

Texas A&M University -Commerce
Women and Genocide

Fall 2013
PSCI 515.01E

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Office hours: TR 12:30-2:30 and by appointment

Course Introduction: Genocide is the ultimate in man's inhumanity to man. It is also one of the most emotion-laden words in diplomacy and social science. Over 50 million people died in acts of genocide in the 20th century and the 21st century is proving that this phenomenon is still a pervasive reminder of state violence. Among the millions of people affected by genocidal violence, women experiences remained understudied. The aim of this course is to examine the experiences of women through women's voices across a number of cases of genocide in the 20th and 21st century.

We will approach these experiences through a general history of women and the violence of war and through the personal accounts of women's experiences before, during, and after the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, the Cambodian genocide, the Rwandan genocide, "ethnic cleansing" in the Balkans, and Darfur. It is my hope to instill a sense of moral obligation on your part to oppose genocide wherever it appears, in whatever guise, and for whatever "reason" or rationalization. With that in mind, the purpose of this course is not only to understand the gendered experiences of genocide, but also to develop an awareness of women's voices in these conditions.

This course applies toward the 12 hour graduate certificate in Holocaust Studies offered by the Department of Political Science.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will have a better understanding of the unique experiences of women and genocide.
2. Students will gain an understanding of the unique cultural lives of women who experience each genocide under investigation and the role of women within that culture before mass violence began.
3. Students will have a greater understanding of the moral dilemmas or the "choiceless choices" that informed each genocide.
4. Students will comprehend how and in what way women attempt to rebuild their lives in post-genocidal contexts.

Required Texts: please purchase your books as frugally as possible as I understand that books can be costly. You may be able to find some of these books at a half-price bookstore and you may certainly purchase an e-reader version of any of the books.

Samuel Totten (ed) 2012. Plight and Fate of Women During and Following Genocide. Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review Volume 7. New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers. ISBN 978-1-4128-4759-9.

Slavenka Drakulic. 1999. S. A Novel About the Balkans. Penguin Books. ISBN 0140298444.

Denise Affonco. 2007. To The End of Hell: One Woman's Struggle to Survive Cambodia's Khmer Rouge. Reportage Press. ISBN 13: 978 1 906702-07-6.

Immaculee Ilibagiza (with Steve Erwin). 2006. Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust. Hay House Publishers. ISBN 13: 987-1-4019-0897-3.

Charlotte Delbo. 1995. Auschwitz and After. Yale University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0300070576

Rena Kornreich Gelissen and Heather Dune Macadam. 1996. Rena's Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz. Beacon Press. ISBN-13: 978-0807070710.

JoAn D. Criddle. 1998. To Destroy You is No Loss: The Odyssey of a Cambodian Family. East/West Bridge Publishers. ISBN-13: 978-0963220516.

Margaret Ajemian Ahnert. 2007. A Knock at the Door: A Journey Through the Darkness of the Armenian Genocide. Beaufort Books. ISBN: 978-0-8253-0512-2.

Chris Bohjalian. 2012. The Sandcastle Girls. Doubleday Publishers. eISBN 978-0-385-53480-2.

Halima Bashir with Damien Lewis. 2008. Tears of the Desert: A Memoir of Survival in Darfur. NY: Ballantine Books. eISBN 978-0-345-50990-1

Assignments: You are required to read all of the readings for each particular class meeting. Additionally, you are to select one book to lead discussion. You are also expected to participate in each week's discussion. We will assign books the first week of class.

We will also watch the film "In the Land of Blood and Honey". I have a copy that I can circulate among everyone. We will discuss this movie in the context of the Bosnian genocide.

- Discussion should draw on the theoretical readings in the Totten edited text as well as the distinct voice of women. For example, as we proceed through each memoir, think about the context of the memoir. What do they recall about their lives prior to the violence, during, and afterwards? How and in what ways were the individual women able to reconstruct their lives? What role, if any, did culture, religion, ethnicity, gender play a role in their experiences? What combination of factors contributed to each woman's survival or triumph throughout their experiences?
- What preoccupies the central characters in each book, how do they process the experiences they are living, do they search for answers, etc.

Reading and Discussion Schedule:

Tuesday August 27 Introduction to the course, readings assigned.

Tuesday September 10 Totten Chapter 1
Ahnert, A Knock at the Door
Bohjalian, The Sandcastle Girls

Tuesday September 24	Totten Chapter 2 Delbo, Auschwitz and After Gelisson, Rena's Promise
October 8	Totten Chapter 4 Affonco, To the end of hell... Criddle, To destroy you is no loss
October 22	Totten Chapter 6 Illabagiza, Left to Tell
November 5	Totten Chapter 5 Drakulic, S. A novel about the Balkans (discussion of the film "In the Land of Blood and Honey")
November 19	Totten Chapter 7 Bashir, Tears of the Desert
December 3	summing up Totten Chapters 9 and 11

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

- **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**
- **Texas A&M University-Commerce**
- **Gee Library, Room 132**
- **Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835**
- **Fax (903) 468-8148**
- **StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu**