



MA Option Spring Term 2019

Genocide, Colonialism, and the International

Convened by Dr Louise Wise
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Module Description

This module adopts a global lens to offer an in-depth exploration of genocide throughout history and in the contemporary world. Combining conceptual analysis with detailed case studies, it introduces students to a range of approaches to thinking about, and trying to understand, genocide. Why do genocides happen? How do normal people become perpetrators? And which intellectual tools and theoretical frameworks can help us make sense of this complex phenomenon? The module draws on insights from diverse fields, including sociology, anthropology, history, postcolonial studies, philosophy, psychology and law. It emphasises the importance of situating *all* genocides in their historical, global and transnational contexts.

We begin by interrogating the highly politicised concept of genocide itself: what is 'genocide'? What are the origins of the term, and how has its meaning shifted over time? How adequate are legal frameworks? What are the politics of naming situations as 'genocide'? We will delve into the question of how genocide is related to other forms of war and violence, and examine how different 'forms' of genocide have emerged historically, in different international contexts, and in different regions of the world. A core theme of the module is the neglected relationship(s) between genocide and colonialism, which we will use as a route into thinking about ongoing genocides against Indigenous peoples. We'll also explore the relationship between genocide and political economy, the nation state, globalisation, and the destruction of the environment ('ecocide'). We'll unpack thorny issues around the politics of memory, trauma and representation, and unsettle dominant narratives and assumptions about genocide.

Throughout the module, we'll ask what it means to be 'critical' in genocide studies, and look at the exciting emerging research trends of this relatively young field of study. Finally, we'll ask the challenging question of response. What are the possibilities for meaningful political action against genocide? What are the dangers of response? And of course the biggest question of all: is it possible to end genocide?



Seminar Format

This module will be taught as a weekly 3-hour seminar.

These sessions will combine lectures, group work, class discussions, presentations, and debates.

We will at times incorporate film, documentary, policy documents and NGO reports.

There will be considerable scope for students to pursue their specific interests in relation to the course.



Learning Objectives

By the end of the module, students will:

- ❖ Have an understanding of the intellectual history and conceptual genealogy of the term, 'genocide', and be able to connect this history to contemporary debates (and contentious politics) about definition
- ❖ Have detailed knowledge of a number of empirical case studies (historical and contemporary), and the major debates surrounding these cases
- ❖ Demonstrate critical understanding of major theoretical approaches to analysing and explaining genocide
- ❖ Understand different historical 'forms' of genocide in relation to their global context(s)
- ❖ Be able to reflect on questions of historical interpretation and representation in relation to genocide
- ❖ Have awareness of the political, policy, and legal issues surrounding responses to genocide
- ❖ Be able to think about the ethical challenges of studying, representing, and responding to massive human suffering and trauma





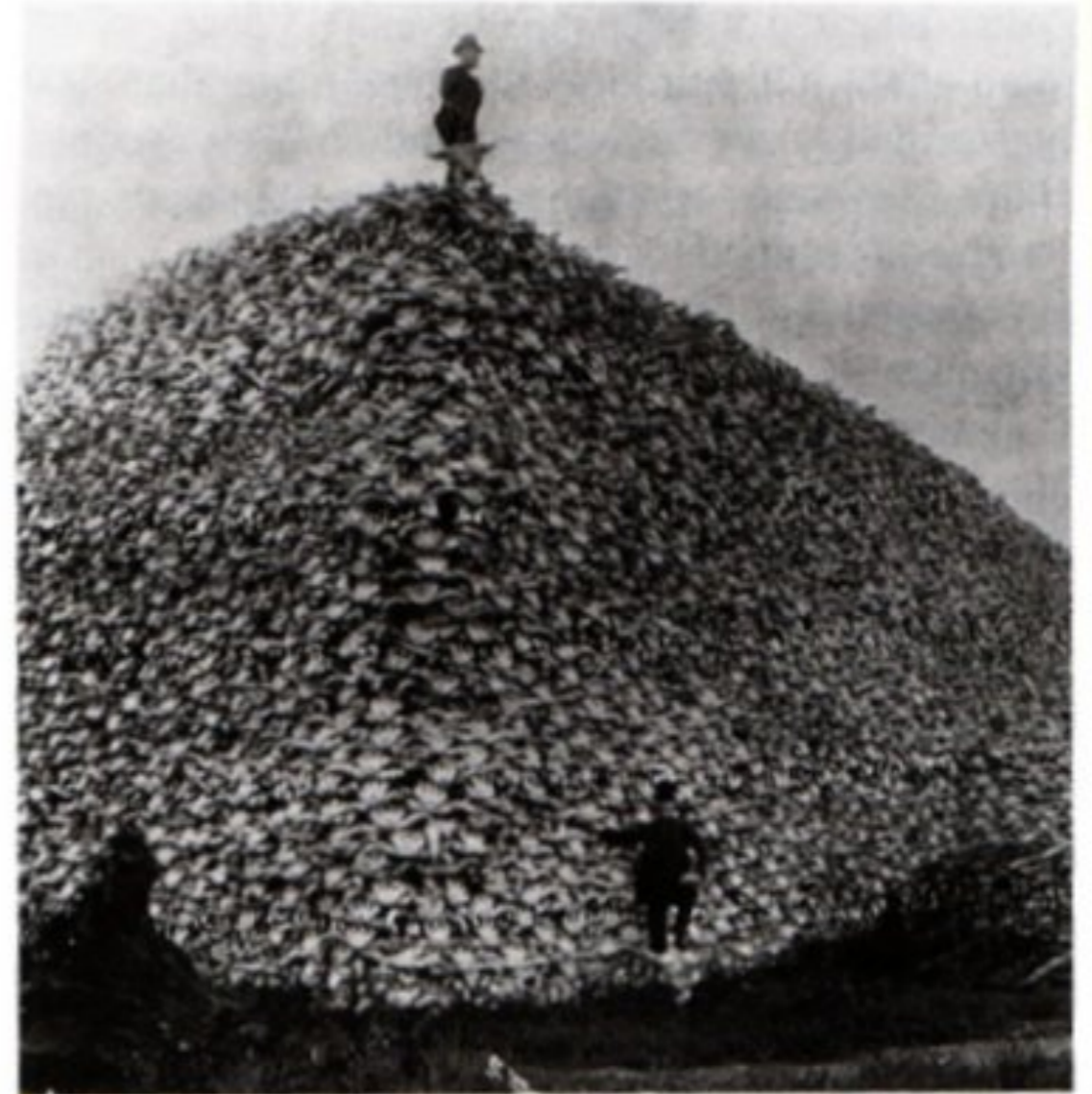
Assessment

The module is assessed by two modes:

1. One group presentation (10%)
2. One 4,000 word essay, submitted at the end of the module (90%)

Students can develop their own essay question

Any questions? Please feel free to get in touch:
l.wise@sussex.ac.uk



**Buffalo Skulls at the Michigan Carbon Works,
1895**