

Teaching Ten Stages of Genocide¹ **By Prof. Gregory H. Stanton**

During my years as the James Farmer Professor of Human Rights at the University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, Virginia, I taught an introductory course on genocide every semester. Each class was limited to 28 students because students learn best when they actively participate. From experience I found 28 students to be the limit for good discussion. I taught the course using the probing questioning and discussion typical of American law schools, but without Paper Chase intimidation or “hide the ball” pseudo-Socratic-ism.

The problem with much law school teaching is that a “Socratic method” limited to questions can leave students wondering what the answers are, without mastery of the structures that form the law. When I was a law professor at the Washington and Lee University School of Law, I taught a section of Contracts each year to part of the entering class. I finished each unit in the Contracts course with a summary of the structures of the legal doctrines we were studying, showing how each case we studied fit into those structures.

The summary lectures became so popular that students from other sections would sometimes sneak out to listen to them. Some of my orthodox colleagues scolded me for making law seem too clear. They thought the “hide the ball” method of teaching was closer to what lawyers would face in their practices.

The special challenge of teaching genocide studies is that it is a new field beyond established pathways in many other fields: social and cultural anthropology, history, law, political science, economics, psychology, journalism, ecology, and religion. Genocide has been with the human race since the beginning of time, but until 1944, it didn’t even have a name. There have been thousands of genocides.

“Issues in Human Rights: Genocide” was a course open to all students at the University of Mary Washington. The syllabus and course schedule are in the Appendix.

The questions we grappled with in “Issues in Human Rights: Genocide” included:

- What patterns do genocides have in common?
- How do they differ?
- How can we compare them?
- Why do people perpetrate genocides?
- What political, economic, social, cultural, and historical conditions increase the probability of genocide?
- What social transformations are elements in the genocidal process?
- Does the process have predictable stages?
- How can policy makers take action to stop the processes before thousands of people die in another genocide?

Human societies and cultures are structured – we live in social structures that we are born into, but that we also construct. Human societies have predictable processes that order our lives and our relationships.

No human society can endure in constant chaos. Human cultures have developed structured symbolic ways for people to communicate, produce, reproduce, live together, and find meaning. Even destructive processes like war and genocide develop in predictable ways.

I am trained as both a structural anthropologist and international lawyer. Discovering and describing common processes in human life is the task of social and cultural anthropology. Determining how we design and live within social structures is the task of law. So perhaps it was not accidental that my investigations into the processes of genocide resulted in “The Ten Stages of Genocide.”

I began to think about these processes when I encountered the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, where I was asked to direct a relief program in 1980, shortly after the Khmer

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Rouge were overthrown. The processes of classification, symbolization, and dehumanization immediately struck me.

I returned from Cambodia to Yale Law School determined to put the Khmer Rouge leaders on trial for their crimes. When I founded the Cambodian Genocide Project in 1982, I was still a Yale law student. That project and its successors, the Cambodian Genocide Program at Yale and the Documentation Center of Cambodia, resulted in creation of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, for which I drafted the Internal Rules.

It took from 1982 to 2006, but top Khmer Rouge leaders have finally faced justice, and Cambodians now understand why so many died. That experience resulted in advice I gave every class I later taught. Students do not have to wait for graduation to begin to change the world.

I again confronted genocide as a Foreign Service Officer in the State Department during and after the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Many of the same processes I saw in Cambodia, and read about in the Holocaust, Armenia, and other genocides became evident to me.

Also apparent was our own government's failure to recognize the warning signs of genocide and our unwillingness to send U.N., U.S., NATO, or African troops to stop or at least slow down a genocide that took 800,000 lives in just three months. I was assigned to the clean-up crew, assigned to design and create the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR.)

It was clear that such tribunals always come too late – after the genocide is over. As I talked with many diplomats involved in making U.S. policy during that genocide, it became apparent that many did not know what genocide is, and more importantly, did not know how to see it coming.

In 1996, I wrote “The Eight Stages of Genocide.” It was the product of ten years of thought, but the thoughts crystalized into a model that seems simple, but that has been evident in every genocide I have studied.

The model is actually based on complex analysis of many genocides, but it was written so it would be comprehensible to non-social scientists. It is a process model, not a statistical model. I have learned that most non-social scientists are unable to think with statistics. Most people think with ordinary language and stories.

The Eight Stages model of the genocidal process was intended for circulation to colleagues in the U.S. State and Defense Departments and the National Security Council. It had to be short. If overburdened Foreign Service Officers were to have time to read it, it had to be no more than two pages long, on two sides of a single sheet of paper.

