

PEACE OR WAR?
SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MILITARY INTERVENTIONISM

Professor Charles Derber

Course Description:

War, terrorism and other violence imply the breakdown of social order. As such, they are a rich topic for raising and answering the most fundamental, perennial questions of sociology. What is a social system and how does it sustain itself or break down? What are the forms of legitimate state authority, and what is their relation to the application of violence? To what extent are war, terrorism and violence necessary to and functional for the maintenance of modern societies? To what extent can our current forms of domestic and international organization be understood as systems of stratification and social domination based on race or class? Our approach in this course is to answer these questions through a historical and case-based methodology: specifically, the examination of case studies of American wars in the Third World.

This course seeks to give students a new perspective on American society, as well as on an international system unable to maintain itself without collapse into terror and violence. Many of the great social and political theorists have been concerned with the causes of war and violence as part of a more general approach to understanding society. Sociological theory has been concerned with the state as the institution officially endowed with the monopoly of violence in society, as well as with the social themes of war and violence: inequality and stratification, power and authority, ideology and community. We shall also be centrally concerned with the organization of the international social structure and economy, and the ways in which relations between advanced and developing countries can become locked into an institutionalized system of violence, including terrorism in its modern form.

In the first section of the course, we look at fundamental sociological concepts through the lens of social theories of war, relying on historical and institutional analyses by classical sociological thinkers as well as contemporary writers. In the second section, we examine the cold war era, exploring case studies of American wars to illuminate the perennial sociological questions about power, authority, domination, and social order that inform sociology as a discipline. In the third section, we look at the post cold war era, and focus on issues of Middle East politics and the nature and roots of terrorism. The fourth section focuses on "humanitarian" wars officially declared to stop genocide, ethnic cleansing or mass starvation. In the final section, we consider what kinds of societal and new international forces, including the UN, will be necessary to ensure a new era of peace, examining fundamental sociological questions about social change and social reconstruction.

Because of the challenging nature of the material - which taps personal, ethical and political values (including issues of multiculturalism, race and neo-colonialism linked to the focus on wars in the Third World) - students will have opportunities to explore and write about their own evolving perspective on peace and war. Students will take part in small group discussions of these subjects, write a research paper about one case study, and also write essay-based mid-term and final exams.

Books (Required or Recommended)

Blum, Rogue State (online reserve)
Chomsky, The Essential Chomsky
Danner, Massacre at El Mozote
Derber, The Wilding of America, 5RD EDITION
Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars (paperback)
Derber, People Before Profit
Huntington, Clash of Civilizations (online reserve)
Hunter, Future of Islam and the West (online reserve)
Lerner, Healing Israel/Palestine
Steele, Defeat

REQUIREMENTS:

MID-TERM EXAMINATION
FINAL EXAMINATION

I. Society and War: The Sociology of Violence and Social Order in the American Context

Week 1. Who Runs the World? The US As Global Cop

Chomsky, The Essential Chomsky
Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Introduction
Perkins, Confessions of an Economic Hit Man (optional)

Week 2. Social Structure and War 1: Empire, Terrorism and the World System: Radicalism and the View from the Left

Chomsky, The Essential Chomsky
Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chap 2
Blum, Rogue State, pp. 125-168 (online reserves; optional)
Lobe, "Pentagon Moving Quickly to Becoming "globocop"(online reserves)
Pilger, "Hidden Agenda Behind the War on Terror" (online reserves)

Week 3. Empire, Terrorism and International Politics: Neo-Conservatism, Realism, and the View from the Right and Center

Kagan, "Of Power and Weakness," (Online Reserves)
Bruce Murphy, "Neo-conservative clout seen in US Iraq" (online reserves)
PNAC, Rebuilding America's Defenses, pp.i-v; pp. 1-7 (online reserves)
Boot, "The Case for Empire," Wall St. Journal, 2002 (onlinereserves)
Fareed Zakaria, "Obama, Foreign Policy Realist" (online reserves)
Wikipedia, "Political Realism"
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_realism

Week 4 The Business of War: Capitalism, Globalization, and Militarism

Klare, Blood ad Oil, Preface, Chaps 1-2
Melman, Permanent War Economy, Chapters 1;6 (online reserves)

Week 5. Violence and the American Dream: Culture and Social Breakdown
Derber, The Wilding of America, 5th edition Chapters 1-3;7
Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chapter 3

II. Cold Warriors: Rethinking American Wars in the Cold War Era

Week 6. The Vietnam War
Gabriel Kolko, Anatomy of a War Intro; Chaps. 7; 9 (online reserve)

MIDTERM EXAMINATION (In Class) Week 7

Week 8 El Salvador, and Central America
Mark Danner, The Massacre at El Mozote
Blum, Killing Hope, pp.352-370 (online reserve)

III. Wars After the Cold War: Terrorism, Pre-emptive War and Empire

Week 8. A Post-Cold War Clash of Civilizations?
Huntington, Clash of Civilizations, Chapter 1 and pp.209-221 (online reserve)
Hunter, Future of Islam and West, Intro and Conclusion (online reserve)
Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chapter 1 and 6

Week 9. Iraq and Afghanistan: Liberation. Occupation and Hegemony
Steele, Defeat, Intro, Chaps 1,5, 9, Conclusion (online reserves)
Cheney, "The Administration's Case for Removing Saddam," (packet)
Wolfowitz, "Why We Invaded Iraq" Vanity Fair (Packet or reserve)
Dean, "Is Lying About the reason for war an impeachable offense?,"
Cnn.com/Law Center (course packet)
Paul Rogers, "Afghanistan's Lost Decade," (online reserve)
Rory Stewart, "The Irresistible Illusion," London Review of Books (online)
www.lrb.co.uk/v31/n13/stew01_.html (important piece on Afghanistan)

Week 10 The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Lerner, Healing Israel/Palestine, chapters 2,3,6,7
Merip, "Primer on Israel, Palestine and the Middle East" (Packet)
Prev, "Letter to Global Justice Project from Yanoun, Palestine(packet)

IV. "Humanitarian Intervention:" Current US and UN Dilemmas

Week 11. The New Intervention Debate: Rwanda and other
Humanitarian Crises

Stephen Shalom, "The Debate on Intervention," Z Magazine (online reserve)
Block, "The Tragedy of Rwanda" New York Review (online reserve)
Power, Samantha, "Bystanders to Genocide", Atlantic (online reserve)
Reeves, Eric, "Crash Course on Sudan/Darfur, Parts 1; 2; Nation (online reserves)

Week 12. Economic Policing and Global Government: Haiti, the IMF and WTO

McFadyen and LaRamayee, Haiti: Dangerous Crossroads, Intro., Chaps.
13, 15, 16, 22 (Library Reserve)
Derber, People Before Profit, Chapters 5; 7

V. Peace Strategies and A New Global Democracy

Week 13. International Strategies: Global Democracy, Collective Security
and the Question of Activism

Robert Johansen, "The UN After the Gulf War: Lessons for Collective
Security," World Policy Journal, Summer, 1991 (online reserves)
Derber, People Before Profit, Chapters 6; 8; 10
Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chapters 9-10

Week 14. FINAL EXAM (IN CLASS)