University of Edinburgh
School of Social & Political Science
Social Anthropology

2015 – 2016

Anthropology of Violence

SCAN10058
Course Description
This course examines a variety of anthropological approaches to the study of violence, ranging from evolutionary explanations for male aggression to studies of changing American attitudes toward terrorism in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. It looks critically at the theoretical, methodological and ethical questions raised in studies of violence through ethnographic case studies from around the world. The course considers attempts to define violence as a concept in the social sciences and explores the possible causes, meanings, and uses of violent practices from a variety of different cultural contexts and perspectives. It gives particular attention to the political and economic conditions that promote war and other violent behaviour as well as specific cultural expressions within violent practices. It also discusses ethnographic descriptions of “peaceful societies” and examines the challenges of reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict.

Intended Learning Outcomes
By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Understand how and why violence has become a major area of anthropological research in recent decades, as well as critically analyse a wide variety of theoretical
approaches to violence in the social sciences.

- Relate specific historical and ethnographic case studies of violence to major debates in anthropology and contemporary society.
- Critically examine the political and ethical dimensions of research on violence.
- Recognise the ways in which the study of violence draws on multiple disciplinary approaches from the natural and social sciences.
- Demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate evidence from specific case studies, and use such material in building coherent arguments in essay writing and seminar presentations.

Course Delivery
The course will be taught over ten sessions, including a two-hour lecture on Mondays at 11.10 – 12.10 in room S.1, 7 George Square. Each student will also be assigned to an additional one-hour seminar that meets each week. **Attendance of the entirety of these sessions is compulsory. All students should do the essential reading before each class.**

Communications:
You are strongly encouraged to use email for routine communication with lecturers. We shall also use email to communicate with you, e.g., to assign readings for the second hour of each class. All students are provided with email addresses on the university system, if you are not sure of your address, which is based on your matric number, check your EUCLID database entry using the Student Portal.

This is the ONLY email address we shall use to communicate with you. Please note that we will NOT use 'private' email addresses such as yahoo or hotmail; it is therefore essential that you check your university email regularly, preferably each day.

Assessment at a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Assessment weighting</th>
<th>Submission Date (all course work is due at 12 noon on the date of submission)</th>
<th>Return of Feedback date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10th February 2016</td>
<td>2nd March 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30th March 2016</td>
<td>20th April 2016</td>
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*Note: All course work is submitted electronically through ELMA. Please read the School Policies and Coursework Submission Procedures document for important information on submission procedures and assessment polices.*

Assessment Information
All Single and Combined Honours, BA (Humanities and Social Science), and non-graduating students will be assessed by:

1. A coursework essay of approximately 1000 words that carries a weighting of 30% towards the final overall mark for the course as a whole.
2. An assessed essay of approximately 3000 words that is due near the end of the semester and carries a weighting of 70% of the final mark.
Please refer to the Honours Handbook for more complete information about assessment procedures.

The following are some of the criteria through which the essays will be marked. However, it is important to note that the overall mark is a result of a holistic assessment of the assignment as a whole.

A. Does the essay address the question with sufficient focus?
B. Does the essay show a grasp of the relevant concepts and knowledge?
C. Does the essay demonstrate a logical and effective pattern of argument?
D. Does the essay support an argument with relevant examples?
E. Does the essay demonstrate reflexivity and critical thinking in relation to arguments and evidence?
F. Is the essay written clearly and convincingly?
G. Is the essay adequately presented in terms of: correct referencing and quoting; spelling, grammar and style; layout and visual presentation?

ELMA: Submission and Return of Coursework

Coursework is submitted online using our electronic submission system, ELMA. You will not be required to submit a paper copy of your work. Marked coursework, grades and feedback will be returned to you via ELMA. You will not receive a paper copy of your marked course work or feedback.

For information, help and advice on submitting coursework and accessing feedback, please see the ELMA wiki at https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SPSITWiki/ELMA. Further detailed guidance on the essay deadline and a link to the wiki and submission page will be available on the course Learn page. The wiki is the primary source of information on how to submit your work correctly and provides advice on approved file formats, uploading cover sheets and how to name your files correctly.

When you submit your work electronically, you will be asked to tick a box confirming that your work complies with university regulations on plagiarism. This confirms that the work you have submitted is your own.

We undertake to return all coursework within 15 working days of submission. This time is needed for marking, moderation, second marking and input of results. If there are any unanticipated delays, it is the course organiser’s responsibility to inform you of the reasons.

All our coursework is assessed anonymously to ensure fairness: to facilitate this process put your Examination number (on your student card), not your name or student number, on your coursework or cover sheet.

