

**PEACE OR WAR?**  
**SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMPIRE AND US FOREIGN POLICY**  
**AND HOW TO BUILD A PEACEFUL WORLD**

Professor Charles Derber

Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-2:45; Spring Semester, 2009, 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, 9-11  
 Chomsky, What Does Uncle Sam Really Want?  
 Danner, The Massacre at El Mozote  
 Derber, The Wilding of America, 4<sup>th</sup> EDITION  
 Derber, People Before Profit  
 Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars  
 Klare, Blood and Oil  
 Lerner, Healing Israel/Palestine  
 Steele, Defeat

LIBRARY OR ONLINE RESERVES (also 20 copies at bookstore)

Blum, Rogue State  
 Huntington, Clash of Civilizations  
 Hunter, Future of Islam and the West  
 Lerner, Healing Israel/Palestine  
 McFadyen and LaRamayee, Haiti: Dangerous Crossroads  
 Kagan, "Of Power and Weakness" online article  
 Perkins, Confessions of an Economic Hit Man

REQUIREMENTS:

MID-TERM EXAMINATION

FINAL EXAMINATION

PEACE DIARY- a weekly account of how to pursue peace in vital world conflicts

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, 9-11

Perkins, Confessions of an Economic Hit Man (optional but highly recommended)

Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Introduction

FILM: BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE (see over first part of semester)

Week 2. Social Structure, Ideology and War 1: US Empire, Terrorism and the World System: View from the Left

Chomsky, What Uncle Sam Really Wants, pp. 1-50; 78-101

Blum, Rogue State, pp. 125-168 (reserves, OPTIONAL)

Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chapter 2

Lobe, "Pentagon Moving Quickly to Becoming "globocop"(ONLINE RESERVES)

Pilger, "Hidden Agenda Behind the War on Terror" (ONLINE RESERVES)

Week 3. Social Structure, Ideology and War 2: Empire, Terrorism and International Politics: View from the Right

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

Bruce Murphy, "Neo-conservative clout seen in US Iraq" (ONLINE RESERVES)

PNAC, Rebuilding America's Defenses, pp.i-v; pp. 1-7 (ONLINE RESERVES)

Boot, "The Case for Empire," Wall St. Journal, 2002 (ONLINE RESERVES)

George W. Bush, "Prevent our Enemies from Threatening US..."(ONLINE RESERVES)

Week 4 The Business of War: Capitalism and Militarism

Klare, Blood and Oil, Preface, Chapters 1,2

Melman, Permanent War Economy, Chapters 1;6 (ONLINE RESERVES)

Week 5. Violence and the American Dream: Culture, War, and Social Breakdown  
 Derber, The Wilding of America, 4th edition Chapters 1-3; 8  
 Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chapter 3

## II. Cold Warriors: Rethinking American Wars in the Cold War Era

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

Week 7 El Salvador, and Central America  
 Mark Danner, The Massacre at El Mozote  
 Blum, Killing Hope, pp.352-370 online (reserve)  
 Film: Innocent Voices (One man's story of Salvador)

## MIDTERM EXAMINATION

### III. Wars After the Cold War: Terrorism, Pre-emptive War and Empire

Week 8. War and Religion: A Post Cold War Return to the Clash of Civilizations?  
 Huntington, Clash of Civilizations, Chapter 1 and pp.209-221 (online reserve)  
 Hunter, Future of Islam and West, Introduction (online reserve)  
 Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Chapters 1, 6

Week 9. Iraq and Iran: Liberation. Occupation and Hegemony  
 Steele, Defeat. Intro, Chaps 1,5,9, conclusion  
 Klare, Blood and Oil, Chapter 4  
 Cheney, "The Administration's Case for Removing Saddam," (online reserve)  
 Wolfowitz, "Why We Invaded Iraq" Vanity Fair (online reserve)  
 Dean, "Is Lying About the reason for war an impeachable offense?,"  
 Cnn.com/Law Center (online reserves)

Week 10, The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict  
 Lerner, Healing Israel/Palestine, Chapters 2,3,6,7  
 Merip, "Primer on Israel, Palestine and the Middle East"online reserves-optional)

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

Week 11. The New Intervention Debate: Rwanda and Darfur/Sudan  
 Stephen Shalom, "The Debate on Intervention," Z Magazine (online reserves)  
 Johnstone, "Making a Killing" In These Times, Dec. 28, 1994 (online reserves)  
 Block, "The Tragedy of Rwanda" New York Review (online reserves)  
 Power, Samantha, "Bystanders to Genocide", Atlantic (online reserves)  
 Reeves, Eric, "Crash Course on Sudan/Darfur, Parts 1; 2; Nation (online reserves)

Week 12. Economic Policing and Global Government: Haiti, the IMF and WTO

McFadyen and LaRamayee, Haiti: Dangerous Crossroads, Intro., Chaps. 13, 15, 16, 22 (Library Reserve)  
Derber, People Before Profit, Chapter 5

V. Peace Strategies and A New Global Democracy

Week 13. International Strategies: Global Democracy, Collective Security and Global Justice

Robert Johansen, "The UN After the Gulf War: Lessons for Collective Security," World Policy Journal, Summer, 1991 (online reserves)  
Derber, People Before Profit, Chaps 6;8

Week 14. Prospects and Strategies for Peace and Activism in the US  
Derber and Magrass, Morality Wars, Conclusion  
Derber, People Before Profit, Chaps 9-10