GOVT 444 004 Human Rights and Transitional Justice in Latin America
Spring 2020 — George Mason University
Mondays 1:30-4:10 pm — Robinson Hall B118

Professor Jo-Marie Burt
Schar School of Policy and Government

(draft syllabus ~ subject to change)

Course Description
In the 1980s, as several countries in Latin America transitioned from military dictatorships responsible for massive human rights violations toward new forms of democratic rule, a new concept emerged to describe the efforts of those societies to grapple with the legacy of past violence: transitional justice. The mechanisms of transitional justice include truth commissions, criminal trials, reparations programs, memorials and memorialization, vetting programs, and institutional reforms, among others. The concept of transitional justice quickly gained relevance beyond Latin America and has since developed into a rich and multifaceted field of interdisciplinary research and praxis premised on the objectives of providing redress for victims and their families and building more democratic, just and inclusive societies. This course will introduce students to the study of human rights and transitional justice through an in-depth examination of several case studies in Latin America, including Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Colombia and Mexico. We will explore the theoretical foundations of human rights that inform the key concepts of transitional justice and will critically engage the core debates within the field of transitional justice theory and practice.

Course Objectives
Students will acquire the conceptual and analytical tools to think and write theoretically and critically about human rights, transitional justice and post-conflict peacebuilding. They will also acquire a detailed understanding of transitional justice processes in Latin America. Through assigned readings and assignments, students will acquire the capacity to engage in critical analysis and will develop and hone their research skills. By the close of this course, students should be able to:

- Have a firm grasp of the development and evolution of key topics in the field of transitional justice
- Identify, summarize, and evaluate the fundamental questions and debates in the field
- Concisely summarize, connect, and evaluate the research by writing short reaction papers
- Employ transitional justice concepts and theories in independent writing

Course Requirements
This is a seminar-style course. As professor I will help guide class discussions, but this is principally a student-driven class. Students will take the lead in class discussions and are expected to come to class fully prepared to engage in class discussion. This means that students are expected to do the assigned readings prior to class and participate actively in class discussions and in small group sessions. Your participation in class discussions is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your grasp of assigned readings, your integration of readings and concepts as we progress through the semester, and to contribute to an active learning environment. I encourage an open learning environment in the classroom, in which students feel free to question, comment, and explain how they view course content. Such an environment helps to foster student interaction, thinking, and analytical and creative skills.

Students must satisfy the following requirements:

1. Participate in class discussions. Learning is an active process. Every student is expected to attend class regularly and be prepared to participate in class discussion. This involves listening to the instructor and your fellow students; offering your comments on assigned readings; and asking questions about concepts and theories we are engaging in this course. You will be more successful in this class if you attend class sessions regularly, take notes, and engage in class discussion.

2. Complete assigned readings. As is the case with attendance, completing the assigned reading prior to class is essential to succeeding in this course. It is your responsibility to obtain and complete the readings prior to the class session they are assigned, though I will do my best to make readings available to you via Blackboard. You will be much more successful in this course if you complete the assigned readings and take detailed notes on them.

3. Assignments/Exams. All assignments, including the discussion board posts, must be handed in on time. Late assignments will not be accepted, and there will be no incompletes, make-up exams or extensions, except in cases of documented emergencies. Written assignments for this class must be uploaded to Blackboard as Microsoft Word attachments and using “SafeAssign.” All assignments must follow the listed instructions. Please make sure that your name and assignment title are both clearly indicated on the first page of your paper. It is your responsibility to ensure that your files have uploaded properly. If you are new to Blackboard, a tutorial is available here: https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student.

4. Technology. The use of laptop computers, tablets (such as iPads), and smart phones is prohibited in class, except when instructed. The costs associated with electronic distractions, to you and those around you, outweigh the benefits of immediate supplementary classroom information. Students may use specific instructional applications, such as Blackboard, only when instructed to do so. However, students may not use laptops or other devices on a general basis in this class. If these restrictions pose a challenge for you, please discuss it with me. To learn more about the benefits of taking notes by hand, see this article.

5. Cheating, Plagiarism, and Academic Integrity. Students in this course are expected to comply with the George Mason University Honor Code. There are three simple guidelines to follow with respect to academic integrity: (1) all work you submit must be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the expectations for any assignment, ask for clarification. Any student engaged in any academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. These violations include cheating on an exam, presenting someone else’s work as your own, and plagiarizing the written word. Plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without providing credit or citation) is a serious offense. If you have any questions at all about what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, or academic misconduct, please ask the instructor.

Course Requirements and Grading
Student grades will be evaluated based on the following requirements, assignments, and examinations.

1. Class participation (50 points, 10% of final grade)
   Active participation requires regular attendance in class. More than two unexcused absences may result in a reduction of your grade.

2. Midterm Exam (100 points, 20% of final grade)
   The midterm will be administered on March 2. It will be in essay format and will be based on class lectures and assigned readings.

3. Discussion board post or In-class writing assignment (10 points each for 100 points total, 20% of final grade) (TBD)
   There will be a total of 11 in-class writing assignments; your lowest grade will be dropped.

4. Truth commission report writing assignment/in-class presentation (100 points, 20% of grade).
   Each student will be assigned to prepare a short report and in-class presentation of the key findings of the truth commission report/final recommendations for one country we are studying in class. Assignments will be made by the second week of class. Depending on class size, other topics may be assigned. Written assignment is due by noon on the day the class meets for the country you are reporting on.

