SYLLABUS:
Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Violence
Spring 2018

Lecturer: Dr LORENZO D’ORSI (lesson 1 – 2, 4 – 7, 9 – 11)
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Guests:
- Prof FRANÇOIS RUEGG (lesson 3)
- Dr LUIbigiovanni quartA (lesson 7)
- Dr AURORA MASSA (lesson 12)

Course Description:
With respect to the first half of the course, the second module aims to provide a more strict anthropological reading on violence. How can socio-cultural anthropology contribute to the understanding of the causes, characteristics, and effects of mass violence, collective traumas, as well as the politics of post-conflict situations? The course will response these questions through theoretical key-concepts and ethnographic case studies from Balkans, Argentina, Rwanda, Palestine, etc., which will offer a comparative outlook. We will critically review theories and discourses on phenomena ranging from the so-called ethnic conflicts, religious clashes, structural violence, routinization of terror, painful memories, state violence. The course will also queries contemporary hot topics, like terrorism and refugee crisis, and critically scrutinize the prominent effects of politics of intervention such as multiculturalism, human rights and humanitarianism. Students will have ample opportunities for in-class discussion and debate.

Course Objectives:
Upon successful completion of the course, students will become familiar with fundamental concepts, paradigms, and debates that have shaped anthropological understanding of violence. They will develop the necessary analytic insight to critically discuss ethnic rhetoric, to debate the cultural construction of identity, to assess conditions of structural violence, and to interrogate sites marked by post-conflict policies. They will be able to apply that knowledge to enhance their own research design.

Course Structure:
The course is divided in 6 units (1 unit per week). Each unite includes 2 modules (tot: 12 modules). Each module lasts 3-hour (1 hour= 45 min.).
Classes will be held in English.
Course Material:

Required readings for the exam:

1 Monograph:

11 Articles:

Non-attending students will be required to study the additional readings of at least 3 modules (chosen by the student).

FIRST UNIT: CULTURE, VIOLENCE AND IDENTIY

This first unit will introduce the course and will illustrate its theoretical guidelines. It will explain the peculiarities of an anthropological approach on violence; and the necessity of thinking violence in plural. It will illustrate the relevance of cultural meanings, and power relationships in comprehending concrete forms of violence. The tension between those perspectives that emphasize cultural readings and those that highlight
power inequalities – the two main cornerstones of the anthropological understanding of violence –, will guide of every single module. The unit will also provide the students a critical reading of the concepts of identity, ethnicity, and nationalism.

1. Module, 12 April: a cultural reading of violence
Required Reading:

Additional Readings:

2. Module, 13 April: Ethnicity, social boundaries and identity
Required Reading:

Additional Reading:

SECOND UNIT: ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS
Through concrete ethnographic cases, this unit will focus on the so-called ethnic and religious conflicts. It will explore the “myth of global ethnic conflict” (Bowen 1996) and the “new wars” (Karldor 1999).

3. Module, 19 April: Violence and religion
guest: FRANÇOIS RUEGG
Required Reading:
4. Module, 20 April: The myth of global ethnic conflict

Required Reading:

Additional Reading:

THIRD UNIT: VIOLENCE IN TIME OF PEACE

This unit will examine forms of social exclusion, dehumanization, reproduction of domination, depersonalization of everyday life, as well as urban marginality and ghettoization. Through famous ethnographic cases, we will critically address key-notions of the anthropological debate such as “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu 1990 [1980]); “structural violence” (Farmer 2004); “genocide continuum” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004), “routinization of fear” (Green 1999), “culture of terror” (Taussig 1984).

5. Module, 26 April: symbolic and structural violence

Required Reading:

Additional Reading:

6. Module, 27 April: Culture of terror and routinization of fear

Required Reading:

Additional Reading:
FOURTH UNIT: CULTURAL TRAUMAS AND POLITICS OF MEMORY

This unit will explore the wide anthropological debate on cultural traumas and politics of memory. It will review different socio-anthropological perspectives on trauma, from the cultural approach of Jeffrey Alexander (2004) to the critical reading of Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (2009). Through concrete ethnographic example, it will also examine the dynamics of remembering violence, and the intergenerational memory transmission.

7. Module, 3 May: Politics of Trauma

Required Reading:

Additional Readings:

8. Module, 4 May: Ruins of memory

Required Reading:

Additional Readings:

FIFTH UNIT: STATE VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM

In this unit we will examine the forms of violence perpetrated by state institutions and how they can be functional to the construction of nation-states. The class will also be given a framework to understanding contemporary forms of violence like the so-called terrorist attacks and suicide bombing.

9. Module, 10 May: State and Carceral Condition
Required Reading:


Additional Reading:


10. Module, 11 May: Terrorism, martyrdom and suicide bombing

Required Reading:


Additional Readings:


SIXTH UNIT: VIOLENCE, REFUGEES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Through ethnographic cases, this last unit will focus on forms of violence within the European reception system of migrants and the European border regime. It will also provide students with an anthropological criticism of multiculturalism, cultural relativism, human right discourse. Through in-class discussion and debate, we will dedicate a part of the last module to recapitulate the topics covered during the whole course, and the main concepts acquired.

11. Module, 17 May: migrants and borders

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:


12. Module, 18 May: the predicaments of Human Rights

Required Reading:

Additional Reading:
- Fassin, D.