

Wars, Violence, and Gender in the Twentieth Century

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November 5–28, 2018

Center for Urban History, Lviv

Four Hours Per Week

Monday, 4:00–6:00 p.m. (CUH Library)

Wednesday, 4:00–6:00 p.m. (CUH Library)



Wars, Violence, and Gender in the Twentieth Century is a seminar-based course for students who are interested in investigating the gender dimension of wars and violence. The course aims to discuss the major military conflicts of the twentieth century from a gender perspective. In doing so, the course will cover the history of global and local wars in a wide variety of regions, including Europe, Africa, and Asia. However, rather than surveying a vast number of military conflicts, we will use a case study approach to conduct in-depth analyses of external and internal dynamics of military encounters and the role of gendered violence during them.

During the course, we will discuss primary sources, recent historiographical debates, and multiple methodological approaches related to violence and gender. For this reason, the course is organized both chronologically and thematically. In particular, we will discuss World War I; World War II; the Holocaust; terrorism; and wars in Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and Bosnia. Focusing on various forms of violence during twentieth century wars and military conflicts (i.e., world wars, guerrilla warfare, civil wars, irregular warfare, and genocides), we will investigate the following:

- (1) How wars and military conflicts shaped gender identities and roles in different societies;
- (2) How gendered violence was instrumentalized by governments and the military command during and after military conflicts; and
- (3) How gendered violence shaped identities and subjectivities of people and societies who committed or experienced violence over the long term.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to do the following:

- Critically appraise the opportunities and limitations of the application of a gender approach to the history of wars and military conflicts;
- Describe key aspects of major military conflicts of the twentieth century;
- Understand the concepts of war, gender, gendered violence, genocidal violence, sexual violence, and trauma;
- Critically evaluate different types of primary sources and scholarly books from a variety of disciplines and different methodological persuasions; and
- Develop a historical explanation of the relationship between violence and gender based on primary and secondary sources.

Schedule

Week 1 (November 5)

Introduction. Gendering Wars and Violences.

World War I: Heroic Masculinities and Fragile Bodies in Industrial Warfare

The introductory class aims to help you navigate the course syllabus; better understand the course aims, assignments, and approaches to the course topics; and engage more deeply with the course materials.

During the second part of the class, we will discuss how societies were mobilized during World War I, experienced warfare, and tried to make sense of their wartime experiences. Furthermore, we will consider the war as a “body” experience, exploring how it physically and mentally affected male bodies.

Week 2 (November 7)

World War II: Sexual Violence Against Women (the Cases of Japan, Germany, and the USSR)

In this class, we will examine World War II as a gendered experience. We will explore various scholarly interpretations of wartime sexual violence, examining its strategic and opportunistic dimensions. In other words, we will reflect on wartime violence as a military strategy, weapon of war, practice, and/or by-product of war.

Week 3 (November 12)

Gendering the History of the Holocaust

This week, we will continue our discussion of different forms of sexual violence. Whereas the previous class concentrated on sexual violence during World War II, this class will focus on similarities and differences in male and female experiences of the Holocaust in concentration camps and beyond them. In other words, using Doris Bergen’s terms, we will explore whether sexual violence during the Holocaust was unique or typical.

Week 4 (November 14)

Transition to Peace: Family and Gender Roles after World War II

Delving into the postwar period, this week’s class aims to trace how postwar European societies tried to overcome the moral and physical devastation of World War II. The class main focus will

be on the war's effects on family life and gender roles. We will discuss how combatants and non-combatants found ways to overcome traumatic wartime experiences and (re)build their lives.

Week 5 (November 19)

The Bangladesh War of 1971: Rape and Nation-Building in Post-Colonial Space

This week, we will continue to explore the post-World War II world. However, we will move from Europe to South Asia to explore the violent process of forming independent states in the postcolonial world. We will focus on one case study—the Bangladesh War of 1971—to examine the relationship between nationalism, gender, and sexual violence.

Week 6 (November 21)

Intimate Violence: The Perpetrator's Perspective on the Rwandan and Bosnian Genocides

During this week's class, we will explore the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides from the perpetrator's perspective. In other words, we will investigate why people commit extraordinary violence. We will also continue our examination of sexual violence (please review readings from Weeks 2, 3 and 5) and the strategic and instrumental use of rape by critically evaluating the concept of "rape as a weapon of war" in the context of the Rwandan and Yugoslav wars and genocides. Specifically, we will look at personal and structural factors that shaped perpetrators' decisions.

Week 7 (November 26)

Violence as Work: Young Men and Child Soldiers in the Sierra Leone Civil War

This week, we will discuss one of the most brutal conflicts in post-independent Africa: the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991–2002). Tracing the blurred boundaries between "war" and "peace" and dispersed frontlines, we will consider how the war penetrated the everyday realm, affecting the labour market and social relations. Another focus of this week's class will be violence against children, the capitalization on child labour, and the employment of child soldiers in warfare.

Week 8 (November 28)

Female Terrorists: Roles, Motives, and Media Representations

Starting with an analysis of the definitions, concepts, characteristics, and types of terrorism, we will focus on the role of women in terrorism. We will approach the topic from two perspectives. First, we will discuss how specific terrorist organizations see women's role in the terrorist movement. Second, we will compare and contrast conventional narratives about women's motives for joining terrorist organizations with women's own narratives about their decision to join.