5. Final Exam or Optional Research Paper (150 points, 30% of final grade)
   The final exam will be administered on May 14. It will be in essay format and will be based on class lectures and assigned readings.
   Optional Rearch Paper: Students will have the option of writing a research paper in lieu of the final exam. Topics must be submitted to professor for review and approval by February 24. Students choosing this route will have to submit a literature review on April 6. Final papers due May 14.

   **All written assignments and exams must be submitted no later than the posted due date through the Blackboard SafeAssign link. Late papers will not be accepted. Blackboard timestamps submissions and will mark papers received after the due date as late. If you are new to Blackboard, a tutorial is available here.**

   **Make-up exams and paper extensions will be given only if students have proper documentation.**

   **This syllabus may change as the semester progresses.**

**Writing-Intensive Course (WIC) Requirement.** This course fulfills the Writing-Intensive Course requirement in the Government & International Politics major through the two required writing assignments.

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<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>In class writing assignments</td>
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<td>Midterm</td>
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<td>Truth commission report assignment/presentation</td>
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<td>Final Exam or Research Paper</td>
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<th>Grading Scale:</th>
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<td>A+: 490-500</td>
<td>A: 470-489</td>
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<td>B+: 440-449</td>
<td>B: 415-439</td>
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<td>C+: 390-399</td>
<td>C: 360-389</td>
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<td>D+: 340-349</td>
<td>D: 310-339</td>
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Required texts: (available for purchase at the GMU bookstore, also available on reserve at Mason library)


In addition to these books, required reading assignments include articles which are available either via E-reserve (which you will be able to access from the course Blackboard); by accessing a database via the GMU Library Website; or online through an open-access website (URL provided by instructor). Course readings may be modified, and additional readings assigned, during the course of semester.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND REQUIRED READINGS**

**I. INTRODUCTION TO COURSE**

January 27 Course Overview; Review Syllabus and Course Requirements and Expectations

February 3 Conceptual Foundations 1
- Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Read Chs. 1-3; Skim Chs. 4-6; Read Chs. 11, 12 and Epilogue

February 10 Conceptual Foundations 2
- K. Sikkink, *The Justice Cascade*, Introduction, Ch. 4
- Carlos Nino, *Radical Evil on Trial*, Ch. 1

**II. CASE STUDIES: STATE TERROR**

February 10 Argentina: Transitional Justice was Born Here
- C. S. Nino, *Radical Evil on Trial*, Introduction (pp. vii-xii), Chs. 2-4
- Other TBA

February 17 Uruguay: Forgive & Forget?
- L. Weschler, *A Miracle, A Universe*, 81-236

February 23 Chile: Truth without Justice / Post-transition Trials
- Other TBA

March 2 Midterm Exam
March 9 No class **SPRING BREAK**

II. CASE STUDIES: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN A CONTEXT OF AUTHORITARIANISM AND INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT

March 16 Guatemala: Genocide
- Reading TBA

March 23 El Salvador: Truth without Justice Redux
- Other TBA

March 30 Peru: Coming to Terms with State and Insurgent Terror
- Other TBA

April 6 Colombia: Peace vs Justice?
- Other TBA

III. FORMS OF REPAIR IN THE AFTERMATH OF ATROCITY

April 13 Seeking Justice
- Other TBA

April 20 Reparations: Case Studies and Best (and Worst) Practices
- TBA

IV. NEW CHALLENGES IN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

April 27 Mexico: Narco-violence, non-state actors and state decay. Can TJ help?
- TBA

May 4 Topic TBA

May 11 FINAL EXAM 1:30-4:10 PM
Additional resources and recommended readings:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court

The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) has a variety of resources on transitional justice theory and its application around the world.

Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions*

Classroom Expectations:
Debate and discussion imply tolerance and respect for opinions other than one’s own. All students must demonstrate courtesy toward professor and fellow students at all times. All assignments must be handed in on time. No late papers will be accepted except in cases of documented emergencies. There will be no incompletes, make-up exams or extensions except in cases of documented emergencies.

Cellular phones and other electronic devices that could disrupt class must be turned off during class time. Computer use in the classroom is not allowed except when directed by instructor.

Honor Code:
The written work for this class will be submitted electronically through Blackboard. Essays may be processed through on-line databases so as to access the originality of work. The George Mason University Honor Code states: “Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee.” Students are encouraged to read the full Honor Code in the University Catalog ([http://catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu)) and to remain vigilant against any violation of the Code in their own work. Any cases of academic dishonesty in this course will be addressed following the guidelines outlined in the University Catalog. Please see me if you have any questions regarding the Honor Code.

Enrollment:
Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. After the last day to drop, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

Mason Email Accounts
Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See [http://masonlive.gmu.edu](http://masonlive.gmu.edu) for more information.

Other Useful Campus Resources:
Writing Center: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)
University Libraries: "Ask a Librarian": [http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html](http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html)
Counseling And Psychological Services (CAPS): (703) 993-2380; [http://caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu)

University Policies
The University Catalog, [http://catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu), is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at [http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu). All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

Important Dates and Information

- **Registration and Tuition**
  - Last day to add and drop classes with no tuition penalty: February 5
  - Last day to drop with no academic liability and some refund: February 11
Selective Withdrawal Period: February 25-March 30

*Grades and Exams*  
Students may view grades via Patriot Web: [https://patriotweb.gmu.edu](https://patriotweb.gmu.edu)