide?

Glick, P. (2002). Sacrificial lambs dressed in wolves' clothing: Envious prejudice, ideology, and the scapegoating of Jews. In L. S. Newman & R. Erber (Eds.), *Understanding Genocide: The social psychology of the Holocaust* (pp. 113-142). New York: Oxford University Press.

Smith, R. H. (2013). *The Joy of Pain: Schadenfreude and the Dark Side of Human Nature* (Introduction and Chapter 10). New York: Oxford University Press.

Durante, F., Volpato, C., & Fiske, S. (2010). Using the stereotype content model to examine group depictions in fascism: An archival approach. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 465-483.

Bilewicz, M., & Vollhardt, J. R. (2012). Evil transformations: Psychological processes underlying genocide and mass killing. In A. Golec De Zavala & A. Cichocka (Eds.), *Social psychology of social problems. The intergroup context* (pp. 280-307). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Week 6 (February 17): Justification, dissonance and the continuum of destructiveness

Tavris, C. & Aronson, E. (2007). *Mistakes were made (But not by me)*. (Chapter 1). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Martens, A., Kosloff, S., Greenberg, J., Landau, M. J., & Schmader, T. (2007). Killing begets killing: Evidence from a bug-killing paradigm that initial killing fuels subsequent killing. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 1251-1264.

Hatzfield, J. (2003). *Machete Season* (pp. 21-27, 47-51). New York: Picador.

Hinton, A. L. (1996, December). Agents of Death: Explaining the Cambodian Genocide in Terms of Psychosocial Dissonance. *American Anthropologist, New Series*, 98, 818-831

Week 7 (February 24): Justification, dissonance and the continuum of destructiveness II

Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 193-209.

Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Escaping the self* (Chapter 4). New York: Basic Books.

Imhoff, R., Wohl, M. A., & Erb, H. (2013). When the past is far from dead: How ongoing consequences of genocides committed by the ingroup impact collective guilt. *Journal of Social Issues*, 69(1), 74-91.

Newman, L. S. (2002). What is a “social-psychological” account of perpetrator behavior? The person versus the situation in Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*. In L. S. Newman & R. Erber (Eds.), *Understanding Genocide: The social psychology of the Holocaust* (pp. 43-67). New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 8 (March 3): Dehumanization/humanization

Smith, D. L. (2007). *The most dangerous animal: Human nature and the origins of war* (Chapter 10). New York: St. Martin’s Press.

Haslam, N., Kashima, Y., Loughnan, S., Shi, J., & Suitner, C. (2008). Subhuman, inhuman, and superhuman: Contrasting humans with nonhumans in three cultures. *Social Cognition*, 26, 248-258.

Castano, E., & Giner-Sorolla, R. (2006). Not quite human: Infrahumanization in response to collective responsibility for intergroup killing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 804-818.

Levine, M., Prosser, A., Evans, D., & Reicher, S. (2005). Identity and Emergency Intervention: How Social Group Membership and Inclusiveness of Group Boundaries Shape Helping Behavior. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31, 443-453.

SPRING BREAK: 3/10

Week 9 (March 17): What about obedience?

Blass, T. (2002). Perpetrator behavior as destructive obedience: An evaluation of Stanley Milgram's perspective, the most influential social-psychological approach to the holocaust. In L. S. Newman & R. Erber (Eds.), *Understanding Genocide: The social psychology of the Holocaust* (pp. 11-42). New York: Oxford University Press.

Hatzfield, J. (2003). *Machete Season* (pp. 10-16, 71-76). New York: Picador.

Browning, C. R. (1992). *Ordinary men: Reserve police battalion 101 and the final solution in Poland* (Chapters 1 & 18, pp. 1-2, 159-189). New York: Harper Collins.

Mandel, D. R. (1998). The obedience alibi: Milgram's account of the Holocaust reconsidered. *Analyse & Kritik*, 20, 74-94.

Week 10 (March 24): Conformity, pluralistic ignorance, and the role of bystanders

Miller, D. T., & Prentice, D. A. (1994). Collective errors and errors about the collective. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 541-550.

Mandler, G. (2002). Psychologists and the National Socialist access to power. *History of Psychology*, 5, 190-200.

Power, S. (2003). *"A problem from hell": American and the age of genocide* (preface. pp. xi-xxi). New York: Harper Collins.

Slovic, P. (2007). "If I look at the mass I will never act": Psychic numbing and genocide. *Judgment and Decision Making*, 2, 79-95.

Week 11 (March 31): Heroic helpers and resisters—the continuum of benevolence?

Chang, I. (1997). *The rape of Nanking: The forgotten holocaust of World War II* (Chapter 5, pp. 105-139). New York: Basic Books.

Rochat, F., & Modigliani, A. (2000). Captain Paul Grueninger: The chief of police who saved Jewish refugees by refusing to do his duty. In T. Blass (Ed.), *Obedience to authority: Current perspectives on the Milgram paradigm* (pp. 91-110). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Vollhardt, J. R., & Staub, E. (2011). Inclusive altruism born of suffering: The relationship between adversity and prosocial attitudes and behavior toward disadvantaged outgroups. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 81, 307-315.

Film, "Hotel Rwanda"

Week 12 (April 7): Social Psychology of Genocide Research: Denial, Deceit, and Self-deception

Baumeister, R. F., & Newman, L. S. (1994). Self-regulation of cognitive inference and decision processes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 3-19.

Davenport, C., & Stam, A. C. (2009, November/December). What really happened in Rwanda? *Miller-McCune*, pp. 61-69.

Shermer, M. (1997). *Why people believe weird things* (Chapters 12-13, pp. 175-210). New York, W. H. Freeman & Company.

Lappin, E. (1999, Summer). The man with two heads. *Granta*, 66, pp. 9-65.

Week 13 (April 14): Film, "The Architecture of Doom"

Week 14 (April 21): Do social psychological explanations condone perpetrators?

Rosenbaum, R. (1995, May 1). Explaining Hitler. *The New Yorker*, pp. 50-73.

Miller, A.G., Gordon, A. K., & Buddie, A. M. (1999). Accounting for evil and cruelty: Is to explain to condone? *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 254-268.

Newman, L. S., & Bakina, D. A. (2009). Do people resist social-psychological perspectives on wrongdoing? Reactions to dispositional, situational, and interactionist explanations. *Social Influence*, 4, 256-273.

Tang, Y., & Newman, L. S. (In press). How people react to social psychological accounts of wrongdoing: The moderating effects of culture. *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology*.

Week 15 (April 28): Presentations, discussions of final papers