Colleagues who read my first draft encouraged me to circulate it. Because the State Department had just introduced e-mail (though we still used eighty pound, all metal Wang computers), “The Eight Stages of Genocide” became one of the most widely circulated memos in US State Department history.

I seldom classified memos because so few were based on classified intelligence. Far too many U.S. State Department documents are classified even when their “secrets” have already been reported on the front page of the New York Times. “The Eight Stages of Genocide” has been Unclassified since day one. After I left the State Department in 1999, I publicly presented the “Eight Stages of Genocide” at Yale University.

When I founded Genocide Watch in 1999, we posted “The Eight Stages of Genocide” on our website. At the suggestion of colleagues, I added two more stages in 2012: Discrimination and Persecution.

The model used by Genocide Watch today is thus “The Ten Stages of Genocide.” We use “The Ten Stages of Genocide” as an early warning model, because it identifies processes that contribute to the development of genocide. The model is also intended to suggest measures that can be taken to stop or prevent each of the stages of genocide from getting worse.

The most common misunderstanding people have about the model is assuming that the stages must come in order. That error may be caused by use of the word “stages” for the processes that result in genocide. [I am still seeking a better, more dynamic term.] But the model is not linear. Stages often occur simultaneously.

“The Ten Stages of Genocide” is simply a logical model to help observers understand some of the key operations that result in genocide. It also suggests strategies that can prevent, slow, or stop each “stage”, each process.

Secondary school and university teachers of the Holocaust, and the newly organized International Association of Genocide Scholars discovered the model. They found that it was helpful in comparing and teaching about genocides.

The model identifies steps that, if followed, could lead down the path to genocide. For teachers and students, it describes the dynamics of genocide. It allows them to see the parallels between genocides, and some of the ways genocides differ from each other.

Each of the "stages" is itself a process. That is why the name for each stage ends with "ation," the English ending for process words. It is a structural model. In Piagetian structuralism, which is the model's theoretical basis, structures are systems of transformations.

"The Ten Stages of Genocide" (with examples for each stage) are:

1. Classification – dividing society into "us" vs. "them;" (imposing identity categories);
2. Symbolization – imposing symbols on classifications; (naming groups, imposing yellow stars);
3. Discrimination – using legal or cultural power to exclude groups from full civil rights; (segregation or apartheid laws, denial of voting rights);
4. Dehumanization – portraying targeted groups as subhuman (calling victims vermin, cockroaches, diseases, traitors, criminals, or terrorists);
5. Organization – organizing, training, and arming hate groups, armies, and militias;
6. Polarization – arresting moderates as traitors, propaganda against "enemies of the people;"
7. Preparation – planning, training and arming killers; identification of victims;
8. Persecution – expropriation, forced displacement, ghettos, concentration camps;
9. Extermination – physical killing, mass rape, torture, social and cultural destruction;
10. Denial – minimizing statistics; blaming victims or war or famine; denying "intent."

The model may be found at <http://www.genocidewatch.com/ten-stages-of-genocide>.

What follows are some of the lessons I have learned from teaching about genocide since 1985.

Don't lecture. Question and discuss.

I did not give lectures when I taught "Issues in Human Rights: Genocide." The back and forth of active class discussion creates an appreciation for how difficult it is to come to conclusions. *It generates engagement and excitement as students grapple with the challenges they would face if they were policy makers, human rights activists, or informed citizens.* Many of my students later decided to work in government, in teaching, or with human rights groups. Some told me later that the course changed their lives.

Show films. Bring in eyewitnesses and authors.

The course used many films related to the genocides and topics we discussed. Films *properly used* bring a course to life with powerful images and eyewitness testimony.

Every semester, the survivor of a genocide (a Holocaust survivor, Rwandan, Bosnian, or Cambodian eyewitness, or an Armenian descendent of survivors) came to the university to speak and to meet with our class. I also brought friends who are authors of books about genocide like Eric Weitz, Peter Balakian, and David Scheffer to give lectures at the university and to meet with my classes.

Don't give exams. Assign short, realistic papers.

I do not believe in giving exams. After a student has graduated, when will she ever have to take an exam as part of her job? Why is it important to test whether a student can parrot back what a professor has said in class or what she has read in a book?

The skill that will be useful after graduation is the ability to analyze, succinctly summarize, and creatively organize facts and conclusions. To develop that skill, short papers are much more useful exercises than exams.

Four 3-page papers required students to use the Ten Stage model to analyze the processes in four genocides: Armenia, the Holocaust, Bosnia or Iraq, and Rwanda.