Important note to students

To ensure your course work is submitted successfully, students should aim to upload their submissions at least 1 hour before the deadline.

Students are responsible for ensuring they have sufficient internet access and connection to submit their course work electronically. Technical difficulties and poor internet connection are not acceptable reasons for submitting work late.

You should monitor your university student email account in the 24 hours following the deadline for submitting your work. If there are any problems with your submission the course secretary will email you at this stage.

Marked course work, grades and feedback will be returned online – you will not receive a paper of your marked course work or feedback.

For information, help and advice on submitting coursework and accessing feedback, please see the ELMA wiki at http://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SPSITWiki/ELMA
Length Penalties
Essays over the word limit will lose 10% of their marks. (This applies as much to essays of 5 words over as to essays of 500 words over). This word limit includes footnotes and appendices but not the bibliography.

Any apparently deliberate misrepresentation of the word count or failure to declare a word count will lead to a deduction of 20 marks. N.B. This can affect your final result.

The Operation of Lateness Penalties
Unlike in Years 1 and 2, NO EXTENSIONS ARE GRANTED WITH RESPECT TO THE SUBMISSION DEADLINES FOR ANY ASSESSED WORK AT HONOURS LEVEL.
Managing deadlines is a basic life-skill that you are expected to have acquired by the time you reach Honours. Timely submission of all assessed items (coursework, essays, project reports, etc.) is a vitally important responsibility at this stage in your university career. Unexcused lateness can put at risk your prospects of proceeding to Senior Honours and can damage your final degree grade.
If you miss the submission deadline for any piece of assessed work 5 marks will be deducted for each calendar day that work is late, up to a maximum of five calendar days (25 marks). Thereafter, a mark of zero will be recorded. There is no grace period for lateness and penalties begin to apply immediately following the deadline. For example, if the deadline is Tuesday at 12 noon, work submitted on Tuesday at any time after 12 noon will be marked as one day late, work submitted at any time after 12 noon on Wednesday will be marked as two days late, and so on.
Failure to submit an item of assessed work will result in a mark of zero, with potentially very serious consequences for your overall degree class, or no degree at all. It is therefore always in your interest to submit work, even if very late.

Please be aware that all work submitted is returned to students with a provisional mark and without applicable penalties in the first instance. The mark you receive on ELMA is therefore subject to change following the consideration of the Lateness Penalty Waiver Panel (please see below for further information) and the Board of Examiners.

How to Submit a Lateness Penalty Waiver Form
If there are extenuating circumstances beyond your control which make it essential for you to submit work after the deadline you must fill in a ‘Lateness Penalty Waiver’ (LPW) form to state the reason for your lateness. This is a request for any applicable penalties to be removed and will be considered by the Lateness Penalty Waiver Panel.
Before submitting an LPW, please consider carefully whether your circumstances are (or were) significant enough to justify the lateness. Such circumstances should be serious and exceptional (e.g. not a common cold or a heavy workload). Computer failures are not regarded as justifiable reason for late submission. You are expected to regularly back-up your work and allow sufficient time for uploading it to ELMA.
You should submit the LPW form and supply an expected date of submission as soon as you are able to do so, and preferably before the deadline. Depending on the circumstances, supporting documentation may be required, so please be prepared to provide this where possible.
LPW forms can be found in a folder outside your SSO’s office, on online at: http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/on_course_students/assessment_and_regulations/coursework_requirements/coursework_requirements_honours
Forms should be returned by email or, if possible, in person to your SSO. They will sign the form to indicate receipt and will be able to advise you if you would like further guidance or support.
Please Note: Signing the LPW form by either your SSO or Personal Tutor only indicates acknowledgment of the request, not the waiving of lateness penalties. Final decisions on all marks rest with Examination Boards.
There is a dedicated SSO for students in each subject area in SPS. To find out who your SSO is, and how to contact them, please find your home subject area on the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Name of SSO</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Alex Solomon</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Alex.Solomon@ed.ac.uk">Alex.Solomon@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>0131 650 4253</td>
<td>Room 1.05, Chrystal MacMillan Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Relations</td>
<td>Rebecca Shade</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rebecca.shade@ed.ac.uk">rebecca.shade@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>0131 651 3896</td>
<td>Room 1.05, Chrystal MacMillan Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Anthropology</td>
<td>Vanessa Feldberg</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vanessa.feldberg@ed.ac.uk">vanessa.feldberg@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>0131 650 3933</td>
<td>Room 1.04, Chrystal MacMillan Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Policy</td>
<td>Louise Angus</td>
<td><a href="mailto:L.Angus@ed.ac.uk">L.Angus@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>0131 650 3923</td>
<td>Room 1.08, Chrystal MacMillan Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Jane Marshall</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jane.marshall@ed.ac.uk">jane.marshall@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>0131 650 3912</td>
<td>Room 1.07, Chrystal MacMillan Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Karen Dargo</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Karen.Dargo@ed.ac.uk">Karen.Dargo@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>0131 651 1306</td>
<td>Room 1.03, Chrystal MacMillan Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td>Sue Renton</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sue.renton@ed.ac.uk">sue.renton@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>0131 650 6958</td>
<td>Room 1.09, Chrystal MacMillan Building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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If you are a student from another School, you should submit your LPW to the SSO for the subject area of the course, Vanessa Feldberg.

