

Aspects of Violence

History 412

Autumn 2007

Professor Arthur Waldron

Introduction:

“War” said Heraclitus (ca. 540-480 B.C.E.) “is the father of all things.” Not a happy observation but one that shows how true it is the more one investigates. Violence and destruction, organized and disorganized, are ubiquitous. The twentieth century was perhaps the bloodiest on record, but every century, it seems, sets a new mark.

Yet in the academic and intellectual worlds, violence is rarely addressed in a serious and comprehensive manner. Many reasons exist for this omission, which is in itself worth investigating.

This course will examine a variety of texts, some old and some new, with an eye toward finding commonalities and ways of understanding violence. We will hear a first-hand account of the nightmarish sufferings of children kidnapped to be soldiers in Uganda, look at biological and anthropological approaches to understanding conflict, and spend two full discussions on some very interesting and provocative new work on traditions of violence in the Bible and in Judaism (from research done in part at Penn with David Ruderman, one of our most eminent professors). We will also look at the prototypical Chinese account of battle, more than three millennia ago, as well--of course--as the *Iliad* and some fascinating interpretation of it. We will examine the origins of Mongol fighting power and the origins of the Red Cross, and conclude by looking at a wonderful new book--by a Penn professor--about how genocide should be understood.

History 412 is an upper level seminar, suitable for advanced undergraduates and graduate students. Its purpose is to foster a comprehensive, rigorous, and intellectually adventurous study of violence in all its many forms.

Discussion in Professor Waldron’s seminars is free: *no taboos exist*. You can forget political correctness in this class: what we want is intellectual insight. You will gain nothing by attempting to agree with him or curry intellectual favor. What he wants to know is what you *really* think--even if you have some qualms about saying it. And don’t be afraid to be wrong. Fruitful error is one of the forces that pushes intellectual life forward. The course has no agenda and no school solutions. We aim for free and searching discussion. That is what education is all about.

Evaluation and grading will be based on your in-class presentations and comments. Please do not worry. If you do the work you will do just fine. Try to enjoy the challenge of applying your understanding to perhaps the most widespread, but also the most baffling, of human behaviors.

Staff:

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Structure:

We will meet Monday afternoons from 2-5 PM.

For each topic a student or students will prepare written comments and questions on the readings. The other students will be expected to do the assigned reading and participate in discussions.

CALENDAR

September:

Week II:

10 M (1) **Organizational Meeting**

Reading: None

Week III:

17 M (2) **Dr. Susan Harper will discuss the “Lord’s Resistance Army” in Uganda.**

Reading: Els De Temmerman, *Aboke Girls* (Michigan State University Press, 2001)

Week IV:

24 M (3) **Origins of Violence (1): Football Hooliganism**

Reading: Bill Buford, *Among the Thugs* (New York: Vintage Departures, 1993)

October:

Week V:

01 M (4) **Origins of Violence (2)**

Reading: : S. Zuckerman *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes* (1932; second edition 1981) chapters XIV to the end, i.e. "The Hamadryas Baboon Colony" through "The Social Scale", pp. 215-316 in both editions.

Week VI:

08 M (5) **Origins of Violence (3)**

Reading: Napoleon A. Chagnon *Yanomamo (Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology)* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1997)

Week VII:

Fall Break 13-16 October

Week VIII:

22 M (6) **Prototypical Violence: (1)**

Reading: Bible: Esther (Entire)
Please read this enigmatic book in any edition you wish.

I would also recommend that you consult:

Esther Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Carey A. Moore (The Anchor Bible, vol. 7B. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1971)
and
Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006) pp. 1-106..

Week IX:

29 M **Prototypical Violence: (2)**

Reading: Bible: I Samuel, chapters 1-15.
Please these very important chapters in any edition you wish.

I would recommend you consult: *I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes & Commentary by P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.* (The Anchor Bible, vol. 8. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1980)
and

Horowitz, *Reckless Rites*, pp. 107-end..

November:

Week X:

05 M (7) **Prototypical Violence: (3)**

Reading: *The Iliad of Homer* Translated and with an Introduction by Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

Simone Weil and Rachel Bepaloff, *War and the Iliad* Introduction by Christopher Benfey (New York: New York Review Books, 2005)

Week XI:

12 M (8) **Prototypical Violence (4)**

Reading: *The Book of Documents* 書經 Part V Books I-III “The Battle of Mu-yeh” 牧野

Week XII:

19 M (9) **Prototypical Violence (5)**

Reading: *The Secret History of the Mongols: The Origin of Chingis Khan*. An Adaptation by Paul Kahn (Boston: Cheng & Tsui, 1984).

Thanksgiving Break: 22-25 November

Week XIII:

26 M (10) **Responses to Violence (1)**

Reading: J. Henry Dunant, *A Memory of Solferino* (London: Cassell and Company, 1947)

December:

Week XIV:

03 M (11) **Responses to Violence (2)**

Reading: Daniel Chirot and Clark McCauley, *Why Not Kill Them All? The Logic and Prevention of Mass Murder* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006)

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Classes End: 7 December

Readings

Assigned Readings: Books available for purchase (available at the Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th Street) Items marked with an asterisk (*) are contained in the course packet which will be available for purchase at Wharton Reprographics, Suite 400 SH/DH tel 215 898-2945. Also on reserve at Van Pelt.

*Els De Temmerman, *Aboke Girls* (Michigan State University Press, 2001) ISBN: 9789970022564

Bill Buford, *Among the Thugs* (New York: Vintage Departures, 1993) ISBN 0-679-74535-1

Napoleon A. Chagnon *Yanomamo (Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology)* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1997) ISBN 0-15-505327-2

Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006) ISBN: 0691124914

The Iliad of Homer Translated and with an Introduction by Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) ISBN N-0-226-46940-9

Simone Weil and Rachel Bepaloff, *War and the Iliad* Introduction by Christopher Benfey (New York: New York Review Books, 2005) ISBN 1-59017-145-4

The Secret History of the Mongols: The Origin of Chingis Khan. An Adaptation by Paul Kahn (Boston: Cheng & Tsui, 1984). ISBN 0-88727-299-1

*J. Henry Dunant, *A Memory of Solferino* (London: Cassell and Company, 1947)

Daniel Chirot and Clark McCauley, *Why Not Kill Them All? The Logic and Prevention of Mass Murder* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006) ISBN 13-978-0-691-09296