Two 4-page and two 6-page papers required the students to write different types of policy papers related to a genocide or potential genocide. These papers asked the students to put themselves in the roles of diplomats, journalists, policy makers, and human rights organization analysts at the time of a past or current situation. The four papers were the following:

- The first was a Briefing Paper by a U.S. Foreign Service Officer for the U.S. Ambassador in Constantinople or Berlin just before the beginning of the Armenian genocide or the Holocaust.
- The second was an Op-Ed article by a journalist for an American newspaper at the outset of the Rwandan or Bosnian genocide.
- The third was an Options Paper by a policy maker in the U.S. State or Defense Department about possible U.S. responses to threats of genocide or genocides in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or another current situation.
- The fourth was an analysis of a potential or actual crisis in a country of the student's choosing with recommendations by a human rights organization for responses by governments or the United Nations.

Each student gave a ten-minute class presentation with audio-visuals reporting on her research paper.

Encourage your students. Inspire them by your example.

Because I was not only a college teacher, but also a former Foreign Service Officer with the State Department, the Founding President of Genocide Watch, and VP and then President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, my students learned that it is not enough to be a scholar of genocide. There is a moral dimension to our work.

We should be upstanders. I expected my students to contribute to the work of Genocide Watch, and encouraged them to attend professional meetings, trials, and demonstrations. I helped them get internships with human rights organizations and international tribunals. Several of them founded human rights organizations of their own while they were students. Students Helping Honduras, for example, raised over three million dollars and rebuilt an orphanage and then an entire Honduran village while its founder, Shin Fujiyama, was still a college student at Mary Washington. Shin's organization continues to build schools in Honduras to this day.

Raise your students' consciousness. Help them grow morally.

We confront one of the greatest problems in human history. Yet because we are born tribal, with a culture and language we learn from our parents, we must all learn to transcend our ethnicities, nationalities, and religions.

We must learn to see through the false consciousness of "race." The mistake racists make is to think there is more than one race. We are all members of the same human race.

Raising students' consciousness to transcend human divisions should be one of the goals of a course about genocide. We are really teaching moral development -- as Socrates, Piaget, and Kohlberg showed is a central purpose of education.

Tell stories.

Stories are still the best way to teach, inspire, and motivate people. They are why Jesus taught with parables. They are richer than abstractions. They personalize truth. Stories are one reason the Bible is still so powerful after thousands of years. Stories excite imaginations. They help students think beyond their own lives. Stories make students put themselves in the shoes of the victims of genocide.

Be personal.

Both high school and university students are struggling with some of the most difficult years of their lives. Be available to them. Listen to them. Be willing to discuss whatever is on their minds and their hearts.

This openness means that teachers must be vulnerable. Real listening means not just hearing words, but also feeling emotions. We are born with senses for each other that must not become dulled by the abstractions of our learning or narrowed by the hierarchies of our institutions.

Because genocide studies can be traumatic and depressing, at the beginning of every course, I advised my students to daily read poetry or the Bible, or listen to Mozart or love songs, or take a walk in the woods to remind themselves that the world is not evil.

Praise generously. Correct gently. Grade fairly.

Announce in advance what criteria will be used for grading. Take the time to write comments. Return students' papers in the next class. They will realize that you take improving their work seriously and that they are your first priority.

Be available for personal and career counseling.

Among the most important determinants of students' sense of self-worth is their sense that you value them. Many are in a time of their lives when they are looking for meaning and direction for their lives. Listen actively. Encourage courage.

Promote your students.

Write recommendations so they help your students realize their dreams. Be specific about examples of creativity. Tell your student's story. Say what she couldn't say about herself. Wax poetic about her. Send her what you wrote even if she waived her right to read it. If you can't recommend her whole-heartedly, tell her tactfully that other teachers might help her more. Do this while the student still has time to ask someone else to write for her. Damning with faint praise is worse than no recommendation at all.

Remember our calling.

We are pioneers in a world-wide movement to prevent or end genocide, a crime that has killed even more people than war. We are founders of a movement that will someday be seen as important as the movement to abolish slavery. The revolution in human consciousness that we advocate is almost as important as the movement to free women from the shackles of patriarchy.

Teachers are the most important people in the world.

Politicians usually strive for power. Some even think they are powerful. But no politician has the personal impact on students' lives that teachers do. Only a few other professions can claim such direct influence – pastors, psychiatrists, and physicians, perhaps. The influence of a teacher lasts a lifetime. Nearly every student can remember teachers who changed their lives. Teaching is a calling. Teachers are agents for the force that holds humankind together, the force of justice. Teachers are channels for the most powerful personal force on earth – the force of love.

