CIVILIANS IN THE PATH OF WAR

If— as Carl von Clausewitz famously put it—war is “a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means,” then the targeting and killing of civilians in war is often “a continuation of war by other means.” Noncombatants historically have comprised half of all war deaths, a statistic which shows few signs of changing in civilians’ favor. Indeed, more civilians were killed in twentieth century armed conflicts than in any previous century, and noncombatants have been the primary targets and suffered the vast majority of the deaths in several recent conflicts, such as the civil war in Darfur. What explains this carnage? Why do states and rebel groups put civilians in the cross-hairs in some wars but not others? What norms and laws protect civilians from harm, and why do they seem to be observed so rarely? What are some of the major cases of violence against civilians in the last one hundred years and why did they occur? Does targeting civilians help belligerents achieve their political or military goals? What leads people to participate in violence against noncombatants?

This course aims to answer some of these questions by examining the normative, ethical, and legal prohibitions against harming noncombatants and how they arose; the major social science theories for explaining the occurrence and effectiveness of large-scale violence against civilians in wartime; and a close study of several prominent cases of wartime victimization of noncombatants. The course begins by seeking a definition of civilians/noncombatants; it then proceeds to examine the origins of the principle of noncombatant immunity and how it eventually became codified as an international norm and the subject of increasingly specific international law. The second section of the course turns to theories of large-scale violence against noncombatants, examining a number of independent variables that have been used to explain why states or rebel groups target civilians: regime type, barbaric images of the enemy as sub-human or outside of the boundaries of civilization, military culture, parochial organizational interests in the military, cost-aversion and casualty-sensitivity, desperation to achieve victory, territorial annexation, and the dynamics of guerrilla warfare. After a brief section on whether civilian victimization is effective for achieving belligerents’ political/military goals, the course analyzes several cases of civilian victimization in detail in order to ascertain which factors led to the targeting of noncombatants and whether targeting civilians helped or hindered the perpetrators’ war effort. Finally, the class concludes by examining theories of individual participation in mass killing and how these theories apply to cases of massacre. Although civilian victimization is an ancient as well as a modern practice, most of the cases examined are from the last one hundred years, spanning colonial/imperial wars, the two World Wars, wars of decolonization, as well as recent counterinsurgency campaigns and ethnic killings.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE COMPUTATION

The course is organized into two one-hour and fifteen minute lecture/discussion periods each week. Grades will be based on the following set of criteria:

- **Peer Critique Memo** (5%): 3-5 page memo critiquing a rough draft of another student’s research paper, due in class on Thursday, April 26.

- **Attendance/Participation** (10%): Students are expected to attend all class meetings, do all of the required reading before each session, and be able to participate in discussion.

- **Midterm Examination** (20%): Tuesday, February 28. In-class, closed-book essay exam covering the first two sections of the course.
• **Final Examination** (25%): Tuesday, May 8, 10.20AM – 12.20PM. Cumulative, closed-book final exam, consisting of identifications and essays, emphasizing the last three sections of the course.

• **Research Paper** (40%): 20 pages, HARD COPY due at the instructor’s office by 5.00PM on Friday, May 4. This is a *Writing in the Disciplines* (WID) course. See below for more details.

**BOOKS**

The following books have been ordered and are available at the George Washington University Bookstore in the Marvin Center. They are also on reserve at Gelman Library.


**ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS**

All of the journal articles listed in the required reading below are available online in databases accessible through the George Washington University Library. From the library website (http://www.library.gwu.edu/), search “E-Journals” for the desired title and navigate to the correct volume and issue. If you are accessing the library website from off campus, you will need to enter your last name and your GWID to obtain access. For several class sessions I have assigned book chapters in addition to journal articles. These are placed on E-Reserve, and are indicated by the term “e-res” in parentheses after the citation. These texts are easily obtained through the Blackboard site that has been established for the class. Click on “Blackboard” from the “My GW” page (http://my.gwu.edu), log in, go to the page for this class, and click on “E-Reserves.”

