Fall Semester

UGED 2622/ANTH 2530/5535

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Wednesday 13.30-15.15

Humanities Building 115

This course interrogates the ideas of violence, human rights, and the assumed connection between the two through case studies from historical and current events. What is violence? What do we know about violence and how? Is violence an absolute concept or could it be contextual? In what context is violence legitimate and when is it not? How do state and non-state actors deploy violence? What are the diverse meanings of violence? Human rights have been presumed to be the remedy to violence, and have been especially championed by the international community since after the Second World War.

Are human rights a universal set of ideals or could there be a culturally diverse interpretation of human rights? What is the distinction between human rights and humanitarianism? Are human rights an effective instrument in addressing violence? What are the purposes and problems of the boom of humanitarian initiatives in the new millennium? Finally, what does our assumption of violence and human rights tell us about ourselves and our future?

Learning Outcomes:

1. to understand and critically engage with concepts of violence and human rights;

2. to comprehend the complex meanings of violence within a web of power relations both historically and cross-culturally;

3. to analyze the ways current discourses of violence and human rights are specific to our historical moment through current world events;

4. to evaluate the effectiveness of the operation of current human rights interventions to remedy violence and humanitarian projects to stop human suffering;

5. to cultivate historical and cross-cultural sensitivity in understanding diverse human experiences, crucial to the facilitation of dialogues and collaboration in the advancement of transformative justice;

Please refrain from using any ELECTRONIC DEVICE including mobile phones, computers, tablets, etc in class. Please step out of the classroom to do so if need be. Thank you.


Assessment:

1. Tutorial participation and discussion (20%) Students are expected to contribute to all class discussions by formulating their viewpoints and line of inquiry. Student participation is an
An important element in this course, thus assigned readings for the week are expected to be read prior to attending class. The class is a safe environment for the exchange of diverse ideas and debates. Respect for differences and intellectual rigor are important pedagogical goals: all opinions will be respected but all opinions must be defended. You are expected to attend lectures and a minimum number of 7 tutorials to pass the course. Attendance sheets will be used and adequate documentation (doctor’s certificate or counselling certificate) will be needed if you miss more than 3 tutorials, or you will gain 0 mark for tutorial participation.

2. Leading tutorial discussion (10%)

Students will be divided into groups and be responsible for leading one tutorial discussion. Leading a tutorial means engaging with the readings, expanding on the topics at hand and formulating original questions to open up a space for dialogue. The point is to stimulate and invite tutorial participants to jointly interrogate particular issues that are of interest to the presenter and the class. Students are advised not to present a summary of the readings and leave it at that. You can bring in more materials, such as newspaper cuttings, pictures, video clips etc. You can use printed as well as online and web documents other than the readings to enrich the discussion. You are welcome but not required to discuss with me how you intend to proceed with the tutorial beforehand, unless you require special equipment for your presentation. Leading a tutorial means that you are in charge, be empowered and be creative.

3. Mid-term Essay (1500 words for undergraduate students, 2000 words for MA students) 30%

The mid-term essay would be an analysis of the two films for Lecture 2. The question for the mid-term essay will be given out by the end of week 2. Students are required to submit the essay by October 9 (Monday). No late submission without adequate documentation (doctor’s certificate or counseling certificate) or prior discussion with the lecturer will be accepted.

4. Choose either one of the following:

   a. Public Anthropology Project (40%)

   Violence has been central to the recent controversies and public debates about the 2017 electoral reforms, the Umbrella Movement, the rise of Localist Factions, as well as immigrants and refugees in Hong Kong. Using material from the course in a substantive and systematic manner, students design and carry out their own project (individually or as a group of no more than 3) to contribute to the current discussions amongst different communities at this particular historical moment.

   The goal of the project is to make anthropology relevant in the public sphere. How can anthropologists do more than just participate and observe? How can anthropology publicly engage with contemporary issues to make a difference in the broader world?

   The project can take a variety of forms, including teach-ins, street theater, film, photography, film, installation, poetry-reading etc.

   You are encouraged to discuss ideas with me at any time but not later than October 10. A written paper describing and analyzing the activities involved should be about 2,000 words in length. Due on December 15.
b. Take-home Exam 40%

The questions for the take-home exam will be given on the last day of class (Nov 22). These are due on December 8. No late submission will be accepted without prior approval and adequate documentation. Penalties will be imposed.

Plagiarism

Students are required by university policy to submit all papers to VeriGuide (the Chinese University Plagiarism Identification Engine System). Please check the website http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/ for more information on how to submit papers through VeriGuide.

Course structure

The course is divided into two parts. The first part offers a conceptual introduction that will provide students with the tools to analyze issues of violence and human rights in the world today. The second part is consisted of selected topics that speak to the tension and complexity raised in Part I through empirical studies. It draws on anthropological as well as multidisciplinary works from a global perspective to interrogate the formulation of violence and human rights and humanitarianism as its alleged solution.

* Readings with an * are required readings for MA students, and optional reading for undergraduate and general education students

Part I: Toward a cross-cultural understanding of violence and human rights

W1 (6 Sep) Can violence be apolitical? Can human rights be wrong?


W2 (13 Sep) The politics of representation – violence and rights


W3 (20 Sep) Violence as a spectrum and knowledge production.


**W4 (27 Sep) Human rights as cultural practice**


Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

**Part II Violence and Its Remedies: Interrogating Human Rights and Humanitarianism**

**W5 (4 Oct) Death at the border (Guest Speaker)**


**W6 (11 Oct) Structural violence and resistance: The case of refugees in Hong Kong**


Vecchio, Francesco and Beatson, Cosmo. (2013) 'Resisting government labelling and engaging the community: The 'March For Protection' in Hong Kong', Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration, 3(1), 24-29.


Further readings:


W7 (18 Oct) The Intimate Violence of Borders: The Gendering of Structural Vulnerability


W8 (25 Oct) Security, Identity, and Borders: Trump, Brexit, and Hong Kong


W9 (1 Nov) Sexual violence in conflicts


In-Class Screening: Trailer of *Silence Broken* (1999) by Daisiil Kim-Gibson.

**W10 (8 Nov) “Sex trafficking” and neoliberalism**


In-class screening: *Becky’s Journey* (2013) by Sine Plambech

Watch Online Video: *Paradoxes of Neoliberalism*, available at: http://vimeo.com/72002039

**W11 (15 Nov) The Violence of Humanitarianism**


**W12 (22 Nov) Review, Project Presentation, and Conclusion**

**W13 (29 Nov) No Class, preparation for Final Project/Exam.**