



17.583 - Conflict and the Graphic Novel
Spring 2013
Professor Fotini Christia, Political Science Department

Conflict and the Graphic Novel

Course 17.583: Political Science

Spring 2013. Lecture: Thursdays 3-5pm. Section: Monday 11-12am. 37-312

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Guest Lecturers:

Violeta Ivanova (violeta@mit.edu)

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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 revolution; occupation; insurgency; ethnic conflict; ethnic cleansing; terrorism; and genocide. 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 such as the Holocaust, the war in Vietnam, the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and the recent Iraq war. Highlights include such works as Art Spiegelman's classic *Maus*, Joe Sacco's 'cartoon journalism,' and a graphic novel recently created by the US military to show life in a combat zone. Two animated movies will also be shown: *Waltz with Bashir* and *Grave of the Fireflies*.

Apart from being exposed to seminal works in political science on conflict and violence, and to the graphic novel genre that empirically depicts what transpired during those conflicts, you will also learn and develop new skills that are intended to make you a more effective communicator and which you will be expected to master for a final project which would be presented in class. In that regard, Violeta Ivanova and Elizabeth Skrip of the ARTEMiS visualization group at MIT's Office of Educational Innovation and Technology will deliver guest lectures and hands-on visualization workshops on visual storytelling, screenwriting, storyboarding, illustration, graphic novel design, and 2d animation. The class assignments themselves will also focus on helping you improve your presentation and communication skills. (Please note: You do not need any background in drawing or art for this class!)

Through exposure to political science theory and graphic novels on conflict, along with the guidance in actual visual production and group presentation, you will walk away from this course with a

deeper appreciation of the roots of violent conflict in societies, an improved sense of media self-efficacy and an understanding of how to communicate ideas and themes more effectively in an oral, written and graphic form.

Requirements

Students are expected to do *all* of **the readings** and be able to engage with the themes and theories in the political science work and the empirics and stories introduced in the graphic novels. There will be two **quizzes** that will be very straightforward if you have done the readings. The quizzes we will on weeks 5 and 9.

At the beginning of the semester, students will pick a week to present a twenty-minute **group project**. The project will require background reading on the conflict addressed that week beyond what is assigned in the syllabus. The presentation can be as imaginative as you like, but should provide more information to other students about the political science themes and how they relate to the conflict as well as how the graphic novel helps to explain it better. The teaching assistant will be available to guide and assist you in the presentation.

Students will write a **one five-page response paper**. You may pick any week to write this paper, but you will need to tie the readings together. Specifically, the response paper should directly engage with the theoretical arguments presented that week as well as with how the graphic novels engage with the arguments. In terms of structure, you are advised to choose an argument, explain it in the opening paragraphs, support it in the body of the paper through theoretically and through empirics, and conclude. To improve on your writing, you are encouraged to submit a first draft. The teaching assistant will be available to guide and assist you with improving upon your writing skills. The five page paper must be on a week different from your group project.

The most important part of the course will be your **final project**. This can be a solo project or done with a group and will be presented orally in class as part of a 30 minute presentation. We encourage you to be imaginative. The topic and format of the final project must be approved by the instructor a month before it is due.

Grading

Participation: 20%

Quizzes: 10%

Response Paper: 10%

Group Project: 20%

Final Project: 40%

Week 1: Introduction to the Course; Students Pick Week for Group Project

Week 2: Genocide

"Second-Generation Comparative Research on Genocide," by Scott Straus in World Politics 59: 3

"The Lesson of Hannah Arendt," by Samantha Power in New York Review of Books, April 29, 2004

Maus by Art Spiegelman. Volume 1

Ordinary Men, Chapter 18, pgs 159-190, by Christopher Browning

Maus by Art Spiegelman: Volume 2

Master Race by Bernard Krigstein
Judenhass by Dave Sim

Week 3: Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Cleansing

Understanding Ethnic Violence, Chapter 1, by Roger Petersen
Fax from Sarajevo by Joe Kubert
"War, Collaboration, and Endogenous Ethnic Polarization: The Path to Ethnic Cleansing" by Zeynep Bulutgil in Rethinking Violence: States and Non-State Actors in Conflict
Safe-Area Gorazde by Joe Sacco
War's End by Joe Sacco

