

## International History

Academic year 2019-2020

## Violence, History and Memory in Twentieth-Century Africa

### HI062 - Spring - 6 ECTS

Wednesday 08h15 - 10h00

### Course Description

This course offers historical, theoretical and empirical perspectives on the impact of political violence in the modern history of Africa. Opening with debates over theories of violence and memory, the course then proceeds through a series of case studies. These include the violence of colonisation and decolonisation, postcolonial secession conflicts, contrasting forms of genocide, political oppression, liberation struggles and civil war. In each case, we may consider the causes and means of violence, issues of gender, youth, religion, politics or ethnicity, and the transnational dynamics of conflict. Throughout, questions of culpability, ethics and moralities will be tackled in relation to the various approaches to 'living together again', dominated by the pressures of memory, silence, oblivion and, in some cases, justice.

### > PROFESSOR

[Aidan Russell](#)

[Office hours](#)

### > ASSISTANT

[Atiya Hussain](#)

[Office hours](#)

## Syllabus

**\*\*\*This is a full 6 ECTS course that will run 14 sessions in the first half of the semester and conclude by the Easter Break. Due to the intensity of the teaching schedule the reading requirements are lower than normal, but attendance at all sessions is required. Please note the dates of the sessions listed below.\*\*\***

The course is conducted in seminar format, with two or more articles or chapters for compulsory class reading to be discussed for each session.

Following the introductory class, the opening three sessions on theoretical background the seminars will be structured by a guided discussion led by the professor on the principal themes of violence, memory and justice. For all following seminars, we consider one particular case of political violence, in any of its dimensions. Students are encouraged to apply the theories discussed in the first weeks to each of these cases according to their interest.

Once during the course, each student will act as lead discussant for one class text. They will post a short evaluation of the text on Moodle by 17:00 the day before the relevant class, noting topics and questions for discussion. Drawing connections between the class texts, and applying elements of theory to historical cases, are particularly encouraged. All students are required to read and think about their colleagues' Moodle notes before the class, and come prepared to discuss them. After an introduction to the case from the professor, each discussant will have a few minutes to present their perspective on their text informally, and begin the class discussion on their terms.

Together, the Moodle post, discussant duties, and general class participation (attendance, reading, contribution to debates in class and on Moodle) will be assessed as 25% of the final grade.

Finally, there will be two assessed pieces of written work. The first, a short paper of 1,500 words, should be a critical assessment of one author or theoretical perspective from the first three weeks on violence, memory and justice. It will be submitted by midnight on Sunday 22 March. The second will be a long paper of up to 5,000 words, exploring in detail any question or historical case from the course. Suggested questions will be posted for each session, along with further reading lists, at the start of the semester. Chosen topics must be confirmed with the professor by Sunday 5 April, at which stage an outline, summary or partial draft may be submitted for feedback. Final submission will be midnight on Friday 1 May.

Important dates:

- Discussant notes: 17:00 the day before the relevant class.
- Short paper submission: Sunday 22 March.
- Long paper topic confirmed: Sunday 5 April.
- Long paper submission: Friday 1 May.

Overall assessment:

- Term paper: 50%
- Short paper: 25%
- Class participation (including discussant duties): 25%

**A full reading list, further bibliography and sample essay questions will be distributed in the first class and available on Moodle. For background reading, see the following key texts:**

Amadiume, Ifi and Abdullahi An-Na'im, eds. (2000), *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice* London: Zed Books.

Baaz, Maria Eriksson and Maria Stern, (2013) *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War?: Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond* London: Zed Books

Ben-Ze'ev, Efrat, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter, eds., (2010) *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press

Cramer, Christopher (2006) *Civil War is Not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries*. London: Hurst

Diawara, Mamadou, Bernard C. Lategan, and Jörn Rüsen (2010) *Historical Memory in Africa: Dealing With the Past, Reaching for the Future in an Intercultural Context*. Berghahn Books.

Fanon, Frantz (1963), *The Wretched of the Earth*. Original French: (1961) *Les damnés de la terre*.

Kalyvas, S. N. (2006), *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: CUP

LaCapra, Dominick (2014), *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. JHU Press.

Mbembe, Achille, *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001.

Minow, Martha (1998), *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness : Facing History After Genocide and Mass Violence*. Boston: Beacon Press

Olick, Jeffrey K., Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy, eds. (2011), *The Collective Memory Reader*, OUP

Reid, Richard (2012), *Warfare in African History*, Cambridge: CUP

Reno, Will (2012), *Warfare in Independent Africa*, Cambridge: CUP

Soyinka, Wole (1998), *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness*. Oxford University Press.

Teitel, Ruti G. (2001), *Transitional Justice*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press

Tutu, Desmond (1999), *No Future without Forgiveness*, London: Rider

Werbner, Richard, ed., (1998), *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*, London: Zed Books.

## ***Theories and Concepts***

### **1. Introduction** (8:15, Wednesday 19 February)

In the first week we will review the course content and requirements, while taking the time to think about what it means to study the history of violence. How does violence differ from conflict? What are the ethical and methodological challenges of taking such a lens on history? How can or should we write about the traumatic experiences of others? And what place does history take between justice and memory?

### **2. Theories of Violence** (8:15, Wednesday 26 February)

The first substantive session will be a structured discussion around an overview talk, outlining the various theories that have been raised to answer one of the fundamental questions of the course: how can we explain violence in Africa? The models of economists, political scientists, anthropologists and philosophers will be sketched, providing students with a framework of the competing interpretations that we will test in the subsequent case studies.

### **3. Memory and Memorialisation** (8:15, Wednesday 4 March)

The theoretical and conceptual discussion continues with an exploration of one of the most significant post-conflict issues, the question of memory. Violence has a profound effect on private and public memory, and therefore on the functioning of the surviving society for many years after the experience of violence. How is 'collective memory' formed, and how does it differ or interact with other forms of memory? What role can historians play in societies still dominated by these intricate contests of memory, and what dangers must they avoid? Sometimes, must a society forget its past if it is to escape from it? Or does this simply doom the community to repeat its own violent destruction?

### **4. Truth, Justice, Reconciliation?** (8:15, Wednesday 11 March)

The final preparatory discussion looks at the various processes that have been instituted as a means of putting an end to violence through the establishment of truth and justice. From historical preferences for amnesty or inactivity, to a panoply of national and international tribunals, supposedly 'traditional' courts, and institutionalized truth commissions, the field of 'transitional justice' has expanded considerably in recent years. In its wake have come increasing demands for historical justice, for claims that go beyond a self-conscious moment of 'transition'. But are the means and goals of such processes necessarily compatible, feasible or even desirable? Can they ever be anything other than 'victor's justice'? And how can justice be done for victims of crimes committed decades, or even centuries, in the past?

## ***Cases and Contexts***

### **5. Conquest, Colonisation and Consequence: German Southwest Africa, 1904-1908** (8:15, THURSDAY 12 March)

Following the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885, European powers moved to make good their claims to rule various parts of Africa, competing amongst each other and inserting themselves in to ongoing social and political turmoil across the continent. Between 1904 and 1908, the area that would become Namibia experienced the first genocide of the twentieth century. The consequences of colonial expansion, pestilence and social crisis sparked an uprising against German rule, only to be crushed by a genocidal strategy of warfare that exterminated tens of thousands of Herero and Nama people. In the deployment of concentration camps and racial supremacist ideology, the Namibian trauma

would become central to the definition of genocide after the Second World War, and explicitly linked by some to the development of Nazi ideology in Germany. But among the survivors, new social and cultural practices developed in the wake of genocide, transforming society in unexpected ways. A century later, their descendants now test the international legal regime by bringing claims for reparation against Germany in a US court of law.

**6. Liberation War and Civil War: Kenya, 1952-1960 (8:15, Wednesday 18 March)**

The 'Mau Mau' war was a political struggle against the colonial order, a civil war among the Kikuyu ethnic group, and a battle for the supremacy of White Kenya, among many other things. The Mau Mau rebels were ultimately defeated, yet independence was achieved shortly afterwards, and fifty years later survivors of colonial internment camps prosecuted the British government for torture in the High Court in London. Among the questions to explore are the position of loyalist Kikuyu, the facets of race, ethnicity and ideology, the role and subversion of the British legal system in the colony, the place of the supernatural in the Mau Mau movement and in its depiction within the settler community, the shift from a forest war to mass internment, the pressure to forget in Britain and in Kenya, and the morality of justice half a century after the fact.

**7. Revolutionary War, Torture and Amnesia: Algeria, 1954-1962 (8:15, Thursday 19 March)**

Among the most famous and undoubtedly the most intimate of decolonization conflicts, Algeria's war of independence was doubly significant for the role it has played as a model for ideological liberation, insurgent warfare and counterinsurgency ever since. It brings to light issues of rural guerilla war and urban terror, torture as a strategy of counterinsurgency, propaganda and nationalism, the role of Muslims who fought for France, and the entangled histories of subsequent 'amnesia' in France and enforced memory in Algeria, each of which have only begun to change in the last two decades.