**RESEARCH PAPER**

Students are required to write a research paper of approximately 20 double-spaced pages on a topic of their choice related to civilian victimization. In past years, most students have chosen particular cases or campaigns of civilian victimization and sought to explain why they occurred. Others have looked at certain states or rebel groups and tried to explain consistency or variation in their treatment of civilians. Still other papers have investigated the origins of suicide terrorism, the effectiveness of civilian victimization, or compared Muslim and Christian views regarding morally permissible behavior in war. The topic, question, or case you write about is largely up to you, subject to three caveats: (1) it must be about some aspect of civilian victimization or the fate of noncombatants in armed conflict; (2) it must be approved by the instructor; and (3) it should not be a case we have examined in class (unless specific permission is received).

For papers about the causes of civilian victimization—the most common type of paper—there are several potential research designs. One approach, for example, is to test at least two theories against evidence from a single case to determine which theory (or combination of theories) provides the best explanation for why civilian victimization did or did not occur in that case. These single-case studies can also be divided up into several segments or decision points, a process which multiplies the number of observations and permits comparisons across time. A second method is to test one theory against evidence from at least two cases to see how well the theory holds up in multiple
instances. This design permits interesting across-case comparisons, but also requires greater historical knowledge on the part of the researcher. A third approach is to identify and try to explain puzzling variation in outcomes: why here and not there? Why this time but not that time? This method involves the comparison of at least two cases, one positive and one negative, and tries to locate the source of the divergence in outcome. Finally, students can also compare cases that appear quite different at first glance but have the same outcome. Why do such seemingly divergent cases end up turning out the same? Research design and other issues regarding the paper will be discussed in class on March 1.

In past years, papers written for this class have utilized between a dozen and two dozen sources of information each, and also used multiple types of information: secondary historical and analytical works, journal articles, newspapers, and reports by human rights organizations. Other papers used primary sources, such as U.S. government documents posted on web resources like the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (http://www.state.gov/r/ pa/ho/FRUS) or the *National Security Archive* (http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv). This is not a paper, in other words, that can be written in a few days using one or two books. Nor can good papers be written simply by combing the internet: students must also consult reputable, scholarly, printed sources.

As this is a *Writing in the Disciplines* (WID) course, students will turn in – and receive feedback on – drafts of different sections of the paper over the course of the semester. These individual sections of the paper will not be graded, as the goal is to improve the final product by providing detailed feedback on students’ writing. Failure to turn in paper sections by the specified deadlines, however, will be penalized by deducting points from the overall grade for the paper. You would be well advised to turn in what you have – even if incomplete – by the deadline rather than turning in more complete versions late. Students will be informed whether they are making adequate progress.

Students will receive written comments on each section of the paper from the instructor or the Teaching Assistant. Students will then revise that section of the paper, and turn it in with the next section that is due. For example, on April 5, students will turn in not only a case study, but also the revised version of the Introduction and Literature Review. In late April students will be paired up to read and comment on each other’s rough drafts (see below for details). Students will also receive guidance from the instructor or the TA on the rough draft.

Here is the schedule for writing assignments. Unless otherwise noted, all writing assignments are due in hard copy at the start of class on the specified date.

- **February 7**: Paper Topic Memo. Students will turn in a memo of no more than 3 double-spaced pages. Memos will not be graded, but must be approved by the instructor for students to proceed. Memos should answer the following questions:
  - What is the question you intend to answer in your paper? Which case or cases will you examine?
  - What potential hypotheses or explanations have you identified?
  - What potential sources of information and evidence have you identified? Include a short bibliography.

- **March 8**: Introduction and Literature Review due

- **April 5**: Case Study (or empirical section) due (along with revised Introduction and Literature Review)

- **April 19**: Rough Draft of entire paper due to instructor and student commentator

- **Week of April 23**: Paper Conferences. Students will exchange rough drafts with a partner. Each pair will meet at their convenience during the week of April 23-27 to discuss each other’s papers. Written (typed) comments must be provided on the model of a journal article review (to be demonstrated in class). These comments will be given not only to your partner but also turned in to the instructor.

- **April 26**: Peer Critique Memo due. The memo constitutes 5 percent of your grade.

- **May 4**: Final Draft due, 5.00PM
TEACHING ASSISTANT

The teaching assistant for the course is Dina Bishara, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science.

