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, 2015, 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 or keep a journal on the reading, and also write essay-based mid-term and final exams.

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, dugganka@bc.edu, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, paulette.durrett@bc.edu, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities, including temporary disabilities. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.
Books (Required or Recommended)

PURCHASE:
Chomsky, The Essential Chomsky
Danner, Masacre of El Mozote
Derber, Sociopathic Society
Derber, The Wilding of America, 5th EDITION
Derber, Greed to Green
Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars (paperback 2010 ed.)
Klare, Blood and Oil
Lerner, Embracing Israel/Palestine
Steele, Defeat
Steele, Ghosts of Afghanistan

LIBRARY OR ONLINE RESERVES (also 20 copies at bookstore)
Blum, Rogue State
Chomsky, Occupy
Derber, People Before Profit
Derber, Marx’s Ghost
Derber and Magrass, The Surplus American
Huntington, Clash of Civilizations
Kagan, “Of Power and Weakness” online article
Perkins, Confessions of an Economic Hit Man
Mearshimer, Hans Morganthau 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

          Chomsky in Derber, Sociopathic Society. (Forward to Book)

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:
          Noam Chomsky, Moral and Social Thinker: Solidarty: http://www.solidarity-us.org/node/2693
          Chomsky, The Essential Chomsky, Chapters 14,16; 24

Thursday:  Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chap 12 “American Empire”
          Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chapter 13 “The Wright Problem”
          Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chapter 14 “War Hero; Peace Hero”

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: Fareed Zakaria, “Obama, Foreign Policy Realist” (online reserves)
Wikipedia, “Political Realism”
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_realism
J. Peter Pham, “Hans Morgenthau’s Realist Vision and US Foreign Policy” (online reserves)
James Mann, “On realism: Old and New” American Prospeet, Fall, 2014 (Library Reserve)

Week 4 The Business of War: Capitalism, Economic Violence 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: Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chapter 5 “Capitalist Crisis and Capitalism Against People”
Derber, Marx’s Ghost, pp. 81-100 (Online Reserves)
Derber, Greed to Green, Chapter 9

Week 5 Capitalist Wilding, Socio-Economic Violence and the American Dream: War, Jobs and Social Breakdown

Tuesday, Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chapter 1 “Anatomy of Sociopathic Society”
Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chapter 6 “Manufacturing Surplus People”

Thursday: Derber, The Wilding of America, Chapters 1, 2, 7
Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chapter 4 “Newtown is Just the Tip of the Iceberg”
Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chapter 15 “When Wars Come Home”

II. Cold Warriors: Rethinking the Cold War Era

Week 6. The Vietnam War
Tuesday and Thursday: Kolko, Anatomy of a War, Chapters 7,9 (online reserves)

WEEK 7 El Salvador and Central America
Danner, Massacre of El Mozote, Chaps 1,3,5,9

MIDTERM EXAM

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, Chapters Intro, 1, 2, Conclusion
Huntington, Clash of Civilizations, Chap 1; pp.209-221
Thursday: Presentation by Jonathan Steele

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 Morganthau and the Iraq War: Realism vs neoconservatism (online reserves)
            ALSO ON THURSDAY, NOV. 1 – CLASS PRESENTATION WITH JONATHAN STEELE

Week 10, The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
   Tuesday: Lerner, Embracing Israel/Palestine, Introduction, Chapters 8-10
            Zunes, “Why the US Supports Israel” (online reserves or link below)
            http://www.fpif.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, “Darfur: the Genocid the World Got Tired Of Nov, 2011 (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, Alternative Visions and Activism

   Week 12. What is Peace?: Collective Security, the UN and the US
   Thursday: Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chapters 9-10 (ONLINE RESERVES)

   Week 13. Green Globalization and Global Economic and Social Democracy
   Tuesday: Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chapter 25, “UN, Barbershop, Global Democracy”
            Derber, Sociopathic Society, Chapter 26 “Alternatives to Sociopathic Capitalism”
   Thursday: Derber, Greed to Green, Chapters 12-14

   Week 14. Local-to-Global Peace Politics and Social Activism in a Warring and Warming World
Tuesday: Derber, *Sociopathic Society*. Chapters 21-24; Chapter 28
     Lecture by Paul Shannon

Thursday: Derber, *Greed to Green*, Chapters 16-17
     Derber, *Marx’s Ghost*, Part VI (ONLINE RESERVES)