Gregory H. Stanton is the Founding President of *Genocide Watch* (www.genocidewatch.com). He is the Research Professor in Genocide Studies and Prevention at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, Arlington, Virginia. Dr. Stanton is the founder (1982) of the *Cambodian Genocide Project*, and is the founder (1999) and Chair of the *Alliance Against Genocide*. From 2007 – 2009, he was the President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS.) Stanton served in the State Department (1992 – 1999), where he drafted the United Nations Security Council resolutions that created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Burundi Commission of Inquiry, and the Central African Arms Flow Commission. He also wrote the State Department options paper on ways to bring the Khmer Rouge to justice in Cambodia. He drafted the Internal Rules for the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. In 1994, Stanton won the American Foreign Service Association's prestigious W. Averell Harriman award for "extraordinary contributions to the practice of diplomacy exemplifying intellectual courage," based on his dissent from US policy on the Rwandan genocide. Dr. Stanton has degrees from Oberlin College, Harvard Divinity School, Yale Law School, and a Masters and Doctorate in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Chicago. Stanton is widely known for his model of the genocidal process: "The Ten Stages of Genocide."

Appendix: Syllabus and Course Schedule:

ISSUES IN HUMAN RIGHTS: GENOCIDE

Dr. Gregory H. Stanton

James Farmer Professor in Human Rights

Spring Semester: Monroe Hall 201, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:30 PM – 1:45 PM

Office Hours: Monroe 208D: 8:30 – 11:30 AM, 2:00 – 3:00 PM Tuesdays & Thursdays

Prof. Stanton's telephone: 654-1391; home: 703-448-0222; e-mail: ghstanto@umw.edu

SYLLABUS

There will be five required texts in this course:

Leo Kuper, **Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century**, 1981.

Samantha Power, **A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide**, 2002.

Samuel Totten, William Parsons, & Israel Charny, eds., **Century of Genocide, any edition**.

Eric Weitz, **A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation**, 2003.

Joyce Apsel, ed. **Darfur: Genocide Before Our Eyes**, any edition.

These books are available in the Mary Washington College Bookstore and will also be placed on reserve in the Simpson Library. There will also be some readings posted on Blackboard.

Optional books: These books are available in the University of Mary Washington Simpson Library, where they will be placed on reserve. Students are not required to purchase them.

The Armenian genocide:

Peter Balakian, **The Burning Tigris**, 2003.

The Holocaust:

Martin Gilbert, **Never Again: The History of the Holocaust**, 2000.

The Rwandan genocide:

Linda Melvern, **A People Betrayed**, 2000.

The genocidal process:

James Waller, **Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide**, 2002 or 2007.

Course requirements:

Class attendance is required, and each student should sign in on the class list at each class. Students are expected to do the reading for each class before the class, and to engage in discussion in class. In the fifth week of the course, each student should decide on what country to focus on for the final research paper and begin sending news updates on the country that could be used by Genocide Watch to genocidewatch2@aol.com. Each student should post questions and comments about the course on Blackboard by 10 AM each Tuesday.

Outlines, briefing, op-ed, options, and research papers: Four 3-page Outline papers will be required that set forth the stages of four genocides. Each student will also write one short (four double-spaced pages) briefing paper on one of the past genocides studied, one (four double-spaced pages) newspaper op-ed opinion article on another of the genocides studied; one options paper on a genocide (six double-spaced pages,) and one report on a current situation at risk (six double-spaced pages.) Details on the intended recipients, format, and goals of these papers will be distributed. There is enough material in the required readings for drafting all but the final paper. Only the final paper needs footnotes. The final paper on a current situation will require research on the internet. Students will give ten-minute presentations of their research findings in class during the final classes.

Grading: Each outline paper will count for five percent of the final grade. The briefing, op-ed, options, and research papers will each count for fifteen percent. News updates sent to Genocide Watch will count for ten percent, class attendance and participation for five percent, and the oral presentation of the research report for ten percent of the final grade. **Criteria for grading papers:** choice and accuracy of facts presented, clarity and succinctness of writing, logic of analysis, and soundness of conclusions.

There will be no exams.

ISSUES IN HUMAN RIGHTS: GENOCIDE: COURSE SCHEDULE WITH ASSIGNED READINGS

Tuesday, January 16

Introduction to course: Are there universal human rights?

Alan Gewirth, "Are There Any Absolute Rights?"

The Philosophical Quarterly, Volume 31, Issue 122, 1 January 1981, Pages 1–16

Thursday, January 18

The Genocide Convention: What is genocide? What isn't genocide?

Kuper, Preface, Chapters 1, 2, Appendix 1

Weitz, Introduction

Tuesday, January 23

Raphael Lemkin and the making of the Genocide Convention

Power, Preface, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

Thursday, January 25

Why are there genocides?

Ideologies of race and nation

Kuper, Chapters 3, 4, 5

Weitz, chapter 1

Tuesday, January 30

The Genocidal Process: The Eight Stages of Genocide

The Eight Stages of Genocide, Genocides since 1945,

Twelve Ways to Deny A Genocide at www.genocidewatch.org

Thursday, February 1

The Armenian Genocide

Film: The Armenian Genocide

Tuesday, February 6

The Armenian Genocide

Weitz, Preface; Totten, Chapter 2

Kuper, Chapter 6, Appendix 3

Optional reading: Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*

Outline due on the process of the Armenian genocide

Thursday, February 8

Colonial Genocides

Totten, chapter 1 (The Hereros)

Tuesday, February 13

The Holocaust

Film: Conspiracy: The Wannsee Conference

Thursday, February 15

Weitz, Chapter 3; Kuper, Chapter 7; Totten, Chapter 4, 5, 6

Outline due on the process of the Holocaust

Tuesday, February 20

How Can Ordinary People Commit Mass Murder?

Film: The Milgram and Stanford Prison Experiments

Reading on Blackboard: Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*, Chapter 18 (159 – 189)

Optional reading: James Waller, *Becoming Evil*, Chapters 7, 8 (202-263)

Thursday, February 22

Communist Genocides and Politicides: Soviet Union, Ukraine

Weitz, Chapter 2; Kuper Chapter 8 (138 – 150); Totten, Chapter 3, 4

First paper due: Briefing paper

Tuesday, February 27

Communist Genocides and Politicides: Khmer Rouge Cambodia

Power, Chapter 6; Weitz, Chapter 4; Kuper, Chapter 8 (154-160; 170-173); Totten, Chapter 11

Thursday, March 1

Communist Genocides and Politicides: Khmer Rouge Cambodia – Bringing the Khmer Rouge to Justice

Stanton, *Seeking Justice in Cambodia*, on www.genocidewatch.org

Tuesday, March 13

Racism and Genocide in Rwanda

Film: Ghosts of Rwanda

Thursday, March 15

Totten, Chapter 13

Outline due on the process of the Rwandan genocide

Tuesday, March 20

Rwanda and the Failure of the United Nations to Prevent or Stop Genocide

Power, Chapter 10, Optional Reading: Melvern, Chapter 19

Thursday, March 22

Saddam Hussein's Iraq

Power, Chapter 8, Totten, Chapter 12

Tuesday, March 27

Nationalist and Religious Genocide and Politicide in Bosnia and Kosovo

Power, Chapters 9, 11, 12; Totten, Chapters 14, 15; Weitz, Chapter 5

Outline due on the Bosnian or Iraqi genocide

Thursday, March 29

Genocide and other crimes against humanity in Sudan

Videotape: Sixty Minutes, Genocide in Darfur, Sudan

Totten, Chapter 16

Tuesday, April 3

Genocide and other crimes against humanity in Darfur

Film: Judgment on Genocide in Sudan

Apfel, *Genocide Before Our Eyes*, Chapters by Reeves, Stanton, Markusen & Totten

Second paper due: Newspaper op-ed opinion article

Thursday, April 5

The Sovereign Territorial State and the Limits of Sovereignty

Kuper, Chapter 9

The Responsibility to Protect

Summary of Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (posted on Blackboard)

Tuesday, April 10

Strategies to Prevent and Stop Genocide: The International Campaign to End Genocide

Totten, Preface; Power, Conclusion; Weitz, Conclusion.

Stanton, How We Can Prevent Genocide, on www.genocidewatch.org

Thursday, April 12

Early Warning and Early Response

Totten, Chapter 17; Kuper, Chapter 10 (186 – 209); Articles posted on Blackboard

Tuesday, April 17

Punishment of Genocide: Ad Hoc International Tribunals (ICTY, ICTR, Sierra Leone, Cambodia) and the International Criminal Court

Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation

Power, Chapter 13

Third paper due: Options paper

Thursday, April 19

Current situations at risk of genocide or politicide

Research on www.genocidewatch.org, www.hrw.org, www.crisisweb.org, etc.

Reports from class members

Tuesday, April 24

Current situations at risk of genocide or politicide

Reports from class members

Thursday, April 26

Current situations at risk of genocide or politicide

Reports from class members

Tuesday, May 1

Current situations at risk of genocide or politicide

Reports from class members

Fourth paper due: Report on a current situation at risk of genocide or politicide