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**Conflict and the Graphic Novel**

**Fall 2020**

**SISU 106**

**Monday 2:30pm – 5:20pm.**

**Office Hours: Tuesdays 9 am to 1 pm or by appointment**

**Professor Joseph Torigian**

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**Course Overview**

This class takes a new approach to understanding the roots and consequences of violent conflict in the 20th and 21st centuries: through the graphic novel. Graphic novelists have created works that not only serve as excellent introductions to critically important world events, but also point to larger truths about the use of violence to achieve political ends. As political scientists, graphic novels play the important role of reminding us of the deep well of human suffering that lies beneath our jargon. Many of the graphic novels we will read in this course not only serve these purposes, but also are works of art in and of themselves.

The course will proceed thematically and will address an array of violent dynamics and war processes through the use of seminal works in political science that will delineate the themes, theories and variables of interest. Specifically, we will look at genocide, nuclear weapons, conventional bombing, counterinsurgency, terrorism, occupation, and the war in Iraq, as well as authoritarian politics in Russia and China. The graphic novels will present the empirics, covering some of the most important cases of war, occupation, violent unrest, ethnic conflict and genocide that have occurred over the last seventy years. Highlights include such works as Art Spiegelman’s classic *Maus* and Joe Sacco’s ‘cartoon journalism.’

Through exposure to political science theory and graphic novels on conflict, you will walk away from this course with a deeper appreciation of the roots of violent conflict in societies and an improved sense of how to communicate ideas and themes more effectively in an oral, written, and graphic form.

**First Year Seminar Course Objectives**

1. Demonstrate critical thinking through written and oral presentation
2. Interpret issues from multiple cultural and philosophical perspectives
3. Learn to read critically and analytically
4. Address arguments from a variety of perspectives
5. Develop ability to articulate a position on controversial issues and support those positions with appropriate evidence and argumentation
6. Acquire the skill to present ideas creatively

**Requirements**

*Attendance*: 15%

*Response paper:* 20% (Optional submission October 5 for comments, final submission October 19)

*Mid-term:* 20% (Distributed October 29, due November 5)

*Op-ed*: 15% (Due November 16)

*Final Project In-class Presentation*: 15% (In class. Date TBD)

*Final Project Written Submission:* 15% (Due December 7)

*Online policies:*

This will be my first time teaching online. I have spent the summer training to make this course as smooth as possible. Please do let me know as the semester progresses what you think works and what does not. I have thick skin and big ears, and I feel strongly about working with you to make the course as good as it can possibly be. I will make adjustments early-on based on your feedback.

All synchronous (“live”) content is mandatory, but I will provide the slides after the lecture has concluded. Unfortunately, I cannot record my lectures, and I must request that you also do not record them. The reason for this situation is that I will be teaching topics that are considered sensitive in certain countries. It’s important for both you and me to feel comfortable discussing these subjects privately. If for some reason this situation creates special problems for you, please let me know. If you are interested in how academics have reacted to privacy concerns teaching online, please see:

https://www.asianstudies.org/aas-statement-regarding-remote-teaching-online-scholarship-safety-and-academic-freedom/

I encourage that you leave your camera on at all times, but I do not require it. Leaving your camera on will help me “read the room” and better appreciate when you are engaged. More importantly, it will also help contribute to a sense of community among us – an especially important objective given the situation.

If you have any concerns about technology/connectivity, please contact me or the OIT-designed point person. We will work things out.

You can schedule office hours with me on Calendly. If the time is not convenient, please email me.

Please feel free to edit your “name” on display on Zoom so I know exactly how you would like to be addressed. You can also add a preferred pronoun and/or pronunciation.

I will always start Zoom a bit before class and leave it on afterwards if anyone would like to chat informally. I encourage you to “befriend” people offline if you think you have common interests.

Generally speaking, please leave your audio on mute. If you have something to add during discussion, please use the Zoom function to raise your hand. However, when appropriate, please feel free to have a back and forth with another student.

Thank you for being patient. Please come and say hello as soon as we are all back on campus together.

*Attendance:*

Each class will include discussion of the lecture and reading materials. Students are expected to be able to discuss the readings. Many classes will include structured debate, so come prepared!

Every unexcused absence after the first will lead to a lower grade for participation (from A to B or B to C). Please let me know beforehand if you must miss class for personal reasons like illness, family or personal emergency, religious observance, or mandatory event. I do not need medical documentation.

For information on how class participation is graded, please see:

http://assessment.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/OralCommunication.pdf

*Response paper:*

The response paper is a 5 page, double-spaced written assignment on the readings and lectures. If you turn in this paper two weeks in advance, I will return it to you with comments one week before the final deadline. I also encourage you to contact the Writing Center (see below) - remember this is free help that can only make your paper better and improve your skills.

