

## **HC 153 Violence in America: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective**

Term: Spring Quarter 2004  
Location: Barat Campus  
Time: Tuesdays, 6:30-9:30 PM  
Dates: March 30, 2004-June 8, 2004  
Instructor: Timothy Lenzi  
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Class ID: 5690

This course compares violence in America from the second half of the nineteenth century to contemporary times. A variety of topics will be covered, including: World Trade Center & Pentagon attacks, political violence and assassinations, labor strife, urban unrest, and organized crime. Hollywood and media images of violence affecting youth and individuals, violence as a form of social control, and implications of violence will also be covered. Class discussion will focus on causes of violence in American society. Do groups condone violence when they perceive themselves as outsiders? Have groups resorted to violence attempting to force change in society? Is there a nineteenth century old west gunfight mentality existing in contemporary society?

The course will be interactive; students will be expected to participate in meaningful discussion on assigned readings and topics. In addition, each student will present to the class their position paper topic, and lead a class discussion.

Timothy Lenzi works as an investigator with the United States Department of Justice. Mr. Lenzi has a Master of Arts in History from Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, Illinois. He completed his undergraduate work at Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in History and Minor in Political Science.

### Competencies covered in the course:

H-2-A Can understand a social problems and can analyze the effectiveness of social institutions. Labor strife and urban unrest would be examples of social problems students could analyze under this competency. Violence as a form of social control would be another topic for analysis under this competence.

H-2-G Can evaluate the role and impact of mass media and information technology on society. Movie and television violence would be examples of topics for analysis under this competency. News coverage of violence, and violence on the Internet would be other examples of topics for analysis under this competence.

Can interpret experience in relationship to the perspective of a significant thinker or tradition.

H-2-X -written by student/faculty. Students can develop numerous topics for analysis based on class discussions with the instructor's approval. Students must also consult with their faculty mentor and SNL staff.

H-4 Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural or economic groups in the United States. Race relations would provide numerous topics of analysis under this competence.

Required Texts:

Gurr, Ted Robert. ed. Violence in America. Vols. 1 and 2. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 1989.

Reading Handouts

Excerpts from the following texts:

Browning, Frank, and John Gerassi. The American Way of Crime. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980.

Ryan, Patrick. Organized Crime: a Reference Handbook. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1995.

Scheslinger, Arthur M. Jr. The Crisis of Confidence: Ideas, Power and Violence in America. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969.

Whitmer, Barbara. The Violence Mythos. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997.

\*Additional handouts determined by instructor.

Course Grading Criteria:

Class Discussion      10%

Research Paper      30%

The research paper will be 3-5 pages of content, and will involve summarizing an issue related to the topic of violence in America. Instructor must approve topic in advance. The paper must be relevant to your competence.

Position Paper      60%

The position paper will be 8-10 pages of content, and will focus on recommending a course of action on a particular issue/topic. Topic must be approved in advance by instructor. Students present their position paper topic to the class and lead discussion. The paper must be relevant to your competence.

**Both the research & position papers must have a cover page listing the relevant competencies. In addition, research sources must be cited within the papers and a separate works cited (bibliography) page will be required. Any paper not meeting these requirements and the minimum page length will be subject to grade reduction.**

Students will follow the MLA guidelines for proper citation of research sources for the assigned papers. Please see the instructor if you have any questions concerning citation of sources. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. The instructor must uphold the DePaul University guidelines on academic integrity found in the student handbook.

Attendance at all class meetings is expected. If you are unable to attend a class session, please contact me either by telephone or e-mail. You will be accountable for any assignments due. **Written assignments must be submitted on or before due date or face grade reduction.**

No cellular telephones, pagers or electronic devices should be turned on during class. Breaks will be 10-15 minutes in length unless extended by the instructor.

### **Course Outline:**

Week 1 (3/30)-Introduction and overview of course requirements. Discussion on origins of violence in our history. Begin discussion on World Trade Center & Pentagon attacks.

Week 2 (4/6)-Reading Assignment Due: Gurr, Vol.1 pp 11-20, Gurr, Vol. 2 pp. 11-22, Vol. 2 Chapter (Ch) 1. Library orientation. Continue discussion on World Trade Center & Pentagon attacks. Begin discussion on violence in the second half of the nineteenth century, Civil War draft riots, Post Civil War Reconstruction, lynching, and the Wild West.

Week 3 (4/13)-Reading Assignment Due: Browning & Gerassi handout pp. 241-262, and Schlesinger pp. 1-18, Ryan handout pp. 33-61. Continue discussion on violence in the second half of the nineteenth century. Begin discussion on the cities and urban violence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century including labor strife, immigrant groups and the origins of organized crime, and contemporary organized crime. **Choose topic for research paper (to be approved by instructor).**

Week 4 (4/20)-Reading Assignment Due: Gurr, Vol. 1, Ch. 8; Vol. 2, Ch. 8 & 11. Continue discussion on urban unrest, and labor strife. Begin discussion on late nineteenth and twentieth century political violence and assassination.

Week 5 (4/27)-Reading Assignment Due: Gurr Vol. 2, Ch. 3. **Research papers due.** Discussion on the 1960s and violence as a form of social control, a domestic Vietnam.

Week 6 (5/4)-Reading Assignment Due: Gurr, Vol. 1, Ch. 9; Vol. 2, Ch. 2, 4 & 7; Schlesinger pp. 19-25, Instructor handouts. Discussion on outsiders and violence, street gangs, fringe groups, survivalists, militias and anti-government movements. Discussion on violence comparisons to Western Europe and the American gun culture. **Choose topic for position paper (to be approved by instructor).**

Week 7 (5/11)-Reading Assignment Due: Schlesinger pp. 25-32 and Whitmer handout pp. 213-227, Instructor handouts. Discussion on media coverage and Hollywood images of violence. Does it influence youth? Are there individuals prone to its influence? View and discuss videotaped examples of movie and television violence.

Week 8 (5/18)-Finish discussion on media and Hollywood images of violence. Begin student presentations of position paper topics with class discussion.

Week 9 (5/25)-Continuation of student presentations.

Week 10 (6/1) Complete student presentations. Discussion/summary on various aspects of issues covered in the course.

Week 11 (6/8) -**Position papers due.**

PLEASE NOTE: SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE