



CSPS Winter School

Critical Dialogues on Violence: Foundations and Current debates

8– 12 January 2018

Registration deadline: Wednesday 13 December 2017

Lecturers

Lotje de Vries	(SDC) (coordinator, contact person)
Gemma van der Haar	(SDC) (coordinator)
Han van Dijk	(SDC)
Joost Jongerden	(RSO)
Arjaan Pellis	(GEO)
Lisa Trogisch	(SDC)
Maarten Voors	(DEC)

Introduction

The course “Critical Dialogues on Violence: Foundations and Current Debates” offers an in-depth engagement with foundational texts presenting different conceptualizations and theoretical framings of violence. Increasingly, different forms of conflict and violence permeate everyday-day dynamics of social life. PhD students who study topics related to resource management, social-economic change and governance, may encounter multiple contradictions, conflicts, and overt or covert forms of violence in dynamic research settings. While few PhD projects directly study the causes and effects of violence, most PhD students working on these issues need to develop an adequate conceptualization of conflict and violence as they tend to form an integral part of their research context. This course offers students a theoretical basis to approach processes of conflict and violence in their research projects, touching upon questions such as: What is violence? How does it come about? How is violence organised, socially and politically? More practically, the course asks: in what ways does violence permeate our research projects?

The course particularly explores the (re-) production of violence, focusing on conceptualizations of violent behaviour, the social and political organisation of violence, and violence as communication. It draws on different disciplines (history, philosophy, political sociology, geography, economics). The course combines thorough reading of foundational texts with readings of more recent key thinkers. We will trace how some of the foundational readings found their way into current debates that problematize the nature of violence.

Learning outcomes

Students will engage directly with foundational texts on violence and the various ways this can be interpreted in actual research today. This will allow them to engage more deeply with aspects of their research project that are not directly the topic of study but that potentially greatly shape its outcome or at least determine parts of the lives of its respondents. With this course we hope to accommodate a necessity to dialogue on violence and its multiple interpretations, and to advance on research projects of students who are confronted with different forms of violence in their research.

After successful completion of this course, participants are expected to be able to:

- **Identify** core theoretical frames to understand the (re-) production of violence.
- **Understand** the relevance of historical, abstract and theoretical texts and **apply** them to contemporary issues and debates
- Critically **reflect** on the implications of different theoretical framings for their research projects
- **Develop** a conceptualisation of violence for their own research project

Programme

Session	Theme	Core readings	Lecturer
1	Introduction: Understanding violence	None	Gemma van der Haar and Lotje de Vries
2	Do we need a central form of power to control violence?	Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan	Han van Dijk
3	How can societies protect themselves from state violence?	Pierre Clastres: The Archeology of violence	Joost Jongerden
4	How is violence part of claim-making?	Charles Tilly: The politics of collective violence	Gemma van der Haar
5	Can violence be a legitimate response to repression?	Franz Fanon: The Wretched of the Earth	Lotje de Vries
6	Is violence a normal property of human behaviour?	Hannah Arendt: Eichmann in Jerusalem, a report on the banality of evil	Lisa Trogisch
7	Is violence rational behaviour?	James Fearon: Rationalist Explanations for War	Maarten Voors
8	How is violence a form of communication?	Niklas Luhmann: Social systems	Arjaan Pellis
12 Jan	Final session: master class with Jeffrey Sluka, Massey University, New Zealand		All

Activities

The course is organised around reading, self-study, active pre-class preparation, and dialogue. Over the course of one week, participants will have morning and afternoon seminar sessions. The readings, including guiding questions, will be provided before the Christmas break.

- **Session one** will serve as an introduction into the topic and set-up of the course. We will allow participants to get to know each other, briefly discuss each other's research projects, and align

expectations. We will also elaborate on the different manifestations of violence in their research projects.

- **The literature-based sessions** will discuss foundational texts on violence and bring the discussions in the text to recent debates on violence. Where possible we seek to also discuss how the specific literature of that week is applied in empirical research. The sessions start with an introduction of the literature of about 45 minutes. The remaining time is used for a critical dialogue, drawing on questions brought in by the participants.
- On Friday 12th January 2017, we organize a **PhD masterclass/research seminar in the morning** in which the participants discuss their research in relation to the different perspectives offered in the course. Jeffrey Sluka, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Massey University studying violence and terrorism, will respond to these presentations from a methodological and content perspective. In the afternoon, he will give a public WASS lecture.

Assessment

The assessment consist of 1) an evaluation of the student's participation in the literature sessions and 2) a short essay (3000 words) in which participants will reflect on the ways in which forms or aspects of violence they are confronted with in their PhD research. 1) The active participation in class is assessed through the submission of at least one question for debate and comments on the reading prior to the class, to be submitted at least one day in advance of each session via blackboard. This will also facilitate the teacher in her/his preparation of the lecture. 2) In the final essay, students are asked to apply the theory of one or two sessions and make a connection between the course literature, the theoretical debates in their research and the ways in which they see themselves confronted with forms of violence in their projects.

The course coordinators (Gemma van der Haar and Lotje de Vries) will assess the level of participation and comment on the essays. There will be no final grades but both aspects need to be evaluated positively.

How are the intended learning outcomes assessed?	Participation	Final Essay
Identifying core theoretical frames to understand the (re-) production of violence	x	
Understanding the relevance of historical, abstract and theoretical texts and apply them to contemporary issues and debates	x	x
Critical reflection on the implications of the theoretical framings for your research	x	x
Developing a conceptualisation of violence for your research project		x

Target group and number of participants

This intense course aims for a maximum of 20 students in order to assure a high level of interaction between the teachers and the participants. The course is intended for PhD students in the social and environmental sciences from within Wageningen University and from other universities in the Netherlands and beyond. The course is of particular relevance to students in anthropology, communication sciences, development economics, geography, political science, and sociology of development who are confronted with different forms of violence in their research, especially during their fieldwork. Students at an advanced master level are also welcome.

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Note: WASS generally applies a minimum threshold of 10 participants, but exceptions to this rule are possible (please discuss this with the Education Coordinator).

Assumed prior knowledge

This course is a thorough and critical introduction into debates in the social sciences surrounding violence. Participants are expected to have a basic level of knowledge about concepts or debates related to the broader social sciences. Please contact the course coordinators in case of doubt about the required entry level.

Course fees

For PhDs of WASS there is a fee of 300 euros. For all other participants and for staff members (fellows/post docs), there is a fee of 600 euros for the whole course (including: coffee).

About the Centre for Space, Place and Society

This course is initiated by the Conflict Theme Group of the Centre for Space, Place and Society (CSPS) that brings together researchers from three chair groups within Wageningen University (WUR) – Cultural Geography (GEO), Rural Sociology (RSO) and Sociology of Development Change (SDC) – and beyond, to advance on critical-constructive scholarship within the social sciences. Our particular focus is on issues of socio-spatial and environmental justice. In investigating dynamics of spatial and social rootedness, connections, and circulations, with special attention to questions of inequality, exclusion, difference and plurality, the CSPS seeks to translate knowledge into practical action in pursuit of a more just and equitable world.

Location

The sessions will be held in building “De Leeuwenborch”, Hollandseweg 1 in Wageningen, The Netherlands. The exact rooms will be announced later.

Further information

On *course content* please contact the course contact person, Lotje de Vries. She can be reached via email at Lotje.devries@wur.nl

For details about the *logistics, accommodation, registration, fees, study materials*, etc. please contact

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