

**Theories and Methods in the Humanities:  
Rethinking 'Violence'  
IPH 405**

**Time: MW 1:00pm-2:30pm**

**Location: Seigle Hall 111**

Instructor: Charlie Lesch

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Office Hours: By appointment.

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Office Hours: MW 10:30am-12:00pm and by appointment

## **1. DESCRIPTION**

This seminar will focus on the concept of violence as it relates to the human condition. What is violence? What forms can violence take? Under what conditions, if any, is its use justified? Do violence and rationality stand in opposition? What is the relationship between law and violence? To answer these questions, the seminar will examine an array of classic texts and theories from a variety of fields, including the history of social and political thought, philosophy, anthropology, and religion. Along the way we will challenge a number of classical assumptions about violence: that it is necessarily physical, rather than also psychological, symbolic, or structural; that it is found only in political actors, like the state, rather than also in other parts of the social framework; and that it truly is an enabling condition of a just and peaceful human community. In challenging these assumptions, one aim of the course will be to suggest new ways of thinking about this (apparently) indelible feature of political life. Our broader aim will be to draw out the connections between violence and the human condition.

The seminar is divided into three thematic "Parts." In Part I we begin by considering classical conceptions of violence, drawing out the emphasis placed on its physical form. We then turn in Part II to attempts to broaden the notion of violence out beyond its purely physical form, looking at the extent to which it makes sense to say it has psychological, political, and social forms as well. In the last part of the course, Part III, we investigate ways to respond to the violence we are confronted by (in all its forms), including more violence, civil disobedience, and forms of non-violence inspired by religious traditions.

## 2. TEXTS

Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*  
Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*  
Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*  
Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love*  
Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*  
Stephen Pinker, *Better Angels of our Natures*  
James Scott, *Seeing like a State*

*Additional readings are to be found on Blackboard in the section titled ‘Readings’:*

## 3. GRADING

Attendance & Participation: 25/100

Seminar attendance and active participation are mandatory, and students are expected to complete all the course readings. Readings average only around eighty pages per week, but are often time-intensive and theoretically complex.

Short Papers x2: 35/100 [15/100 for first; 20/40 for second]

Students must produce **two** short, critical essays responding to prompts about the material covered in Part I and Part II of the course (see schedule below). Prompts will be distributed ~2 weeks prior to the due dates of the essays. Each essay is to be 1500-1800 words and submitted through Blackboard. The first paper is due Monday, February 26 by 1:00pm. The second is due Monday, April 2 by 1:00pm.

Research Paper Proposal: 5/100

Students are to submit a research paper proposal, due Monday, April 16 by 1:00pm. It is highly advised that students meet with Dr. Lesch or Dr. Babb prior to submitting their proposal. It is also highly advised that students come up with proposals for at least TWO different research papers, in case the first proposal is rejected.

An acceptable proposal will present a thesis and briefly explain the argumentative strategy for supporting that thesis. A proposal will be rejected if it (i) is too broad in scope, (ii) is too vague, (iii) is on a topic not sufficiently related to the material of the course, (iv) does not have enough background literature, (v) is merely a survey of the literature, or (vi) is not suitable for a paper at least 4000 words in length. Proposals can be either outlines or abstracts. They are to be no more than 750 words.

Research Paper: 35/100

Students are to submit final drafts of their research papers by Wednesday May 16 at 11:59pm. Final drafts must be at least 4000 words, not including marginalia or bibliographies.

