Responses to Violence (CCJS 225)

Term: Fall 2024
Credits: 3
Dates: August 28th – December 4th, 2024
Times: 3-5:30pm, Wednesdays
Classroom: LeFrak 2166

Professor: Thomas Abt
Pronouns: he/him
Email: tabt@umd.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11-12, by appointment, 2147 LeFrak

Course Description

Responses to Violence is an I-Series course that engages students in critical thinking, reading, writing, and discussion about how to address a critically important issue: the enduring challenge of violence. Violence is complex, so the course uses an interdisciplinary approach to discuss its various historical, psychological, sociological, and criminological aspects to see how society can best respond to it.

The course begins with examining the issue of violence in the broadest possible terms using Pinker's Better Angels text as our guide. Next, the course examines one form of violence – community gun violence – in depth, with my book Bleeding Out as a roadmap. For remaining classes, students themselves will choose one or more aspects of the issue they wish study to collectively.

Along the way, I will try to use my practical experiences working in this area to bring the subject matter to life. I have been working to address violence for most of my adult life, and have worked with presidents, governors, mayors, and community leaders to save lives for more than two decades. For more about me, feel free to review my bio here.

In addition, students will be introduced to interesting aspects of this work by a series of guest speakers, some of whom are leaders in academia, some who have held high-level positions in government, and some who possess lived experience.

Each class will begin with short quiz on the reading, followed by a lecture and discussion. After a short break, class will resume with a guest lecture, followed by more discussion. "Student choice" classes at the end of the semester may have a different structure.

Required Resources

Course Website: This course uses the web-based tool, ELMS, to provide students with easy and anytime access to course-related information. To access ELMS, students must first register for class. Once registered, students can use their Directory ID and password to log onto the website which contains course information including the syllabus, assignment details, and other reading and viewing materials. ELMS also contains important course announcements. Students can access their grades (but not those of others) through ELMS once posted. The ELMS address is: http://elms.umd.edu and has a link for "ELMS support."

Books:

Steven Pinker, The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined, ISBN: 978-0-670-02295-3

Thomas Abt, Bleeding Out: The Devastating Consequences of Urban Violence, and a Bold New Plan for Peace in the Streets, ISBN-13: 9781541645714

Additional materials: Additional assigned articles and videos will be found on ELMS. **Reading/viewing these materials is required**.

Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Place the challenge of violence into context in terms of nature, history, culture, and society.

- Recognize the basic drivers of violence in society, and how those drivers have (or have not) been addressed over time.

- Understand a particular type of violence – community gun violence – and potential strategies for reducing it.

- Appreciate the role of evidence and data in policymaking, as well as the practical and political obstacles to such policymaking.

Sensitive Content Disclaimer

This is a class about violence. Due to the nature of the subject, some class content will contain explicit, graphic, and/or vulgar images and/or speech. Some topics such as murder, rape, or genocide, to name just a few, may generate discomfort. If a student believes any such content would be triggering to learn about and talk about, the student should carefully consider whether this class is appropriate for them to enroll in.

Course Structure

Classes. Classes will generally feature a lecture featuring PowerPoint slides with questions and answers interspersed, class exercises, guest lectures and videos and more. Slides will be made available on ELMS after each class.

Quizzes. Each class with assigned materials will begin with a short quiz. Upon entry into class, students will be given access to a web link to complete a 1-3 question quiz related to the required readings/videos for that class. Quiz questions may be multiple-choice, matching, or short answer. Students will have access to the link for the first 5 minutes of class. There will be no makeups for quizzes, but the three lowest quiz grades will be automatically discarded. **The average score of the remaining quizzes will count for 25% of a student's overall grade.**

Class attendance and participation. Given the interactive style of this class, consistent attendance and participation are a major component of student learning. Attendance is encouraged for every session and students are expected to arrive on time and remain throughout the entire class. Students with a legitimate reason to miss class should communicate in advance with the instructor absent an emergency. If advance notice is not provided, students will not be permitted to make up any quizzes they missed. Students who miss class are responsible for learning what they missed from that session.

Participation grades are based on active participation, however, and not just attendance. Students should come prepared to contribute to class discussions by asking or answering relevant questions or by sharing informed thoughts or observations, based on current and previously assigned class materials. Participation is an ongoing

process, so participation grades will not be posted until the end of the semester. See the "Tips for Success" section below for more information. **Participation will count for 15% of a student's overall grade.**

Mid-term exam. The mid-term exam (multiple choice and short answer questions) will be an overview of the course materials to date, including assignments, lectures, and in-class discussions. **The mid-term exam counts for 15% of a student's overall grade.**

Short paper. Students will produce a short (900 word) paper where they identify a type of violence or ongoing violent conflict, explain why it is important for policymakers to address, then propose a concrete intervention or policy response to reduce or eliminate the problem. Examples include domestic violence, gang violence, racial/ethnic violence, workplace violence, genocide, terrorism, and the war in Ukraine, among others. Students should cite academic and policy articles (NOT online news reports) to support their arguments. **The short paper counts for 20% of a student's overall grade.**

Final exam. The final exam (multiple choice and short answer questions) will be an overview of the course materials since the mid-term exam, including assignments, lectures, and in-class discussions. **The final exam counts for 25% of a student's overall grade.**

More detailed descriptions of these assignments will be provided in class.

