

**PSYCHOLOGY 414:
FROM COLLECTIVE MEMORY TO COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE
(FALL 2019)**

I. WHEN AND WHERE: Tuesday from 1:30pm to 4:20pm
Room: A02 (PNI)

II. INSTRUCTOR: Alin Coman
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Office hours: by appointment

III. COURSE DESCRIPTION/OVERVIEW: Inter-group conflict and collective violence are central topics across the social sciences. This course is aimed at providing a framework for integrating different approaches to intergroup conflict, from psychology (social-interactionism) to sociology (social network analysis) to political science (nationalism studies). Various inter-group conflicts are discussed (e.g. the Former Yugoslavian Republics, Israel-Palestine) with the goal of assessing the validity of the interdisciplinary framework proposed herein.

IV. GOALS: This course is designed for advanced undergraduate students who have an interest in exploring the role that collective memory and collective identity play in violent ethnic conflict. In addressing such a complex phenomenon, one cannot afford to reduce one's perspective to a single discipline. Rather, the exploration has to incorporate multiple threads from different perspectives and to force a trans-disciplinary discourse. This course is such an attempt.

By the end of the course, students will:

- 1) become familiar with experimental paradigms and methodologies from different disciplines (psychology, sociology, political science)
- 2) be able to understand limitations of the different disciplinary approaches to inter-group conflict, and will get a better sense of interdisciplinary "bridges"
- 3) develop a problem-focused, trans-disciplinary perspective, which will serve them well at formulating research questions calibrated for complex, real-world, issues

V. GRADING: Grading is distributed as follows:

- 1) Class participation: 30% (15% reading summaries due by noon of the day the course is scheduled & 15% class interventions)
- 2) Midterm conflict presentation: 30%
- 3) Final paper: 40%

Note: Documents with guidelines for each of the following grading sections are uploaded on Blackboard: 1) reading summaries, 2) debate and research labs, 3) group conflict presentation, and 4) final paper.

VI. THE READING LIST: Discussion topics and representative reading assignments are provided in what follows (all readings are posted on Blackboard). Each week, all students will have to read the articles under “Readings.” For some weeks, we will DEBATE a controversial topic, for some other weeks, we will have a RESEARCH LAB. When a debate is scheduled, we’ll arbitrarily split the class in half and you will only have to read the articles assigned for the perspective that you’re defending. When a research lab is scheduled, all students will have to do the readings under “Research lab” (in addition to those under “Readings”).

VII. THE DOCUMENTARY LIST: In addition to the readings for each week, I assembled a list of documentaries to be watched after specific classes. These documentaries will help you better understand class material and will provide a more experiential perspective on the topics we’ll address in this course. Although they are not required, I know you’ll benefit enormously from watching them (Warning: some involve graphic images).

VIII. OVERVIEW. The course has 5 sections:

- 1. Introduction to the course:** to provide you with an overview of the model that I propose, and the intersection points between the different disciplines (psychology, political science, sociology and anthropology) that have to be explored towards a better understanding of ethnic conflict.
- 2. Introduction to individual and collective memory:** to present you with the current perspective on human memory, its flexibility and social construction, to establish the connection between memory and identity, and to explore the formation of collective memory. In this section we will also start discussing propagation of information, memories and beliefs in social networks.
- 3. The intersection between collective memory and collective identity:** discussion of generational memories, and of how common experiences lead to the creation of collective identity. In this section we will also explore: a) the connection between individual and collective identities, b) collective identity as conceptualized by different disciplines, c) the dynamics of collective identities and whether these identities could be manipulated.
- 4. Collective identity driving collective action:** For the last part of the class we will discuss empirical research on collective violence and we’ll tie it all together: collective memory, collective identity, and collective violence.
- 5. Ethnic conflict presentations (Midterm):** students will be assembled as groups and assigned one ethnic conflict to present in class. These presentations come with responsibilities, since each member of each group will be considered the class’s expert on the particular conflict they presented.

Week 1 (September 17)

Topic: Organizational/Conceptualizing conflict

Readings:

Barbara Harff (2003)-Assessing risks of genocide and political mass murder since 1955. A study investigating 35 instances of genocide to identify what are the factors leading to mass atrocities. Ethnic tensions figure prominently in the model.

Robert Kaplan (1993)-Balkan ghosts: A journey through history [Read: Foreword, Chapter 2 (Old Serbia), and Chapter 4 (The White City)]. A perspective insisting that the current tensions in the Balkans are rooted in ancient hatreds among the different ethnic groups, in contrast to current perspectives in political science.