#### 4. SCHEDULE

##### **PART I: CLASSICAL VIEWS OF VIOLENCE**

###### *Topic 1: Introduction*

Monday (1/15): NO CLASS (MLK holiday)

Wednesday (1/17): Welcome and Intro

###### *Topic 2: Classical Views of Violence*

Monday (1/22): Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, “Epistle Dedicatory,” “Preface to the Readers,” chapters 1-3 (Online)

Wednesday (1/24): Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, chapters 5-7, 12-13 (Online)

Monday (1/29): Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Part 2 (Online)

Wednesday (1/31): Max Weber, ‘Politics as Vocation’ (Online)

###### *Topic 3: Stirring the Pot*

Monday (2/5): Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay (Online)

Wednesday (2/7): W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 1 (Online)

Further Reading: Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, First and Third Essays  
W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, Chapters 2-8

## **PART II: FORMS OF VIOLENCE**

### *Topic 4: Violence and Psychology*

- Monday (2/12): Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of The Earth*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-31
- Wednesday (2/14): Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of The Earth*, Chapter 1, pp. 31-62
- Monday (2/19): Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*
- Wednesday (2/21): Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

### *Topic 5: State Violence*

**\*\*Short Paper #1 due on Monday, February 26 by 1:00pm; submit to Blackboard\*\***

- Monday (2/26): Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, Part I
- Wednesday (2/28): Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, Part II
- Monday (3/5): James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*
- Wednesday (3/7): James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*

Further Reading: Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, Part III

### *Topic 6: Structural Violence*

- Monday (3/19): Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*
- Wednesday (3/21): Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*
- Monday (3/26): John Harris, 'The Marxist Conception of Violence' (Online)

Further Reading: Marcus: Repressive tolerance; Ethics and Revolution; Problem of Violence and Radical Opposition

### **PART III: RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE**

#### *Topic 7: Nonviolent Responses to Violence*

**\*\*Short Paper #2 due on Monday, April 2 at 1:00pm; submit to Blackboard\*\***

- Wednesday (3/28): Henry Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience* (Online)
- Monday (4/2): Mohandas Gandhi, *Essential Writings*, Chapter 4 (Online)
- Wednesday (4/4): Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*, Chapters 3-5
- Monday (4/9): Václav Havel, 'The Power of The Powerless' (Online)

Further Reading:

#### *Topic 8 (April 16-20): Violent Responses to Violence*

**\*\*Final Paper Proposals due on Monday, April 16 by 1:00pm; submit to Blackboard\*\***

- Wednesday (4/11): Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, Part I (Online)
- Monday (4/16): Malcolm X, 'Ballot or The Bullet' (Online)

Further Reading: Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, Parts II-III  
Malcolm X, 'Black Revolution'

#### *Topic 9 (April 23-27): Are We Doomed to be Violent?*

- Wednesday (4/18): Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Online)
- Monday (4/23): Stephen Pinker, *Better Angels of Our Nature*, Chapter 8
- Wednesday (4/25): Stephen Pinker, *Better Angels of Our Nature*, Chapter 9/Wrap Up

Further Reading:

#### *Finals Week (May 3-9)*

**\*\*Final Paper due on Wednesday, May 16 by 11:59pm; submit to Blackboard\*\***

## 5. POLICIES

### *Late Assignments Policy*

Assignments turned in late will receive a 5% reduction in earned grade *for each class day that passes starting from the class day the assignment was due*. So, if the assignment due on Tuesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, for example, is turned in by the time of the class on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, then it will receive a 5% reduction in earned grade. But if it is turned in after the 3<sup>rd</sup>, but by the 8<sup>th</sup>, it will receive a 10% reduction. And so on for each class day that passes. Work more than 3 weeks late will not be accepted. Exceptions to this policy may be made in certain cases, such as emergencies.

In most cases we are happy to grant extensions, provided that they are requested at least 24 hours prior to the due date.

### *Academic Integrity Policy*

Our policy is the University’s policy, as found here:

<https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/academic-policies/undergraduate-student-academic-integrity-policy/>

If you are unsure about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please see us. Any violation of academic integrity standards may result in a grade of ‘F’ for the course and a referral to Judicial Affairs, so please be very careful about this.

### *Students with Disabilities*

Any student who has registered with the office of Disability Services and Programs (DSP) and who has been identified by DSP as needing specific accommodations will gladly be afforded them. Please see us as soon as possible in the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations.