

EFFECTS OF TRAUMATIC LIFE EXPERIENCES
LBST 560
Master of Liberal Studies Program
Fall 2011
Wednesdays, 6:00 – 8:40 p.m.

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Course Goals:

This course will examine the psychological and emotional affects of extreme trauma and the consequences for the survivor of traumatic life experiences.

One approach is to examine post-genocide psychological adjustment. Although civilian casualties have always been part of war, modern warfare is increasingly targeting non-combatants. Olweean (2003) notes that “psychological and emotional injuries may be the most enduring effects of war, yet historically, they may be the least addressed in terms of rebuilding a society and preventing future violence” (p. 271). Not only have survivors of genocide typically been exposed to extreme trauma, they have been targeted for death because of some personal characteristic such as religion, race, or perceived ethnicity. In this course, we will explore the long-term mental health consequences of surviving genocide, using the Holocaust and the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide as case examples.

The specific aims of the course are:

1. To learn how quantitatively-oriented social scientist study social issues;
2. To understand the basic scientific literature on the emotional, cognitive, physiological, social, and health consequences of exposure to extreme trauma;
3. To consider how this literature can be applied to the case of survivors of genocide and, specifically, the Holocaust;
4. To conduct a project using the USC Shoah Foundation Institute archives that explores trauma among survivors of the genocide;
5. To compare and contrast the aspects of the Holocaust and the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide that might influence the psychological consequences for survivors.

Course Outline:

WEEK 1 Course overview/Introduction to mental health following genocide

WEEK 2 Reactions to traumatic events

American Psychiatric Association (2000). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV-TR. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, pp. 463-472.

Cook, A., Spinazzola, J., Ford, J., Lanktree, C. et al. (2005). Complex trauma in children and adolescents. Psychiatric Annals, 35, 390-398.

WEEK 3 Research methods in psychology

Trull, T. J. & Phares, E. J. (2001). Chapter 4: Research methods in clinical psychology. Clinical Psychology. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press.

WEEK 4 Application of trauma research to the case of genocide

Olweean, S.S. (2003). When society is the victim: Catastrophic trauma recovery. In S.K. Krippner & T.M. McIntyre (Eds.). The Psychological Impact of War Trauma on Civilians: An International Perspective. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, pp. 271-276.

Staub, E. (2000). Genocide and mass killing: Origins, prevention, healing and reconciliation. Political Psychology, 21, 367-382.

WEEK 5 Introduction to the Holocaust and testimonies from the Shoah archives

USC Shoah Foundation Institute web page
Project Part 1: Watch testimonies

WEEK 6 Biological, psychological, and social effects of trauma exposure

Lemelson, R., Kirmayer, L. J., & Barad, M. (2007). Trauma in Context: Integrating biological, clinical, and cultural perspectives. In L. J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson, & M. Barad (eds.). Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 451-474.

Project Part 2: Develop research question

WEEK 7 Methodology and ethics in studying post-traumatic stress following genocide

Newman, E., Risch, E., & Kassam-Adams, N. (2006). Ethical issues in trauma related research: A review. Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethic, 29-46

Project Part 3: Project reading(s)/Proposal

WEEK 8 Individual differences in reactions to post-traumatic stress

Barenbaum, J., Ruchkin, V., & Schwab-Stone, M. (2004). The psychological aspects of children exposed to war: Practice and policy initiatives. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 45, 41-62.

WEEK 9 Exam

WEEK 10 Treatment of post-traumatic stress
Vicarious and secondary traumatization

Bradley, R., Greene, J., Russ, E., Dutra, L., & Westen, D. A multidimensional meta-analysis of psychotherapy for PTSD. American Journal of Psychiatry, 162, 214-227.

Project Due
Project presentations

WEEK 11 Literary and media portrayals of trauma following genocide

Project Part 4: Media portrayals

Project presentations

WEEK 12 A second case study: The 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide

Geltman, P. & Stover, E. (1997). Genocide and the plight of children in Rwanda. The Journal of the American Medical Association, 277, 289-294.