Week 2 (September 24)

Topic: *Memory's flexibility*

Readings:

Schacter, D., L., Guerin, S.A., and St. Jaques, P. (2011). Memory distortion: an adaptive perspective. A review article on memory distortions, and why these distortions allow for the adaptive capabilities of the cognitive system.

Tversky, B., & Marsh, E. (2000). Biased retelling of events yield biased memories. A series of experiments showing how remembering events with different motivations in mind impacts what one remembers subsequently.

Debate: Is memory accurate?

Brown & Kulik (1977). Flashbulb memories as extraordinary memories. A paper that introduces a now very popular construct: flashbulb memories. The argument in the paper is that these memories are accurate.

Talarico & Rubin (2003). Flashbulb memories as typical memories. A paper that disputes the claim that flashbulb memories are special using memories of September 11 as a case study.

To watch after class:

"How does human memory work?" - BBC Documentary (51 minutes) – a documentary about memory across the lifespan

(LINK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnNCURNfsvY>)

Week 3 (October 1)

Topic: *Propagation of information, memories and beliefs*

Readings:

Harber, K.D. & Cohen, D.J. (2005). The Emotional Broadcaster theory of social sharing. This article traces the social sharing that occurred after a group of students visited a morgue.

Barrett, J., and Nyhof, M. (2001). Spreading of non-natural concepts. A series of experiments looking at the propagation of counter-intuitive concepts in conversations.

Berger, J. (2011). Arousal increases social transmission of information. A brief empirical article exploring the factors that drive propagation of information.

Research lab: Memetics: how to spread ideas?

Dawkins R. (1978) The selfish gene (Chapter 11: Memes: the new replicators). One of the first books to define and discuss the concept of a meme as a cultural unit of information.

Gladwell, M. (2000). The tipping point. How little things can make a big difference. (Chapters 1: The three rules of epidemics). This is an easy-to-read popular book on large-scale dynamics.

Week 4 (October 8)

Topic: *The formation of collective memories: psychologically grounded dynamic phenomena*

Readings:

Shteynberg, G. (2010). The silent emergence of culture. Experiments showing that individuals pay more attention to, and better remember, information that they believe is attended by similar others than information they believe is attended by dissimilar others.

Schuman & Scott (1989). Generations and collective memories. Paper showing that different generations of Americans remember different memories from the past. The intersection between personal and national history is used as an explanation.

Spivey, L. (2017). The shared past that wasn't. An easy to read piece about the psychological literature on the formation of (false) collective memories.

Research lab: Special cases of collective memories: myths.

Cohen (2013). Italian praised for saving Jews is now seen as a collaborator. A New York Times article about how a myth of a hero emerged at the outset of WW2.

Welzer, H. (2005). Grandpa Wasn't a Nazi: The Holocaust in German Family Remembrance. An impressive qualitative study about how current generations remember their grandparents' involvement in the Holocaust.

To watch after class:

"The Betrayed" BBC documentary (40 minutes) – a documentary about the different perspectives (Armenian vs. Turkish) on the Armenian genocide (WARNING: graphic images; link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FI8PP0JnsW0>)

Week 5 (October 15)

Topic: *Collective identity*

Guest (in class) speaker: Romeo Dallaire (former UN general stationed in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide)

Readings:

Cialdini et al. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. The research study investigates the tendency of individuals to associate themselves with successful others.

Hastorf, A. H. & Cantril, H. (1954). They Saw a Game: A Case Study. A study on how Dartmouth and Princeton have different perspectives after watching a Dartmouth vs. Princeton football game.

Invited speaker: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda

New York Magazine Review of Romeo Dallaire's book: "*Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*"

<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2004/11/18/a-hero-of-our-time-5/>

Week 6 (October 22)

Topic: *Conflict group presentations (Note: readings are specific for each conflict group)*

General resource: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (<https://ucdp.uu.se/?id=1&id=1>)

Conflict: ISRAEL vs. PALESTINE

Sub-Topics:

- Consociational democracy vs. ethnic partition
- Identity construction
- Sacred values

Suggested readings:

Rashid Khalidi, Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness. Analysis of the attempts to construct a pan-Arab identity.

Andeweg, R. (2000). Consociational democracy. An extensive review of consociational democracy as a possible solution in divided societies.

Kaufmann, C (1996). Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic War. Kaufmann is a proposer of ethnic partition in situations where conflict has become intractable.

N. Sambanis (2000). Partition as a Solution to Ethnic War. A statistical test of the partition hypothesis. (Heavy on stats)

Ginges, J., Atran, A., Medin, D., & Shikaki, K. (2007). Sacred bounds on rational resolution of violent political conflict. An empirical study on Palestinian refugees and Israeli settlers looking at how material tradeoffs can backfire in negotiations.

Conflict: FORMER YUGOSLAVIAN REPUBLICS

Sub-Topics:

- Peace agreements
- Electoral sequences
- Top down vs. bottom up collective action

Suggested readings:

Robert Kaplan (1993)-Balkan ghosts: A journey through history (part 1: Yugoslavia). A perspective insisting that the current tensions in the Balkans are rooted in ancient hatreds among the different ethnic groups, in contrast to current perspectives in political science.

V. P. Gagnon (1995). Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia. The case for elite driven instigation, focusing on Slobodan Milosevic's role as a nationalist manipulator.

J. Linz and A. Stepan (1992). Political Identities and Electoral Sequences: Spain, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia. Elections, if done correctly, can create inclusive identities that help federalism to be successful.

Holbrooke, R. (1998). To end a war. This is a book written by the main negotiator of the Dayton Agreement, Richard Holbrooke, in which the dynamics that lead to the agreement are thoroughly presented. (Chapter 2 - "The greatest collective failure").

Conflict: INDIA

Sub-Topics:

- Conflict escalation
- Elite driven mobilization
- Group identity and sacred values

Suggested readings:

S. Rudolph & L. Rudolph (1993). Modern Hate. The Ayodya mosque incident in India: it's not about ancient hatreds.

Ashutosh Varshney (2003). Understanding Gujarat Violence and Paul Brass (2003). The Gujarat Pogroms of 2002. Both articles published in Items and Issues (Social Science Research Council).

Brass, P. (1997). Theft of an Idol. How local elites in India construct a system of ethnic violence.

Ashutosh Varshney (2003). Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India. Cities with cross-religious civic organization avoid riots, others don't.

Sachdeva, S., & Medin, D.L. (2009) Group Identity Salience in Sacred Value Based Cultural Conflict: An Examination of the Hindu-Muslim Identities in the Kashmir and Babri Mosque Issues.

Conflict: RWANDA

Sub-Topics:

- Genocide and reconciliation
- Mass-media and intergroup conflict
- Dehumanization

Suggested readings:

Power, S. (2001). Bystanders to Genocide: Why the United States Let the Rwanda Tragedy Happen. Detailed account of the Rwandan genocide and the passivity of the international community.

Scott Straus (2007). What Is the Relationship between Hate Radio and Violence? Rethinking Rwanda's "Radio Machete". An article debating the efficiency of media in guiding the Rwandan genocide.

Paluck, E.L. (2009). Reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict using the media: A field experiment in Rwanda. An empirical study looking at the impact of media in changing collective norms in Rwanda.

Haslam, N. (2006). Dehumanization: an integrative review. A review of the literature looking at manifestations and theories of dehumanization as a social phenomenon.

Week 7 (October 29)

FALL BREAK (NO CLASS)

Week 8 (November 5)

Topic: *Identity mobilization and identity change*

Readings:

Byman, D (2000). Forever enemies? The manipulation of ethnic identities to end ethnic wars. Case studies are presented in favor of the idea that identities are highly malleable.

Posner, D. (2004). The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi. An empirical investigation of a social construction of identity perspective.

Ashutosh Varshney, "Understanding Gujarat Violence," and Paul Brass, "The Gujarat Pogroms of 2002," in Items and Issues (2003). The two pieces are trying to make sense of the collective violence that occurred in the Indian state of Gujarat, the mobilization of social networks is proposed as an explanation.

Research lab: How to design democracies to avoid conflict.

Linz, J. and Stepan, A. (1992). Political Identities and Electoral Sequences: Spain, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia. Founding elections, if done correctly, can create cross-cutting or inclusive identities that help federalism to be successful.

Duke, L. (2006). The word at war. Propaganda? Nah, Here's the Scoop, Say the Guys Who Planted Stories in Iraqi Papers. This is a Washington Post article on the Lincoln Group, a group that was involved in spreading propaganda in Iraq in an effort to build democracy.

To watch after class:

“Ghosts of Rwanda” PBS Documentary (128 minutes) – a documentary about the Rwandan conflict (WARNING: graphic images; link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJAuyIRfYIM>)

Week 9 (November 12)

Topic: *Sacred values*

Readings:

Ledgerwood, A., Liviatan, I., & Carnevale, P. J. (2007). Group identity completion and the symbolic value of property. In valuing property, people consider its relevance for the group.

Ginges, J., Atran, A., Medin, D., & Shikaki, K. (2007). Sacred bounds on rational resolution of violent political conflict. An empirical study on Palestinian refugees and Israeli settlers looking at how material-sacred tradeoffs can backfire in negotiations.

Atran, S., Axelrod, R., & Davis, R. (2007). Sacred barriers to conflict resolution. Brief piece interviewing leaders involved in intractable conflicts about sacred values.

Research lab: Are there cultural differences in the values that people hold?

Michele J. Gelfand et al. (2011). Differences Between Tight and Loose Cultures: A 33-Nation Study. This study shows how ecological and historical threats shape culture, and influence the degree to which norms are enforced.

Week 10 (November 19)

Topic: *Identity and the origins of nations: primordialism, perennialism, and modernism*

Guest (in class) speaker: Staffan de Mistura (former UN Special Envoy to Syria)

Readings:

Anderson, B. (1983). Imagined communities, Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 3 (The origins of national consciousness). The modernist view on nationalism.

Brubaker, R., Loveman, M., & Stamatov, P. (2004). Ethnicity as cognition. It brings in psychology and anthropology to the ethnicity debate. It discusses the contribution of psychological phenomena (stereotyping, social categorization, schema) to the constructivist approach to ethnic groups and nations.

Invited speaker: The power of schematic narrative templates.

Wertsch J. (2008). Collective memory and narrative templates. A theoretical paper on how nations use narrative templates to interpret the past, to mobilize in the present, and to imagine their future.

Week 11 (November 26)

Topic: *Mass-media/new-media: its impact in the creation of shared representations and in mobilizing the collective*

Guest (Skype) speaker: Billy Brady (Yale University)

Readings:

Wegner et al. (1981). Incrimination through innuendo: Can media questions become public answers? This study investigates how easily media can influence public opinion by simply casting doubt on a public figure.

Brady, W.J., Wills, J.A., Jost, J.T., Tucker, J.A., & Van Bavel (2017). Emotion shapes the diffusion of moralized content in social networks. An empirical paper on how information propagates on Twitter among liberals and conservatives.

Paluck, E.L. (2009). Reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict using the media: A field experiment in Rwanda. An empirical study looking at the impact of media in changing collective norms in Rwanda.

Invited (Skype) speaker: Read about the importance of media in curating the informational landscape?

Pariser, E. (2011). The Filter Bubble (Chapter 2: The User is the content). The book claims that with advancements in technology (e.g., algorithms developed by Google, Facebook), a personalized internet is created, which, in his opinion, will lead to the fragmentation of society.

Week 12 (December 3)

Topic: *Understand large-scale dynamics: social network analysis and agent-based modeling* (*A brief workshop in social network analysis)*

Readings:

Borgatti, S. (2009). Network analysis in the social sciences. This review introduces a few fundamental concepts in network science and presents how different disciplines developed an interest in social network analysis.

Gladwell, M. (2000). The tipping point. (Chapter 2: The law of the few: connectors, mavens and salesmen). An easy to read chapter on the role that node (=people) attributes play in the dynamics of social networks.

Research lab: The impact of social networking in our lives.

Bond et al. (2012). A 61-million-experiment in social influence and political mobilization. This the largest empirical study ever conducted; it shows how different messaging strategies have different consequences in terms of voting behavior.

To watch after class:

“Six degrees of separation” (40 minutes) – an accessible documentary on the study of networks (link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcCpEf6_Ofg)

Week 13 (December 10)

Topic: *Collective action / Princeton Museum Visit with Dr. Veronica White*

Readings:

Scacco, A. (in press). Who Riots? Empirical investigation explaining individual participation in ethnic riots in Nigeria.

Debate: Is computational modeling a solution to understanding collective violence?

Lim, M, Metzler, R., & Bar-Yam, Y. (2007). Global pattern formation and ethnic/cultural violence. An agent-based model simulating the violence that occurred in Former Yugoslavia and in India based on a type segregation model.

Weidmann & Toft (2010). Promises and pitfalls in the spatial prediction of ethnic violence. A critique of Lim et al.

To watch after class:

“Waltz with Bashir”- Movie directed by Ari Folman on memory and conflict, presenting the Shabra and Shatilla massacres in Lebanon (link: <http://waltzwithbashir.com/>)