

## **PEACE OR WAR?**

### **EMPIRE, US FOREIGN POLICY, AND BUILDING A PEACEFUL WORLD**

Professor Charles Derber

Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-2:45; Spring Semester, 2012, 3 credits

#### **Course Description:**

This course seeks to give students a new perspective on American society, as well as on an international system unable to maintain itself without collapse into terror and violence. Many of the great social and political theorists have been concerned with the causes of war and violence as part of a more general approach to understanding society. Sociological theory has been concerned with the state as the institution officially endowed with the monopoly of violence in society, as well as with the social themes of war and violence: inequality and stratification, power and authority, ideology and community. We shall also be centrally concerned with the organization of the international social structure and economy, and the ways in which relations between advanced and developing countries can become locked into an institutionalized system of violence, including terrorism in its modern form.

In the first section of the course, we look at fundamental sociological concepts through the lens of social theories of war, relying on historical and institutional analyses by classical sociological thinkers as well as contemporary writers. In the second section, we examine the cold war era, exploring case studies of American wars to illuminate the perennial sociological questions about power, authority, domination, and social order that inform sociology as a discipline. In the third section, we look at the post cold war era after September 11, 2001, and focus on issues of Middle East politics and the nature and roots of terrorism. The fourth section focuses on "humanitarian" wars officially declared to stop genocide, ethnic cleansing or mass starvation. In the final section, we consider what kinds of societal and new international forces, including the UN, will be necessary to ensure a new era of peace, examining fundamental sociological questions about social change and social reconstruction.

#### **Sociology 092 and the Core Curriculum**

Peace or War is a part of the Core Curriculum. As such, it raises questions central to the study of society, employs an inter-disciplinary approach, and challenges students in personal, ethical and spiritual ways.

- 1) **The Long Standing Perennial Questions:** War, terrorism and other violence imply the breakdown of social order. As such, they are a rich topic for raising and answering the most fundamental, perennial questions of sociology. What is a social system and how does it sustain itself or break down? What are the forms of legitimate state authority, and what is their relation to the application of violence? To what extent are war, terrorism and violence necessary to and functional for the maintenance of modern societies? To what extent can our current forms of domestic and international organization be understood as systems of stratification and social domination based on race or class?
- 2) **Historical Perspective:** Our approach in this course is to answer these questions through a historical and case-based methodology: specifically, the examination of case studies of American wars in the Third World. We rely on in-depth studies of US linked wars since World War II, including Viet Nam, El Salvador, Rwanda, the Gulf War, the war on terrorism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the 2003 invasion of Iraq.
- 3) **Cultural Diversity:** This course examines the roots of war as they relate to race, nationality and ethnicity, as well as class. We explore in detail why wars have occurred so frequently in the Third World, in the context of the history of colonialism and the post-colonial revolution of peoples of color. The course also examines the roles of religion and ethnicity in wars such as

- Rwanda and Israel/Palestine and seeks to integrate cultural and religious issues with the core sociological and political economy analytical framework of the course.
- 4) **Methodology of the Discipline:** The course explores work that draw on comparative, historical, economic, and case study methods. Students mainly read qualitative material but there is attention to quantitative data and assessment of debates about the accuracy of data on economic impacts, casualties and weapons presented in the media.
  - 5) **Creating a Personal Philosophy:** War and peace involve personal issues that are deeply challenging: about ethics, mass violence and death, economic exploitation and ethnic and religious issues. Students are encouraged to reflect personally about the highly charged material they read and to bring their own values and spirituality into frequent small group discussions and short papers. The course inevitably leads students to challenge not only their longstanding view of American foreign policy and American values but their deepest personal and moral commitments.
  - 6) **Writing Component:** Because of the challenging nature of the material, students will have opportunities to write about their own evolving perspective on peace and war. Students will have the opportunity write a research paper about one case study, and also write essay-based mid-term and final exams.

Books (Required or Recommended)

**PURCHASE:**

Chomsky, *The Essential Chomsky*  
 Danner, *Masasacre of El Mozote*  
 Derber, *The Wilding of America*, 5<sup>th</sup> EDITION  
 Derber, *Greed to Green*  
 Derber, *Marx's Ghost*  
 Derber and Magrass, *Morality Wars* (revised paperback edition, 2010)  
 Klare, *Blood and Oil*  
 Steele, *Defeat*  
 Steele, *Ghosts of Afghanistan*

**LIBRARY OR ONLINE RESERVES** (also 20 copies at bookstore)

Blum, *Rogue State*  
 Derber, *People Before Profit*  
 Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*  
 Kagan, "Of Power and Weakness" online article  
 Lerner, *Healing Israel/Palestine*  
 Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*  
 Mearshimer, *Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism vs neoconservatism*

REQUIREMENTS:

MID-TERM EXAMINATION

FINAL EXAMINATION

I. Society and War: The Sociology of Violence and Social Order in the American Context

Week 1. Who Runs the World? Empires, Hegemony and The US As Global Cop

Tuesday: Chomsky, *The Essential Chomsky*, "Reflections on 9-11," Chap 21

Thursday: Derber, *Morality Wars*, Introduction

Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (optional but students really enjoy it)