**8. Crises of the Postcolonial State: Nigeria, 1967-1970 (8:15, Wednesday 25 March)**

Soon after independence and in the context of the global Cold War, several of the new nations in Africa experienced dramatic crises. In Nigeria, a military coup and massacres of Igbo people elsewhere in the country prompted the Igbo-dominated eastern region to create its own nation, Biafra. The bloody war of reintegration that followed incorporated a deep yet cautious involvement from foreign powers, and also saw the beginning of a new dynamic of humanitarian intervention that would come to dominate many internal conflicts in Africa in the following decades. Exploring issues of ethnicity, religion, land and resources, this case brings to light questions of identity and intimate violence, famine as a weapon of war, the nature of genocide and its use in propaganda, how humanitarian relief can fuel and prolong conflict, what happens when public history is silent on a trauma of such colossal proportions, and the power of literature for the expression of memory.

**9. Military Rule and Political Terror: Burundi, 1972 (8:15, Thursday 26 March)**

Military coups proliferated across Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, and the authoritarian governments they formed frequently imposed their power with extreme violence against their political enemies. Tiny Burundi, largely forgotten and ignored by the rest of the world, nevertheless experienced perhaps the first organized genocide in postcolonial African history, six years after a bloodless coup deposed the ancient monarchy. The Tutsi-dominated army responded to a localized Hutu rebellion with a nationwide system of repression that abducted and murdered Hutu who could read or had any marginal mark of exceptionality. But can violence that is 'selective' in this manner still be called genocide? And what are we to make of the fact that this catastrophe, silenced for forty years in public discourse, is now part of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that covers all crimes in the country

back to 1885?

10. **Ideological Terror and Conventional Justice:** Ethiopia, 1976-1977 (8:15, Wednesday 1 April)

Ethiopia presents a significant example of extraordinary political terror in a state that had largely avoided formal colonization, as the revolutionary military government of the Derg engaged in brutal urban struggles with its similarly revolutionary civilian rivals. The case questions the definition of genocide, forces us to explore the 'theatricality' of violence, the significance of political ideology, and the remarkable example of the use of 'conventional' trials for the exaction of transitional justice some twenty years later.

11. **The Dark Side of Democracy:** South Africa, 1984-1994 (8:15, Thursday 2 April)

The 1990s brought a wave of multi-party democracy across Africa, a time of hope and fear that was epitomized by the confluence in 1994 of triumphant elections in South Africa and genocide in Rwanda. This session examines the final years of apartheid and the complex violence during the political campaign that led up to the celebrated peaceful elections. From the declaration of successive states of emergency from 1985, when state violence and armed resistance intensified, to the intricate factional violence of the liberalized political contest in the early 1990s, along with the contingent phenomena of urban gangs and street crime, the experience of South Africa provides a more disparate case study than others under consideration, but one that is ultimately essential for the understanding of contemporary issues in South Africa and elsewhere. Questions to consider include the role of masculinity, youth and gender in political and intimate violence, the impact of structural violence, apartheid and the 'warrior tradition', the relationship of violence to democratic liberation, and the function of the most remarkable process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was later instituted to provide a space of forgiveness and restoration, memorialising a particular incarnation of national history and identity in the process.

12. **Genocide, Justice and Reconciliation:** Rwanda 1994 (8:15, Wednesday 8 April)

Often mistakenly treated as the archetype of violence in Africa, deeply entangled with two of our compulsory cases in Burundi and Congo, and presenting one of the most complex, controversial and extensive attempts at transitional justice and reconciliation in the world, Rwanda's 1994 genocide pushes to the fore problems of causation, historical narratives of citizenship and exclusion, the divisions of democracy, the roles of hate media, the Catholic Church and political authority in intimate violence, and post-violence issues of authoritarianism and memorialization, national, international and 'traditional' justice processes, and the fundamental issue of 'living together again'.

13. **Internationalisation of War and Justice:** Congo, 1996-2005 (8:15, Thursday 9 April)

For our final case, we take the confluence of myriad conflicts in the Congo Wars as a springboard for testing the temporal and spatial limits of our questions. Recent memories of foreign intervention, the proliferation of rebel and communal defence forces, violent displacement, exclusionary struggles over citizenship and belonging, the criminal exploitation of natural resources, gendered violence and catastrophic state collapse combine with over a century of images, echoes and precedent, not to mention ongoing violence continuing to today. Spatially, the form and nature of the violence experienced in the Congolese territory make painfully clear the limitations of studying any such conflict within national boundaries alone, while the country and its citizens have been the central stakes in the unstable search for a new form of international justice. The continental war fought largely on the territory of Congo provides one of the most exemplary and complex cases to be explored in the course, bringing us back to think about our fundamental questions on the grandest of scales.

14. The final session takes the form of extended office hours on Thursday 9 April, when students may come to discuss their papers with the professor as they wish.