Tips for Success

- **Read.** If you do the reading, you will do well in this course. Period.

- **Show up.** As a famous comedian once said, "80% of success is just showing up." Come to class. Be on time.

- **Participate.** Try to a make contribution every class, but beyond that it's about quality, not quantity. Be as thoughtful as possible. The best questions, thoughts, and/or observations do two things at the same time: (1) they demonstrate knowledge of class materials and (2) push the conversation one or two steps beyond those materials, inspired by your own creative thinking. Extra credit for contributions that positively build on the comments of other students.

- **Stay current.** Each class builds on previous course content, so do not fall behind. If you do fall behind, check in with Professor Abt as soon as possible so you can troubleshoot together.

- **Enable notifications.** Pro tip – ELMS can ensure students receive timely notifications via email or text. Enable notifications to be sent instantly or daily.

- **Ask for help.** If you're struggling in any way (or than with technology, see below), reach out to Professor Abt sooner rather than later. You can't get help if you don't ask for it. For help with ELMS or other technology, contact IT Support.

Policies and Resources for Undergraduate Courses

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity,
- Student and instructor conduct,
- Accessibility and accommodations,
- Attendance and excused absences,

- Grades and appeals, and
- Copyright and intellectual property.

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with Professor Abt with any questions.

Course Guidelines

Names/Pronouns and Self-Identifications

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. Students are invited, if they wish, to share how they want to be referred to in class, both in terms of their name and pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). Keep in mind that the pronouns someone uses are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.

Additionally, it is the student's choice whether to disclose how they identify in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of their identity (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. Professor Abt will do his best to address and refer to all students accordingly and asks students to do the same for their fellow Terps.

Communication with Instructor

If students need to communicate with Professor Abt, please email him at tabt@umd.edu. Do NOT email him with questions that are easily found in the syllabus or on ELMS (i.e. When is this assignment due? How much is it worth? etc.). Professor Abt will do his best to respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays. Note: The University has decided that the students' TERPMAIL email must be used in all classes. Therefore, students should communicate with Professor Abt through their TERPMAIL email accounts.

Communication with Peers

With a diversity of perspectives and experiences, students may find themselves in disagreement and/or debate with one another. That is normal, even welcome. That said, it is important that students agree to conduct themselves in a professional manner and that they work together to foster and preserve a virtual classroom environment in which they can respectfully discuss controversial questions.

Students are encouraged to confidently exercise their right to free speech – bearing in mind, of course, that they will be expected to craft and defend arguments that support their positions using facts, data, research, and other forms of evidence found in class materials and elsewhere. Also keep in mind that free speech has limits; this course is NOT the space for hate speech, harassment, disrespectful, or derogatory language. Professor Abt will make every reasonable attempt to create an atmosphere in which each student feels comfortable voicing their positions without fear of being personally attacked, mocked, demeaned, or devalued.

Any behavior (including harassment, sexual harassment, and racially and/or culturally derogatory language) that threatens this atmosphere will not be tolerated. Please alert Professor Abt immediately if you feel threatened, dismissed, or silenced at any point during our semester together and/or if your engagement in discussion has been in some way hindered by the learning environment. Talking in class should be fun!

Course Grades

Assignment	Percentage %
Quizzes	25%
Active participation	15%
Mid-term exam	15%
Short paper	20%
Final exam	25%
Total	100%

All grades will be posted on ELMS. If students would like to review any of their grades or have questions about how something was scored, please email Professor Abt to schedule a time to meet and discuss. Formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing within one week of receiving the grade.

Short papers will suffer a full grade penalty for each day they are late so students should plan to have their work submitted well before the scheduled deadlines.

Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. To be fair to everyone there must be clear standards that are applied consistently. Understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same as making the cut (89.99 ≠ 90.00), and it would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others.

Final Grade Cutoffs									
+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%	+	67.00%	+	
A	94.00%	B	84.00%	C	74.00%	D	64.00%	F	<60.0%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%	-	60.00%	-	

Academic Integrity

The University's Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principles of academic honesty and integrity are upheld. In accordance with this code, the University of Maryland does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Students must fully understand this code and its implications because all acts of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this code. All students are expected to adhere to this Code. It is the student's responsibility to read it and know what it says, so they can start their professional life on the right path. **As future professionals, your commitment to high ethical standards and honesty begins with your time at the University of Maryland.**

It is important to note that course assistance websites, such as CourseHero, or AI generated content are not permitted sources, unless the instructor explicitly gives permission. Material taken or copied from these sites can be deemed unauthorized material and a violation of academic integrity. These sites offer information that might be inaccurate or biased and most importantly, relying on restricted sources will hamper student's learning processes, particularly the critical thinking steps necessary for college-level assignments.

