



Violence and Politics: from Plato to Daech

*1st Term research Seminar
Fall 2016*

Olivier Roy and Cynthia Salloum

Mondays 3-5pm in seminar room 4 (Badia Fiesolana)

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[Register Online](#)

Course description

This course will study the philosophical and political implications of political violence on the premise that the process of modern civilization did not achieve the end of violence nor secure peace and safety to populations. It is truism to say that the last century has proven this premise to be true especially when the war in Syria is setting new records of violence and cruelty. The course will address the paradox of violence —at once necessary and repelled, both a pain and a cure— through a historic non-linear examination of its theories, ethics, roots, nature, types and dynamics. The course offers the opportunity to develop knowledge and analysis on a classical topic of political philosophy and political thought that calls forth various contemporary social science perspectives. It will provide an overview on a range of debates including on revolutionary violence, terror, conventional and civil warfare, ethnic and religious conflict, colonial and postcolonial violence, repression and genocide, guerrilla warfare, insurgency and counterinsurgencies, torture and cruelty. The end goal is to gain a firm understanding of political violence in its epistemological, ontological and historical dimensions.

Course outline:

Session 1: The paradox of violence with Plato

- Plato, *The Republic*, III (412c-end); IV (435d-end); IX (571a-580a)
- Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*, University of Chicago Press, [1961] 2000, pp.1-30

Session 2: Violence and the paradox of truth with Augustine

- Augustine, *The confessions*, [Selections, Bks 3,4,7,8,9].
- William Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality*, Rowman and Littlefield, 1993 [Introduction, Preface, Chapter 5].

Session 3: Violence and the paradox of justice with the Church

- René Girard, *Violence and the sacred*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1977 [Chapter 1].
- Marie-Louise Bulst-Thiele, “The Influence of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux on the Formation of the Order of Knights Templar” In M. Gervers (ed.), *The Second Crusade and the Cisterians*, 2012, pp. 57-65.
- Wolfgang Palaver, Harriet Rudolph Dietmar Regensburger, *The European Wars of Religion*, Routledge, 2016 [Chapter 7].

Session 4: Absolutism and warfare with Machiavelli

- Niccolo Machiavelli, 1988, *The Prince*, Q. Skinner and R. Price (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Discourses on Livy*, Trans. by Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, University of Chicago Press, 1996, [Book I, Ch. 18, 35, 40; Book II, Ch. 8, 24, 32; Book III, Ch. 21].
- Adam Minter, “Machiavelli, Violence and History”, *The Harvard Review of Philosophy*, Spring 1992, pp. 25-32

Session 5: Revolutionary violence from Robespierre to Stalin

- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Edition, London, 1967 [Chapter 1].

- Friedrich Engels, "Introduction (1891) to Karl Marx, The Civil War in France", in Marx/Engels/Lenin: On Historical Materialism, New York: International Publishers, 1974
- Walter Benjamin, « Critique of violence », Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913-1926, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Raymond Aron, History and the Dialectic of Violence, An Analysis of Sartres's Critique de la Raison Dialectique, trans. Barry Cooper, Harper and Row, 1976 [Chapter VI].

Session 6: From sacred violence to terror

- Claude Lefort, "The Revolutionary Terror", in Democracy and Political Theory, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1988, p. 50-88.
- Barrington Moore Jr., "The Impact and function of Terror" in Catherine Bestemann, Violence, A reader, New York University Press, 2002, pp. 61-66.
- David L. Hoffmann, Cultivating the Masses, Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939, Cornell University Press, 2014 [Chapter 5].

Session 7: The era of State violence

- Thomas Hobbes, The Leviathan, II, 20, 28.
- Hannah Arendt, On Violence, Harcourt, New York, 1969, 1970.
- Catherine Bestemann, Violence, A reader, New York University Press, 2002 [M. Weber, "Politics as Vocation", Ch.2; H. Arendt, "Reflections on Violence", Ch.3; C. Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime", Ch. 4].
- Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, Harcourt, New York, 2004 [Chapter 13].

Session 8: Violence and civil conflict

- Stathis Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars, Cambridge University Press, 2006 [Introduction, Chapters 7, 10].
- Stathis Kalyvas, "'New' and 'old' civil wars: A valid distinction?", In World Politics 54:1, 2001, pp. 99-118.
- James D. Fearon, David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War", The American Political Science Review, Vol. 97, No.1, Feb. 2003, pp. 75-90.

Session 9: Of violence and cruelty

- Michel de Montaigne, *Essays of Montaigne* [1584], IV [Of Cruelty].
- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, Vintage Books, 1977, pp. 3-31.
- Judith Shklar, "Putting Cruelty First", in *Ordinary Vices*, Harvard University Press, 1984, pp.7-44.
- Talal Asad, "On Torture, or Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment", in *Social Research*, Vol.63, No.4, Winter 1996, pp. 1081-1109.

Session 10: From new wars to new violences? —Debate