We will spend a portion of one lecture on how to write a successful response paper, when I will also provide you with possible topics.

*Mid-term*:

The mid-term is a take home exam. You will have one week to finish two essay questions based on the readings and lectures. Each answer should be at most two double-spaced pages.

*Op-ed:*

An op-ed is a short, 500 word piece that appears on a newspaper’s editorial page. We will cover the basics of writing a good op-ed in class.

The topic of your op-ed is why people should read one graphic novel that we do not teach in class, or an explanation of what you think that graphic novel teaches about the nature of political violence.

You may select from any of these graphic novels, or you can ask for my approval to do a book not on this list.

*The Arab of the Future: A Childheed in the Middle East, 1985-1987* by Riad Sattouf

*Alpha: Abidjan to Paris*, by Bessora and Barroux

*Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea* by Guy Delisle

*Berlin* by Jason Lutes

*The Life of Frederick Douglass* by David F. Walker, Damon Smyth, and Marissa Louise

*The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* by Sonny Liew

*They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei

*Boxers and Saints* by Gene Luen Yang

*Exit Wounds* by Rutu Modan

*Pride of Baghdad* by Brian K. Vaughn

Your op-eds will help me determine what to change to my syllabus next time I teach it.

*Final Project:*

As a final project, you will provide an idea for a graphic novel to either a publisher or an illustrator. The project should demonstrate both familiarity with the topic and how it connects to a political science concept or policy issue. During the last week of class, you will present your idea to the class as a whole (half the grade). You will also submit a three page summary of your ideas in written form. You may choose to work with a partner. However, if you choose to partner up, your oral and written assignments will double in required length. One lecture will include a tutorial on Powerpoint.

**All written assignments should be provided in paper form at the beginning of class on the day of the deadline. Please print double-sided and recycle.**

**Office Hours**

As a First Year Seminar, one of the intentions of this course is to help you figure out how to approach your college education as a whole. We will address this issue throughout the semester. However, I **strongly** encourage you to come to office hours or schedule a meeting with me one on one. You do not need a specific reason to come chat – we will find something to talk about. If I could give my undergraduate self one piece of advice, it would be to take advantage of my professor’s office hours. You should come to office hours at least once to discuss your final project, but feel free to come discuss other assignments as well.

**Readings and Assignments**

***August 24: Introduction to Course***

Readings:

*March*, Volume 1, by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell

“Can Comics Save International Relations?” by Diane Coyle and Penny Mealy, *Foreign Policy*, November 5, 2019.

***August 31: Genocide***

Readings:

*Maus* Book 1 by Art Spiegelman

“Second Generation Comparative Research on Genocide,” by Scott Straus in *World Politics* 59: 3.

In class:

Short clip of Genocide: Worse Than War

***September 7: Labor Day***

***September 14: Nuclear Weapons***

Readings:

*Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima,* Volume 1, by Keiji Nakazawa

“The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered” by Bart Bernstein in *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1995

“Revisiting Hiroshima in Iran” by Scott Sagan and Benjamin Valentino in *International Security* 42:1, pages 41-54 and 75-79.

In class:

Short clip of The Fog of War

***September 21: Conventional Bombing***

Readings:

*School Essays* by Ulli Lust: <http://www.electrocomics.com/pdfs/schoolessays_ullilust.pdf>

*Bombing to Win* by Robert Pape, pages 12-86

Tutorial on how to write, question for response paper distributed

In class:

Short clip of The Fog of War

***September 28: Ethnic Conflict***

Readings:

*Safe Area Gorazde* by Joe Sacco

*Understanding Ethnic Violence* by Roger Petersen, Chapter 1

“Ethnic Cleavages and Irregular War: Iraq and Vietnam” by Stathis Kalyvas and Matt Kocher in *Politics and Society*, 6:1

In class:

Short clip of The Death of Yugoslavia

***October 5: Counterinsurgency (Optional submission of first draft of response paper)***

Readings:

*Vietnamerica* by GB Tran

Reviews of US Army Field Manual No. 3-24 in *Perspectives on Politics* by Stephen Biddle and Stathis Kalyvas

***October 12: Terrorism***

Readings:

*The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* by Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon

“The Strategies of Terrorism” by Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter in *International Security*, 30:1

In class:

Short clip of Inside 9/11 by National Geographic

***October 19: Occupation (Response Papers Due)***

Readings:

*Footnotes in Gaza* by Joe Sacco

“Uncommon Ground: Territorial Conflict and the Politics of Legitimacy” by Stacie Goddard in *International Security,* 3:31

***October 26: The War in Iraq***

Readings:

*The White Donkey: Terminal Lance* by Maximilian Uriarte

*A Second Chance with Aria* by Adam Yang in *Destination Unknown*, Volume 1, Spring 2019 (pages 61-71)

“An Autopsy of the Iraq Debacle: Policy Failure or Bridge too Far?” by Daniel Byman in *Security Studies*, 17: 2008.