Additionally, students may naturally choose to use online forums for course-wide discussions (e.g., Group lists or chats) to discuss concepts in the course. However, collaboration on graded assignments is strictly prohibited unless otherwise stated. Examples of prohibited collaboration include: asking classmates for answers on quizzes or exams, contributing to each others' short papers, etc. Students should visit the **Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies** and reach out if they have questions.

Finally, on each exam or assignment students must write out and sign the following pledge: *"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."* If students ever feel pressured to comply with someone else's academic integrity violation, please reach out to Professor Abt straight away. Also, *if you are ever unclear* about acceptable levels of collaboration, *please ask*!

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools Prohibited

In this course, Professor Abt's expectation is that students will not use any artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs such as ChatGPT or DALL-E to help you with assignments. Any use of AI-generated work to outline, write, create, or edit assignments will be considered an academic integrity violation. Abt's reasoning for this is that these programs may provide inaccurate or biased information, but more importantly, they do not serve individual development as a student. In this course students will learn valuable skills from outlining, generating, and editing their own work. If students have questions about this policy or are not sure if a resource they have found will violate this policy, please ask.

Course Outline

Date	Topic	Assignment
8/28	Welcome, introduction, syllabus review	None
9/4	Lecture: Pacification Guest speaker: Dr. Woodie Kessel, UMD School of Public Health	Pinker – Chapters 1, 2
9/11	Civilization and Humanitarianism Guest speaker: Antonio Moore, The Flip Project LLC	Pinker – Chapters 3, 4
9/18	The Long Peace and the New Peace Guest speaker: Enrique Betancourt, Chemonics International	Pinker – Chapters 5, 6
9/25	Rights Revolutions and Inner Demons Guest speaker: Elizabeth Marie Aparicio, UMD School of Public Health	Pinker – Chapters 7, 8

10/2	Better Angels and Conclusion Guest speaker: Rachel Kleinfeld, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	Pinker – Chapters 9, 10
10/9	Bleeding Out; Triage	In-class mid-term exam; Abt – Chapters 1, 2
10/16	Sticky Situations; Carrot and Stick	Abt – Chapters 3, 4
10/23	No Justice, No Peace; Pacifying Shooters	Abt – Chapters 5, 6
10/30	Cooling Hot Spots; Guns, Gangs, and Drugs	Abt – Chapters 7, 8
11/6	How Talk Informs Action; Redemption and Recovery	Abt – Chapters 9,10
11/13	No class!	None
11/20	Getting Started, Getting Connected	Abt – Chapters 11, Appendix A
11/27	Student choice: TBD	TBD
12/4	Student choice: TBD	Paper due; TBD
	Final Exam	

Note: This is a tentative schedule that will be updated as necessary – students should monitor the course ELMS page for the most up to date assignments. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.

Resources & Accommodations

Accessibility and Disability Services

The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The **Accessibility & Disability Service (ADS)** provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known.

Any student who needs accommodations should contact Professor Abt by September 11, 2024 and provide him with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form.

For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact ADS at 301-314-7682, or email them at **adsfrontdesk@umd.edu**. Information about **sharing accommodations with instructors**, **note taking assistance** and more is available from the **Counseling Center**.

Religious Observances

If students are restricted from meeting course requirements due to a religious observance, they will need to discuss this with Professor Abt by September 11, 2024.

Student Resources and Services

Taking personal responsibility for one's own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. Professor Abt hopes that students will come talk to him so that he can help them find the right approach to success in this course, and he encourages students to visit **UMD's Student Academic Support Services website** to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to them.

In particular, almost everyone can use some help sharpening their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting **UMD's Writing Center** and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center.

Students should also know there is a wide range of resources to support them with whatever they might need (**UMD's Student Resources and Services website** may help). If you feel it would be helpful to have someone to talk to, visit **UMD's Counseling Center** or **one of the many other mental health resources on campus**.

Notice of Mandatory Reporting

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, Professor Abt designated as a "Responsible University Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to UMD's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy on Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Misconduct.

If a student wishes to speak with someone confidentially, they should contact one of UMD's confidential resources, such as CARE to Stop Violence (located on the Ground Floor of the Health Center) at 301-741-3442 or the Counseling Center (located at the Shoemaker Building) at 301-314-7651.

They may also seek assistance or supportive measures from UMD's Title IX Coordinator, Angela Nastase, by calling 301-405-1142, or emailing titleIXcoordinator@umd.edu.

To view further information on the above, please visit the Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct's website at ocrsm.umd.edu.

Basic Needs Security

If students have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, they should visit **UMD's Division of Student Affairs website** for information about the resources the campus offers them.

Veteran Resources

UMD provides some additional supports to our student veterans. Students can access those resources at the office of Veteran Student life and the Counseling Center. Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor.

Course Evaluation

Students should submit a course evaluation through Student Feedback on Course Experiences in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to Course Experiences is confidential. Campus will notify students when Student Feedback on Course Experiences is open for them to complete their evaluations at the end of the semester. Please go directly to the **Student Feedback on Course Experiences** to complete evaluations. By completing all evaluations each semester, students will have the privilege of accessing through Testudo the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

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