

# Intellectuals and Violence

History 195S (EI, R, W, CZ, SS) - WF 1:15-2:30 - Languages 208

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Office Hours: WF, 2:30-3:30, and by appointment

The vocation of the intellectual is to stand for the better reason, not for the bigger gun; to be on the side of the weak and the just, not the strong and unscrupulous. This at least is the idea of the intellectual established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And yet many intellectuals have in the past and today continue to defend violent political engagement. If religiously motivated and justified terrorism has had the largest headlines recently, there remain significant secular movements that also advocate political violence. Is there any reliable way to distinguish between immoral demands made in the language of morality and genuinely moral demands for difficult or painful action? Where is the boundary of acceptable coercion? How can we separate publicly compelling facts from personally held values or opinions? Is there meaning in seemingly random or opportunistic violence? These are ethical, philosophical, and political questions. This class sets out to investigate how these questions have been framed and what kinds of answers have been given to them. The main terrain of inquiry is Europe since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mode of inquiry is intellectual history. Put differently, this class will be a collective intellectual historical investigation into the problem of violence in politics, and the history of reflections on this problem.

This class is a capstone research seminar. A heavy emphasis will therefore be placed on writing as a skill, as well as on the formulation and completion of an independent research project. Class assignments are designed to aid progress toward this goal. The class also aims to provide acquaintance with some of the major figures and contours of European intellectual history over the last century and a half. In support of this, some attention will be given to intellectual history as a discipline of scholarly inquiry. Thus, by the end of the class, students will have gained not only substantial research and writing experience, but also foundational knowledge about major thinkers and historical problems in European history, and finally familiarity with the basic elements of intellectual historical scholarly practice.

## **Course Requirements and Assessment**

Participation	(20%)
Reading Responses	(10%)
First Paper, 4-6 pgs	(10%)
Second Paper, 4-6 pgs	(10%)
Capstone Project	
Proposal, 1-2 pgs	(5%)
Bib. essay, 3-5 pgs	(10%)
Draft, 10 pgs	(5%)
Peer edit, 2 pgs	(5%)
Final Version, 25 pgs	(25%)

## **Participation**

This is meant to reflect presence in the classroom. Obviously, it is hard to be present without attending class. It is also hard to be present without having read and thought about the assignment for that day. Presence does not, however, only mean speaking. It also means listening to others with respect and attention. The principle, fundamental to the practice of intellectual history, that apparent misunderstandings reward critical analysis just as much as apparent understandings, applies to the classroom as well as the historical record.

## **First and Second Papers**

More detailed descriptions will be distributed for these assignments later. The first paper will be an engagement with one of the texts on the syllabus, while the second paper will be an analysis of a scholarly article not on the syllabus.

## **Reading Responses**

For most readings, a short prompt will be posted on a blackboard. The prompt will vary considerably depending on the reading, but will never require an extended response. It will ask for no more than a short paragraph, and generally not more than a few sentences. Responses should be posted the night before the day on which the reading is due, so that they can serve as a reference point for in-class discussion.

## **Capstone Project**

The capstone project is an independent research paper of approximately 25 pages. It is divided into several smaller assignments—indeed it is possible that the first and second short papers will contribute materially to it as well. More detailed instructions for each part will be provided later. The central elements: a proposal, due early in the semester and in no way binding, for a possible research project within the scope of the class; a bibliographic essay, which will discuss secondary material related to the research project; an outline to be discussed with the instructor; a draft to be read and commented upon by fellow students; a peer-editing report on the work of a fellow student; and finally the completed project itself, due at the time of the final exam.

## **Books to Purchase (at the Gothic bookstore):**

Marx, Karl. *Later Political Writings*. ed. Carver  
Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*.  
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Humanism and Terror*.  
Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*.  
Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*.

All other readings will be available on blackboard under ‘course documents,’ divided into folders according to week.

## Schedule

### Week 1 – Introductions – Current Events

August 31<sup>st</sup>

Introductions

September 2<sup>nd</sup>

London Burning (see blackboard course documents for links).

### Week 2 – Violence, Two Approaches

September 7<sup>th</sup>

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*.

September 9<sup>th</sup>

Habermas, Jürgen. from *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*.

### Week 3 – States and Revolutions (to the *Mur des fédérés*)

September 14<sup>th</sup>

Sièyes, *What is the Third Estate?* (first chapter)

Marx, “The Communist Manifesto” (sections I and II),

“The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” (pp 31-40, 69-72, 78, 111-127).

September 16<sup>th</sup>

“The Civil War in France.”

### Week 4 – A New Aristocracy?

September 21<sup>st</sup>

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. (Preface, first and second essays)

September 23<sup>rd</sup>

Nietzsche, (third essay).

**Short Paper #1 Due**

### Week 5 – Proletarian and other Apocalypses

September 28<sup>th</sup>

Sorel, Georges. *Reflections on Violence* (Letter to Halévy, chs 1, 4, 6-7)

September 30<sup>th</sup>

Luxemburg, Rosa. “The Junius Pamphlet” (from *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*)

### Week 6 – After the Apocalypse

October 5<sup>th</sup>

Benjamin, Walter, “Critique of Violence.”

Benda, *The Treason of the Clerics* pp 43-66, 124-203.

October 7<sup>th</sup>

Weil, Simone. “The Iliad, or The Poem of Force”

**Research Proposal Due**

Fall Break

Week 7 – The National?: Philosophy and Authenticity

October 12<sup>th</sup>

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* (Part II, Ch 1)

Jünger, Ernst “Total Mobilization”

Heidegger, Martin. “The Self-Assertion of the German University”

October 14<sup>th</sup>

Gentile/Mussolini, “Origins and doctrine of Fascism”

Week 8 – The End of History

October 19<sup>th</sup>

Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. (§179-196, 582-595)

Kojève, “In Place of an Introduction” from *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*

October 21<sup>st</sup>

Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Concept of Enlightenment”

**Short Paper #2 Due (Zero Draft)**

Week 9 – From Resistance to Revolution

October 26<sup>th</sup>

Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*.

October 28<sup>th</sup>

Camus, *The Rebel* pp 4-25, 246-252.

Week 10 – Decolonization and Late Marxism

November 2<sup>nd</sup>

Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

November 4<sup>th</sup>

Mills, C. Wright. “Letter to the New Left”

**Bibliographic Essay Due**

Week 11 – 1968 to the *Années de plomb*

November 9<sup>th</sup>

Arendt, *On Violence*.

Marcuse, “Subverting Forces – In Transition” from *An Essay on Liberation*.

November 11<sup>th</sup>

Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance”

**Meeting to discuss Outline**

Week 12 – States and Peoples

November 16<sup>th</sup>

Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, (lectures 1 and 2)

Clastres, Pierre. “The Archeology of Violence.”

November 18<sup>th</sup>

Tilly, Charles. “Warmaking and Statemaking as Organized Crime.”

Thanksgiving Break

Week 13 – The Third Time as Satire?

November 30<sup>th</sup>

The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*.

**Distribute Draft of Final Paper**

December 2<sup>nd</sup>

Davis, Mike. “Planet of Slums,” *New Left Review*, 2004.

**Peer Edit Due**

Week 14 – Violence on the Screen

Viewing times to be organized collectively

December 7<sup>th</sup>

*Waltz with Bashir* (dir. Folman)

December 9<sup>th</sup>

*The Baader-Meinhof Complex* (dir. Edel)

**Final Paper Due at the time of the Final Exam (December 15<sup>th</sup> by 9AM)**