POLICIES AND RESOURCES

- **Class Policies.** Students are expected to attend every class session, do all the reading before class, and come prepared to discuss it. Exceptions will of course be made for religious holidays. Students who know they will miss class owing to observance of a religious holiday need to notify the instructor during the first week of the semester. Late final papers will be accepted up to 72 hours after the deadline, but one letter grade will be deducted for each 24 hour period that the paper is late. Papers that are more than 72 hours late will not be accepted. Exceptions will be made only in cases of extraordinary personal or family emergency; if you find yourself in such a situation, consult the instructor as soon as possible. Students must take the final exam at the time and date assigned by the Academic Scheduling Office. Students who have three final exams on one day may petition for one of them to be rescheduled. Note that this must be done at least three weeks prior to the last day of classes: see http://www.gwu.edu/~regweb/web-content/scheduling/exam_policies.html. Laptops are allowed in class for note-taking purposes, not for checking e-mail, Facebook, or surfing the web. The only cell phones allowed in class are those that have been turned off.

- **Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Integrity.** According to the university’s Code of Academic Integrity, “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the rest of the code, see http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html. In general, I expect that you will not lie, cheat, steal, or otherwise conduct yourselves dishonorably, and will do something if you observe others engaging in such conduct. All work you submit for this course must be your own. I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. Suspected cases will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity. If you have questions about what constitutes proper use of published or unpublished sources, please ask the instructor.

- **Disabilities.** Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202.994.8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/.

- **Counseling.** The University Counseling Center (UCC, 202.994.5300) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include crisis and emergency mental health consultations, confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals (see http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices).

- **Security.** In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.
COURSE SCHEDULE

1. **Introduction and Course Overview**
   - No assigned readings
   
   January 17

**Part I. Normative and Legal Protections for Noncombatants**

2. **War by Other Means?**
   
   January 19

3. **Defining Civilians/Noncombatants**
   
   January 24

4. **Origins of Noncombatant Immunity**
   
   January 26

5. **Legal Codifications of Noncombatant Immunity**
   
   January 31
6. Arguments about the Morality of Killing Civilians February 2

Part II. Theories of Civilian Victimization

7. Regime Type February 7
   Research Paper Memos Due

8. Instructor Traveling: No Class February 9

9. Race and Identity February 14

10. Organization Theory February 16

11. Desperation and Annexation February 21
    - Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War*, read 1-56, 180-183; skim 57-82.
12. **Guerrilla Warfare/Insurgency**  
   February 23  

13. **MIDTERM EXAM**  
   February 28

14. **Research Papers in Political Science**  
   March 1  
   - Readings TBD

**Part III. Does Civilian Victimization Work?**

15. **Assessing the Effectiveness of Targeting Civilians**  
   March 6  

16. **Assessing the Effectiveness of Terrorism**  
   *Introduction and Literature Review Due*  
   March 8  

17. **Spring Break: No Class**  
   March 12

18. **Spring Break: No Class**  
   March 14

**Part IV. Historical Cases**

**A. CONVENTIONAL WARS OF ATTRITION**

19. **World War I: Starvation Blockades**  
   March 20  

20. **Instructor Traveling: No Class**  
   March 22
21. **World War II: The Bombing of Germany**
   March 27

22. **World War II: The Bombing of Japan**
   March 29

**B. COUNTERINSURGENCY**

23. **The Boer War**
   April 3

24. **France in Algeria**
   April 5
   - Case Study Due
   - Aussaresses, *Battle of the Casbah*, all.
   - Movie, time TBD: *The Battle of Algiers*.

25. **Darfur**
   April 10
C. CLEANSING

26. Instructor Traveling: No Class  
   April 12

27. World War I: The Armenians  
   April 17
   - Valentino, *Final Solutions*, 152-166.

28. World War II: The Killing Machine  
   April 19
   Rough Draft Due
   - Valentino, *Final Solutions*, 166-178.

29. Rwanda  
   April 24
   Paper Conferences This Week

Part V. Individual Participation

30. Theories of Individual Participation  
    Peer Critique Memo Due  
    April 26

31. Make-Up Day: Reserve Police Battalion 101 in Poland and Course Wrap-Up  
    May 1
    - Browning, *Ordinary Men*, all.

32. Final Paper Due: 1957 E St. NW, #605B  
    May 4, 5.00PM

33. FINAL EXAM  
    May 8, 10.20AM