Week 2. US Empire, Terrorism and the World System: Radicalism and the View from the Left

Tuesday: Chomsky, *The Essential Chomsky*, Chapters 14,16; 24

Chomsky, "The Contours of Global Order, Huffington Post, posted 4/21/11 at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/noam-chomsky/us-global-power\\_b\\_851992.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/noam-chomsky/us-global-power_b_851992.html)

Thursday: Derber and Magrass, *Morality Wars*, Chapter 2

Week 3. Empire, Terrorism and International Politics: Neo-Conservatism, Realism, and the View from the Right and Center

Tuesday: PNAC, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, pp.i-v; pp. 1-7 (online reserves)

Boot, "The Case for Empire," *Wall St. Journal*, 2002 (online reserves)

Kagan, "Of Power and Weakness," (Online Reserves)

Thursday: Fared Zakaria, "Obama, Foreign Policy Realist" (online reserves)

Wikipedia, "Political Realism"

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political\\_realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_realism)

J. Peter Pham, "Hans Morgenthau's Realist Vision and US Foreign Policy" (online reserves)

Joshua Landis, "WASHINGTON'S BATTLE OVER SYRIA," CNN.com posted on

[http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/24/washingtons-battle-over-syria/?hpt=hp\\_bn2](http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/24/washingtons-battle-over-syria/?hpt=hp_bn2)

Week 4 The Business of War: Capitalism and Militarism in an Age of Oil and Global Warming  
Tuesday: Klare, Blood and Oil, Preface, Chapter 1

Melman, Permanent War Economy, Chapter 1 (online reserves)

Thursday: Marx's Ghost: Parts 1-3

Derber, Greed to Green, Chapter 9

US Pentagon, "Climate Change Seen as Threat to US Security, New York Times, Aug. 8, 2009 (online reserves)

Week 5 Violence and the American Dream: Culture, War, and Social Breakdown

Tuesday: Derber, The Wilding of America, 5th edition Chapters 1;2, 7

Thursday: Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chapter 3

## II. Cold Warriors: Rethinking the Cold War Era

Week 6. The Vietnam War

Tuesday: Kolko, Anatomy of a War, Chapters 7,9 (online reserves)

Film: Hearts and Minds (GO TO LIBRARY TO SEE)

WEEK 7 EL SALVADOR AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Danner, Massacre of El Mozote

(but in Fall, 2011, week 7 Tuesday is Steele talk and Thursday is Marx's Ghost

MIDTERM EXAM-TAKE HOME

## III. Wars After the Cold War: Afghanistan, Iraq, and Hegemony in the Middle East

Week 8. Afghanistan: Liberation. Occupation and Hegemony

Tuesday: Steele, Ghosts of Afghanistan

Huntington, Clash of Civilizations, Chap 1; pp.209-221

Presentation by Jonathan Steele

Thursday: Steele, Ghosts of Afghanistan, Chaps

Week 9 Iraq: Triumph or Defeat?

Tuesday: : Steele, Defeat Chaps 1, 5, 9 conclusion

Thursday: Cheney, "The Case for Removing Saddam" (online reserves)

Mearshimer, Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism vs neoconservatism

(online reserves)

Week 10, The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Tuesday: Lerner, Healing Israel/Palestine, Chapters 2,3,6,7 9 (ONLINE 2 and 6)

Zunes, "Why the US Supports Israel" (online reserves or link below)

[http://www.fpi.org/articles/why\\_the\\_us\\_supports\\_israel](http://www.fpi.org/articles/why_the_us_supports_israel) (online reserve or click link)

Thursday: Film: Christmas Break in Palestine

IV. "Humanitarian Intervention:" Current US and UN Dilemmas

Week 11. The New Intervention Debate: Rwanda and Darfur/Sudan

Tuesday: Stephen Shalom, "The Debate on Intervention," Z Magazine (online reserves)

Power, Samantha, "Bystanders to Genocide", Atlantic (online reserves)

Thursday: Reeves, Eric, "Crash Course on Sudan/Darfur, Parts 1; 2; Nation (online reserves)

Black, "Climate Change is a Major Cause of Conflict in Africa"

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8375949.stm>

V. PEACE: VISIONS, ALTERNATIVES AND ACTIVISM

Week 12 What is Peace?: Collective Security, the UN and the US

Tuesday :Robert Johansen, "The UN After the Gulf War: Lessons for Collective Security," World Policy Journal, Summer, 1991 (online reserves)

Thursday: Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chapters 9-10

Week 13. Green Globalization and Global Economic and Social Democracy

Tuesday: Derber, People Before Profit, Chapters 6;10

Thursday: Derber, Greed to Green, Chapters 12-14

Week 14. Local-to-Global Peace Politics and Peace Activism in a Warring and Warming World

Tuesday: Lecture by Paul Shannon

Thursday: Derber, Greed to Green, Chapters 16-17

Derber, Marx's Ghost, Part VI