WEEK 13 Trauma following the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide

Bolton, P. (2003). Assessing depression among survivors of the Rwanda genocide. In S.K. Krippner & T.M. McIntyre (Eds.). The Psychological Impact of War Trauma on Civilians: An International Perspective. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, pp. 67-77.

Boris, N. W., Brown, L. A., Thurman, T., Rice, J. C. et al. (2008). Depressive symptoms in youth heads of household in Rwanda: Correlates and implications for interventions. Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 162, 836-843.

WEEK 14 The future of the study of mental health and genocide: Research and career opportunities and challenges

Eisenman, D., Weine, S., Green, B., de Jong, J et al. (2006). The ISTSS/Rand guidelines on mental health training in primary healthcare for trauma-exposed populations in conflict-affected countries. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 19, 5-17.

Peltonen, K. & Punamaki, R-L. (2010). Preventive interventions among children exposed to trauma of armed conflict: A literature review. Aggressive Behavior, 36, 95-116.

WEEK 15 Conclusions/Summary
 Course Evaluations

Project Part 5: Cultural considerations

Grading:

Your grade in this course will be based on three components--class participation, exams, and a course project.

- Class participation: 10% of grade

To receive full credit for class participation, you will need to attend the entire class period, complete all assigned readings before class, be prepared to describe and comment on reading assignments, and attend to and participate in classroom discussions. If you are uncomfortable with speaking up in class, please come see me at the beginning of the semester.

- Exam: 15% of grade

There will be a midterm exam, which will count for 15% of your grade. The exam will be based on assigned readings and materials presented in class.

- Course Project

Everyone will do a class project based on interviews in the USC Shoah Foundation Institute archives. The project will involve listening to testimonies from the archives and developing a research question or hypothesis based on the experiences of the survivors whose interviews you have heard. Then, you will test your hypothesis using other testimonies in the archives. Results will be discussed in both oral and written presentations. Finally, you will consider how your findings might differ in the context of the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide. The project is divided into the following three parts:

- *Worksheets (25%)*. You will be asked to complete 5 worksheets (see attached) of 1-2 pages each.
- *Written Project (30%)*. You will write up your Shoah archive project in the format of a scientific paper (details will be provided in class).
- *Oral Presentation (20%)*. Each of you will present your project in a 20-minute class presentation.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/> Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>

**COURSE PROJECT WORKSHEET
PART1: WATCH TESTIMONIES**

Watch 2 testimonies from the Archives, respond to the questions below about each testimony, and be prepared to present your reactions in class.

Testimony #1

Code #:

Brief description of experiences:

Reactions/Questions/Research Ideas:

Testimony #2

Code #:

Brief description of experiences:

Reactions/Questions/Research Ideas:

Summary

What were the reactions to trauma described by these survivors?

What were the similarities and differences between their experiences and reactions?

What other information would you like to have gotten?

What research questions might you consider based on these testimonies?

Other thoughts?

COURSE PROJECT WORKSHEET
PART 2: DEVELOP RESEARCH QUESTION

Develop a research question that you would like to explore for your project.

What research question (or questions) would you like to explore for your project?

How might you use the Archives to study this question?

What topic do you want to read more about as you consider your research question?

Find an article in the scientific literature that addresses that topic. Read the article and provide a brief summary (no more than one page). Be sure to provide the full reference for the article.

**COURSE PROJECT WORKSHEET
PART 3: PROJECT PROPOSAL**

Describe your project proposal.

What hypothesis will you test for your project?

What are your specific procedures?

What will you measure and how will you operationalize your variables?

How will you select the testimonies for inclusion and how many will you use?

How will you “analyze” your findings?

COURSE PROJECT WORKSHEET
PART5: CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Briefly describe 5 ways in which you think the 1994 Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda was similar to the Holocaust.

Briefly describe 5 ways in which you think the 1994 Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda was different from the Holocaust.

How might you expect these similarities and differences to influence the psychological adjustment of survivors?

How might your project have been different if you had conducted it with testimonies from survivors of the 1994 Tutsi Genocide? Would your methods have been different? Would your findings have been different?