HIST 608
Colloquium: Genocide in World History
Fall 2012

Professor Jeff Ostler
383 McKenzie Hall
Office Hours:
    Mon., 10:30-noon
    Tues., 11:00-12:30
    and by appointment
Phone: 6-1265
Email: jostler@uoregon.edu

About the colloquium:
A conversation (colloquium) on the topic of genocide in world history provides an opportunity to explore several issues.

The most obvious of these is the history of a variety of phenomena (ranging from massive/total violence to forced removal to cultural destruction) that scholars have discussed under the rubric of genocide (and related terms like ethnic cleansing). These issues have always been important for historians, though whether frameworks created by the invention of the term genocide and the legal and moral issues surrounding it assist or hinder historians’ understandings is an open question.

Since works on genocide seek to explain it as a general phenomenon or to explain one or more historical cases, they necessarily draw on/create frameworks to do so. Because of this, the colloquium will allow us to explore those frameworks, not just as they relate to genocide but on their own terms. Thus, we will consider issues related to nationalism, racism, revolution, ideology, modernity, democracy, totalitarianism, colonialism, identity, and group psychology (not an exhaustive list).

The colloquium also provides an opportunity to think critically about the emergence of genocide studies, a relatively new interdisciplinary field with an international presence and influence. How did this field emerge? How have scholars writing about genocide defined the term, and what has been involved in debates over these definitions? What are the concerns and assumptions of genocide studies? How has the field changed over time? What kinds of cases has the field considered and what kind has it omitted? What are the strengths and weaknesses of genocide studies? How have various disciplinary perspectives (including, of course, history) influenced the field?

Finally, depending on students’ inclinations, there will be some room for consideration of the contemporary politics of the history of genocide and other historical “wrongs.” Why, for example, has the question of genocide in Australian history become a matter for national debate, whereas the question of genocide in U.S. history has not? Or, to take another example, what are the politics surrounding the question of Turkey’s genocide of Armenians both within Turkey and outside (i.e., France and the United States)? Why do certain historical wrongs (involving claims of genocide, but other claims as well) become subject to claims for reparations?
Readings:

Readings are listed below. Sufficient copies of books should be available through Summit, though this will require advance planning. All other readings (articles, book chapters, reports, drafts of papers, etc.) will be made available through Blackboard.

Assignments:

1. Students will be responsible for opening the discussion for sessions 2 through 8. Each student will required to do this once (in most cases, two students will be assigned to a session). Students responsible for a particular session will spend 10-15 minutes presenting issues for discussion at the beginning of the session and then initiate a conversation.

2. Each student will give a brief oral presentation in sessions 9 and 10.

3. Six short papers (1-2 pages), noted on the schedule, due at the beginning of the session.

4. A long paper (20-25 pages) addressing either specific issues or cases relating to genocide. Papers could take up issues and cases that receive significant attention in the assigned readings or issues and cases that are less prominent or unaddressed in the assigned readings. This paper will be due on Wed., Dec. 5, at 5 p.m.

Grading:

I will make a holistic evaluation of your work in the seminar, weighted more to the long paper than any other assignment, but taking into account the quality of your contribution to the conversations and the short written assignments. The only assignment I will formally grade will be the long paper.

Schedule:

Week 1 (9/26): United States and the Problem of Genocide

Reading:
Samantha Power, “A Problem from Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide (2002)

Week 2 (10/3): Definitions

Readings:
Raphaël Lemkin, “Genocide,” Chapter 9 of Axis Rule in Occupied Europe (1944), pp. 79-95


**Writing:**

One-page reaction to one of the articles

**Week 3 (10/10): Nationalism**

**Reading:**


**Writing:**

Choose an article or book from notes to chapter 1, “Race and Nation,” of Weitz’s book. One-page summary of how Weitz uses the book or article.

**Week 4 (10/17): Democracy**

**Reading:**


**Writing:**

One-page reaction to the argument Mann makes for one of his cases.
Week 5 (10/24): Other Frameworks

Readings (choose one):

Writing:
  Two-page book review

Week 6 (10/31): Agriculture

Reading:

  All read introduction, chapter 1, introductory note to parts 2 and 3, and epilogue carefully. All read most other chapters somewhere between a skim and carefully. All chose one chapter for careful focus and evaluation of argument.

Writing:
  One-page abstract of the chosen chapter

Week 7 (11/7): Colonialism and Settler Colonialism

Readings:


Henry Reynolds, “Genocide in Tasmania?” in *Genocide and Settler Society*, pp. 127-149


Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, “Frontier Conflict,” Chapter 8 of *The History Wars* (2003), pp. 142-170, 269-275


Writing:

One-page identification of an issue and reaction to it

Week 8 (11/14): Americas


Victoria Sanford, “¡Si Hubo Genocidio en Guatemala!: Yes! There Was Genocide in Guatemala,” in *Historiography of Genocide*, pp. 543-576

Jeffrey Ostler, research proposal for “The Destruction and Survival of American Indian Communities, 1754-1900”

Jeffrey Ostler, draft paper on American Indians’ consciousness of genocide, 1750s-1810s

Writing:
One-page identification of an issue in the readings and a reaction to it

Week 9 (11/21 or another date): Other Issues

All choose an issue to be investigated and read/skim relevant articles and/or books. The issue could be one already explored in some depth, mentioned but not discussed much, or not at all mentioned. Possibilities: the proliferation of “cides”; gender and genocide; “cultural genocide”; is the world getting less violent?; genocide and memory; reparations; national recognition and non-recognition of genocide; genocide and a particular academic discipline (e.g., sociology, political science, etc.)

Week 10 (11/28): Further Comparisons and Cases

Same as above, except for cases of genocide/possible genocide.

Long Paper Due, 12/5, 5 p.m.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