**Students with Disabilities**
The School welcomes disabled students with disabilities (including those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia) and is working to make all its courses as accessible as possible. If you have a disability special needs which means that you may require adjustments to be made to ensure access to lectures, tutorials or exams, or any other aspect of your studies, you can discuss these with your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor who will advise on the appropriate procedures.

You can also contact the Student Disability Service, based on the University of Edinburgh, Third Floor, Main Library, You can find their details as well as information on all of the support they can offer at: [http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service](http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service)

**Special Circumstances:**
If you find yourself struggling due to illness, an accident or bereavement, you can ask your Personal Tutor and Student Support Officer for advice on applying for Special Circumstances. You should also read the Special Circumstances section of the Honours Handbook.
Discussing Sensitive Topics:
The discipline of Anthropology of Violence addresses a number of topics that some might find sensitive or, in some cases, distressing. You should read this Course Guide carefully and if there are any topics that you may feel distressed by you should seek advice from the course convenor and/or your Personal Tutor. For more general issues you may consider seeking the advice of the Student Counselling Service, http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling

Coursework Essay Questions (1000 words):
Submission Deadline: Wednesday 10 February 2016 by 12 noon

1) Why has violence become such a prominent theme in anthropology?
2) What ethical and methodological problems can anthropologists face in conducting ethnographic research on violence?
3) To what extent should studies of violence reflect the political stance or personal convictions of the researcher?
4) Why do anthropologists generally reject biological explanations of violence?
5) Why are colonial social categories so important for understanding violent conflicts in the contemporary world?

Assessed Essay Questions (3000 words):
Submission Deadline: Wednesday 30 March 2016 by 12 noon

1) In what ways have anthropologists and other social scientists attempted to define ‘violence’ as a concept?
2) To what extent is male aggression an evolutionary adaptation?
3) How can attention to indigenous cosmology and/or mythology help anthropologists better understand contemporary violent conflicts?
4) Why do anthropologists tend to view memories of past violence as forms of ‘social memory’?
5) What does it mean to say that some forms of violence are ‘invisible’?
6) How does structural violence relate to specific forms of overt or intimate violence?
7) Why are violent practices so often related to symbolic understandings of gender and/or the body?
8) In what ways are nation-states responsible for promoting and carrying out violence?
9) What are the challenges of reconciliation in the aftermath of violence?
10) To what extent is it misleading to talk about ‘cultures of violence’ or ‘violent societies’?
CLASSES AND READING LIST
This reading list sets out both essential and further readings. Students must read all of the essential readings before each session and be prepared to comment on them in class. To this end students will be required to have written a brief paragraph on each of the essential readings and bring it with them to class. Although these paragraphs will not form part of the overall assessment, they will form the basis of our class discussion. Students should refer to further readings in both pieces of assessed work. All essential readings, and some further readings, are available online or as PDFs on Learn.

LECTURE PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 January</td>
<td>What is Violence and how do we Study it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18 January</td>
<td>Violence and Human Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25 January</td>
<td>Historical Perspective: Conflicts in Colonialism</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 February</td>
<td>Remembering Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8 February</td>
<td>The Violence of Everyday Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>15 February</td>
<td>INNOVATIVE LEARNING WEEK - no classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>22 February</td>
<td>Gender and Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>29 February</td>
<td>The Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7 March</td>
<td>Cosmology and the Poetics of Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>14 March</td>
<td>Interventions of the State: The War on Terror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21 March</td>
<td>Peace and Reconciliation</td>
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</tbody>
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Primary textbooks for the course:

WEEKLY THEMES AND READING LIST

WEEK 1: What is Violence and how do we Study It?
We begin this week by looking critically at what anthropologists and other social scientists are talking about when they describe, interpret and theorize violence. Is it possible to define universally what violent behaviour is cross-culturally? We will examine some of the underlying assumptions made in studies of violent practices and discuss the ethical issues involved for researchers who carry out fieldwork in the context of war and socio-political conflict.