Week 4: Storytelling and Writing with Pictures

Some Reflections on Bosnia, Sarajevo, and Gorazde and Joe Sacco, Frontline Journalist (interview by Gary Groth) in Safe-Area Gorazde: the Special Edition, by Joe Sacco
Developing Story Ideas, Chapters 2-3, by Michael Rabiger
Phantom Fury – A Marine's Story by Violeta Ivanova and Betsy Skrip (graphic novel and accompanying materials: interview transcripts, story outline, and storyboards)
Marines in Fallujah combat video by Jan Bander/DVIDS
Fiasco: the American Military Adventure in Iraq, Chapter 18 (Second Fallujah), by Thomas E. Ricks

Week 5: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

Reviews of US Army Field Manual No. 3-24 in Perspectives on Politics by Stephen Biddle and Stathis Kalyvas.
"The Dynamics of Violence in the Vietnam War: An Analysis of the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES)" by Stathis Kalyvas and Matt Kocher" in Journal of Peace Research, 46: 3
Landscape by Archie Goodwin (in BC and MBWC)
Last Day in Vietnam by Will Eisner (in MBWC)
Holding Action by Archie Goodwin (in BC) (about the Korean War)
Vietnamerica by GB Tran
Counterinsurgency, Introduction and Chapter 1, by David Kilcullen
Viet-Cong! by Archie Goodwin (in BC)
The Casualty by Will Eisner (in MBWC)
The 5.56 Blues by Don Lomax (in MBWC)
The Legion of Charlies by Tom Veitch (in MBWC)
The Docs by the Naval Health Research Center
Also, Quiz!

Week 6: Storyboarding and Illustration

Visualization Style Guide for Conflict and the Graphic Novel by Betsy Skrip and Violeta Ivanova
Drawing in the Digital Age by Wei Xu
The Visual Story: Creating the Visual Structure of Film, TV, and Digital Media by Bruce Block
Pride of Baghdad by Brian K. Vaughan

Week 7: Graphic Novel Design and Animation

Developing Story Ideas, Part 3 and Part 4, by Michael Rabiger
Making Comics, Chapter 1, by Scott McCloud

Persepolis: Volumes 1 and 2 by Marjane Satrapi
Persepolis 2.0 <http://www.scribd.com/doc/18878654/Persepolis20>

Week 8: Sectarian Conflict and Occupation

"Explaining the Iraq Quagmire: Policy Failure or Bridge Too Far?" in Security Studies, Winter 2008/2009

"Ethnic Cleavages and Irregular War: Iraq and Vietnam" by Stathis Kalyvas and Matt Kocher in Politics and Society, 6: 1.

War Fix by Steve Olexa and David Axe

Sand by Mark Chadbourn (in MBWC)

"Uncommon Ground: Territorial Conflict and the Politics of Legitimacy" by Stacie Goddard in International Organization. 60: 1

"The Path to Intractability: Time and the Entrenchment of Territorial Disputes" by Ronald Hassner in International Security, 3: 31

Footnotes in Gaza by Joe Sacco

Exit Wounds by Rutu Modan

Week 9: Resistance, Revolution, and Terrorism

"Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory" by JA Goldstone in Annual Review of Political Science, Vol 4

"Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict," by Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan in International Security 33: 1.

"The Strategies of Terrorism" by Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter in International Security, 30: 1
Inside Terrorism, Chapters 1 and 2, by Bruce Hoffman

"Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay" by Martha Crenshaw in Security Studies 6: 1
The 9/11 Report by Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon

Also, Quiz!

Week 10: Targeting Civilians in Conventional War, and Review

Bombing to Win by Robert Pape pages 12-86

"The Causes of War and the Conditions of Peace" by Jack Levy in Annual Review of Political Science, Vol 1.

School Essays by Berlin Kids by Ulli Lust

http://www.electrocomics.com/pdfs/schoolessays_ullilust.pdf

I Saw It! by Keiji Nakazawa (in The Mammoth Book of War Comics)

Snow by Askold Akishin (in MBWC)

Long View by Archie Goodwin (in Blazing Combat)

Night Drop by Archie Goodwin (in BC)

Enemy! by Archie Goodwin (in BC)

Week 11-12: Class Presentations