***November 2: The Iranian Revolution (And mid-terms due)***

Readings:

Persepolis 2.0 (short): https://www.flickr.com/photos/30950471@N03/sets/72157620466531333/

In class:

Persepolis (movie) and discussion

Tutorial on how to write an op-ed

***November 9: China***

Readings:

*Tiananmen 1989* by Lun Zhang, Adrien Gombead, and Ameziane

In class:

Short tutorial on how to do Powerpoint

***November 16: Russia (op-ed due)***

Readings:

*Other Russias* by Victoria Lomasko

“Choosing Autocracy: Actors, Institutions, and Revolution in the Erosion of Russian Democracy” by Mike McFaul in Comparative Politics, 50:3

In class:

Short clip of Putin’s Revenge (PBS Frontline)

***November 23: Presentations***

***November 30: Presentations***

**Reference Materials**

*Making Comics* by Scott McCloud

*Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud

*Alan Moore’s Writing for Comics* by Alan Moore

**Additional Information and Policies**

*Academic Integrity:*

All students are required to adhere to the Academic Integrity Code:

<https://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm>

*Requests for Extensions or Special Accommodations*

Students anticipating any difficulty in completing assigned work on time should consult with their professors well in advance of any course deadlines. Any student seeking exceptions to course policies or requesting special accommodations due to medical or familial issues must first consult with the Office of the Dean of Students (Butler Pavilion, Room 408; [www.american.edu/ocl/dos](http://www.american.edu/ocl/dos)). Should the Office of the Dean of Students determine that accommodations are appropriate, a letter will be issued from the Office of the Dean of Students to the student’s professors. Students must then follow up with their professors either in person or via email as soon as the circumstances permit in order to discuss new arrangements for required work and deadlines. Simply providing a letter from the Office of the Dean of Students does not constitute a waiver for course requirements or deadlines, nor does such a letter excuse work missed prior to the provision of documentation unless the Office of the Dean of Students specifically indicates that the accommodations are retroactive. Late penalties and other course policies will apply to any revised assignment arrangements or deadlines.

*Early Warning Notices*

Undergraduate students may receive Early Warning Notices within the first month of classes. These notices are designed for you to contact your faculty, receive assistance, and develop strategies to improve your performance.

*Emergency Preparedness*

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www. prepared. american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/ college-specific information.

*Student Support Services:*

**Academic Support Center** (x3360, MGC 243):

Supports the academic development and educational goals of all AU students while also providing support to students with disabilities. We offer workshops on topics of interest to all students such as time management, note taking, critical thinking, memory skills, and test taking. Additional support includes free private and group tutoring in many subjects, supplemental instruction, The Math Lab and Writing Lab.

**Writing Center** (x2991, Bender Library, 1st Floor):

Offers free, individual coaching sessions to all AU students. In your 45-minute session, a student writing consultant can help you address your assignments, understand the conventions of academic writing, and learn how to revise and edit your own work.

**Counseling Center** (x3500, MGC 214):

Is here to help students make the most of their university experience, both personally and academically. They offer individual and group counseling, urgent care, self-help resources, referrals to private care, as well as programming to help you gain the skills and insight needed to overcome adversity and thrive while you are in college. Contact the Counseling Center to make an appointment in person or by telephone, or visit the Counseling Center page on the AU website for additional information.

**Center for Diversity & Inclusion** (x3651, MGC 201):

Is dedicated to enhancing LGBTQ, Multicultural, First Generation, and Women’s experiences on campus and to advance AU’s commitment to respecting & valuing diversity by serving as a resource and liaison to students, staff, and faculty on issues of equity through education, outreach, and advocacy.

**OASIS: The Office of Advocacy Services for Interpersonal and Sexual Violence** (x7070):

Provides free and confidential victim advocacy services for American University students who are impacted by all forms of sexual violence (e.g. sexual assault, rape, dating or domestic violence, sexual harassment, or stalking).

**International Student & Scholar Services** (x3350, Butler Pavilion, Room 410):

Offers resources to support academic success and participation in campus life including academic counseling, support for second language learners, response to questions about visas, immigration status and employment and intercultural programs, clubs and other campus resources.

**SIS Virtual Hub:**

A full listing of resources and information for SIS Undergraduates.