Essential Readings:

Further Readings:

WEEK 2: Violence and Human Nature
For some anthropologists, violent practices such as rape and murder are as much a result of human evolution as they are influenced by socioeconomic conditions. Are men psychologically predisposed to be violent? What do they have to gain in Darwinian terms through such practices? Looking at studies ranging from a classic ethnography of “tribal violence” in the Amazon and urban crime rates in the United States, we will discuss the implications and problems of sociobiological approaches that explain violence as an evolutionary adaptation in human psychology.
Essential Readings:

Debate about Human Nature and Violence in Popular News Media:

Further Readings:

WEEK 3: Historical Perspective: Conflicts in Colonialism
This week we examine how various forms of violence have emerged and changed through colonial history and the new political and economic relations it brought to many parts of the world. We will look at how historical approaches to violence have challenged assumptions previously made about “tribal warfare” and genocide. In what ways did Europe’s colonial expansion in Africa, Asia and the Americas create new spaces for violence? To what extent have western imaginations of the ‘other’ inflected contemporary violence conflicts in the postcolonial world?

Essential Readings:

Further Readings:
WEEK 4: Remembering Violence

In recent years social scientists have become increasingly interested in how people remember (and forget) past violence. Anthropologists tend to view memory not just as the excavation of accurate representations of the past or individual experiences of trauma, but also forms of remembering that are profoundly ‘social’. This week we will look at the politics and ‘poetics’ of memory through ethnographic examples of how people relate to past violence in diverse ways. How do people of different generations and genders remember the past differently? What kinds of ‘social memory’ are constituted through trauma like initiation rituals or the Holocaust?

Essential Readings:

Further Readings:
WEEK 5: The Violence of Everyday Life
Most people would describe killing and other direct use of physical force to do harm as "violence". But what about the conditions of poverty and everyday suffering with which many people in the world live? This week we will look at how poverty, oppression and other inequalities may constitute a form of violence in everyday life. How do poverty and other "structural violence" encourage violent practices? As anthropologists, how can we identify the links between specific acts of violence and wider social, economic and political processes?

**Essential readings:**

**Further Readings:**

WEEK 6: Gender and Violence
Women are often the specific target of violence in everyday life and in times of war. This week we will look at gendered violence in a number of different social contexts, from the streets of New York City to domestic life in the Andes. To what extent should we impose our own assumptions about justice and acceptable gender relations when we study other cultures? What can specific cultural constructions of masculinity tell us about the gendered forms violence often takes?

**Essential Readings:**

**Further Readings:**

WEEK 7: The Body
Whether as a source of pain, nationalist sentiment or cultural identity, the body is central to understanding the social meanings of violence. This week we will explore historically and ethnographically how the practice of violence is often closely related to body symbolism and embodied experience. We will examine cases in which bodies become expressions of domination, control, contestation, ambiguity and terror. Why is the female body so often a site of symbolic violence and nationalist imagination? In what ways does the treatment of bodies reveal structural violence?

Essential Readings:

Further Readings:

WEEK 8: Cosmology and the Poetics of Violence
While many anthropologists point out the political and economic conditions that cause violent conflicts, others look to the particular ideologies that order different societies in attempting to explain violence. This week we will explore how culturally contingent ideas about life, death, and the body have influenced the ways in which violent practices are carried out in the context
of genocide in Rwanda, initiation rituals and revenge-killing in South America. What do such practices mean to the victims, perpetrators and witnesses of violence?

**Essential readings:**

**Further readings:**

**WEEK 9: Interventions of the State: the war on terror**
While the responsibility of protecting human rights rests centrally in the hands of modern nation-states, it is often these same states that carry out some of the most severe and widespread acts of violence. From Nazi Germany to American imperialism we can see that nation-states have a major role in violent conflicts around the world. This week we will explore how war, torture and other forms of violence result from the suspension of rights within state regimes. We will look at how this process has played out in the ‘war on terror’ in the United States and elsewhere. In what ways do modern states promote or legitimize violence?

**Essential Readings:**
Further Readings:

WEEK 10: Peace and Reconciliation
Why do we find more violence in some societies than in others? Can we really talk about “cultures of violence” or “peaceful societies”? This week we will look at ethnographic case studies of societies in which violence and aggressive behaviour are, according to the ethnographers, completely unacceptable and seldom observed. We will look critically at these representations of society as well as examine how peace is made in the aftermath of violent conflict. What are some of the key challenges to reconciliation?

Essential readings:

Further Readings:
Howell S. (1989) “To be angry is not to be human, but to be fearful is”: Chewong concepts of human nature of Howell, S. and R. Willis (eds.) *Societies at Peace: anthropological perspectives*. London: Routledge. (chapter 2)