



M.A. (DLB) 0721 – Gender Violence in War: Policies for Peace and Transitional Justice

Cross Elective – Spring 2026

Course Information

Course Duration: 15 weeks
Credit Hours: 60 hours
Meetings: Thursdays 4-7 pm
Location: T4-S113
Prerequisites: None
Equivalent Courses: N/A

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Debotri Dhar

Bio: Dr. Debotri Dhar's interdisciplinary work spans international relations, women's and gender studies, comparative politics/ policy, humanitarian law and education. She is also a published novelist. Dr. Dhar has authored and edited numerous books including *Education and Gender* (Bloomsbury: London, New York, New Delhi) and published book chapters and journal articles. She has given talks or papers at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Oxford, Boston, BHU, U-Penn, Delhi, Ashoka, as well as British Council, India Habitat Centre, and wider audiences. She has served as a reviewer for the National Endowment for the Humanities (USA) and Indian Institute for Advanced Study fellowships, reputed humanities and social sciences journals, and a judge for the Barbara Deming Fund for women writers (New York) and Kitaab's Best Asian writing series (Singapore). Dr. Dhar previously lectured at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor for several years, where she was affiliated with the Ford School of Public Policy and Institute for Research on Women and Gender, and consulted across sectors. She writes for newspapers and magazines, including *The Times of India*, *Asian Age*, and *Outlook*. Dr. Dhar earned a B.A in Economics from Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University, Masters in Women's Studies, with distinction, from Oxford University, and Ph.D in Women's and Gender Studies from Rutgers University. She is the Founder of the Hummingbird Global Writers' Circle and Leaders Forum.

1. Course Description

The interdisciplinary course examines gender violence as a critical aspect of war, armed conflict and genocide, in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Students will learn how sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has been used as a weapon of war by state and non-state entities in the

Global North and Global South, with particular attention to South Asia and Indo-Pacific. Examining the humanitarian and human rights dimensions of war, students will study how international criminal jurisprudence treats genocidal sexual violence. We will interrogate how countries transitioning from armed conflict adjudicate war crimes through criminal tribunals, truth and reconciliation commissions and hybrid courts, highlighting state accountability in international relations and assessing policy and diplomacy tools for prevention and peacebuilding. A section of the course is devoted to understanding humanitarian assistance as an instrument of foreign policy, diplomacy and soft power and India's regional/global role in providing humanitarian aid. Literary and humanistic engagements are included. Classroom learning will be supplemented with visits by ambassadors and thought leaders. This course would be of interest to students of international relations, law, policy, journalism, and the liberal arts.

2. Course Intended Learning Objectives(Aim)

Course Learning Outcomes	Teaching-Learning Activities	Assessments/ Activities
1.Scholarly knowledge The primary scholarly outcome is for students to gain knowledge about the gender dimensions of war and armed conflict.	Lectures and class discussion	Class participation, class presentations, research paper/ project
2.Applied Learning Students will formulate policy tools for SGBV prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. They will also consider and assess diverse perspectives to build their own toolkit.	Lectures, discussions, guest presentations	Writing assignments, case studies, policy briefs, film and documentary critiques, simulations
3.Practical Skills Students will learn critical thinking, presentation, communication, and writing - including policy writing-skills and engage in dialogue across differences.		Group discussions and assignments
4.Career Goals The interdisciplinary elective will be useful for students considering careers in academia, policy and diplomacy, social / criminal justice, and journalism.	Lectures and guest presentations	Class assignments, office hours

3. Course Modules

MODULE	WEEK	TOPIC
Framing the Issue	1	1. Introduction to key terminology: Sexual and Gender-based violence; Global South; Indo-Pacific; usefulness and limitations of these concepts in IR.
Colonialism and Cultural Stereotyping	2	Gender and cultural essentialism: the stereotyping of “nonwestern” cultures; challenges of cultural relativism; and significance of de-westernizing feminism
Feminist Perspectives on Gender, Violence and the Nation	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feminist theories and international relations 2. Women as reproducers and markers of national boundaries; the use of SGBV as an organizing mechanism to protect national identities. e.g. the Balkans. 3. Rape, genocide, and women’s rights as human rights. Examples of United Nations initiatives.
Peacebuilding and peacekeeping	4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessing the efficacy of UN peacekeeping missions. 2. Women, Peace and Security (WSP) Agenda
Gender Violence and the Law	5	Human rights, humanitarian law, and SGBV: Global Frameworks
Transitional Justice Mechanisms	6	Truth and reconciliation commissions; hybrid courts; challenges of transitional justice and post-conflict reconstruction. E.g. Khymer Rouge in Cambodia; Rwandan genocide
Gender and War in S. Asia	7	The Partition of India and cross-border gender violence. Film: Pinjar based on Amrita Pritam’s novel.
	8	Bangladesh: Then (1971) and Now
	9	Tale of Two Countries: Afghanistan and Sri Lanka
Case of China	10	China, Tibet, Uighur Muslims, and SGBV
Global Health and SGBV	11	Impact of SGBV on health and well-being across the lifespan. Examples: Korean survivors of the Japanese comfort women system; wars in Syria and Sudan; forced marriages under Boko Haram in Nigeria
Current Wars and Global Politics	12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current wars, such as Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine wars (Current affairs). 2. Countering Violent Extremism, peace education, and pedagogies of justice

India's achievements	13	India's regional and global contributions in humanitarian aid, assistance, and preventive diplomacy. Limitations and future possibilities
Global Policy Coalitions	14	Effectiveness of North-South security dialogues such as QUAD, UN Women's initiatives, and South-South cooperation models in SGBV prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.
Conclusions	15	Course conclusions Revisions

4. Course Evaluation

Percentage	Course Assignment
10%	Class participation
30%	Class presentation
30%	Writing assignment
30%	Term-end exam

Class participation: Student engagement is necessary for the success of the course. Please come prepared to class, having done the assigned readings for the day. Your contribution to classroom discussions will be in the form of ideas, questions and comments based on the readings. You are also encouraged to bring newspaper articles on current affairs and other relevant materials to share with the class.

Class presentation: During the semester, each student will be responsible for leading one discussion based on the assigned reading(s). Your presentation will begin with briefly reviewing key points in the assigned literature. Then, going beyond mere summary, please reflect more deeply on the material and describe the perspectives that you gained from them. Did it challenge any of your earlier beliefs and encourage you to think differently? Make your presentation interesting, such as by incorporating exercises or including audio tapes, short visual clips, poems, art, and music. Students will sign up for presentations during the first week. Each presentation will be for 15 minutes, and will be graded on content, organization, and creative use of materials.

Writing assignment: For the written assignment, students may choose one out of three possible options: a policy/ advocacy brief; an article for a newspaper/ website; or a research paper. Students who opt for the research paper option will have the opportunity to have their paper considered for a conference .

Writing across genres, and the basic features of different kinds of writing – e.g. audience, tone/style, aim/objective – will be discussed in class.

Term-end exam: The open-book final exam (essay type, 1200-1500 words) of a duration of 1:30 hours will be held in class.

5. Grade Definition

Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	Comments
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 - 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyze existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 - 69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 - 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50 - 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45 - 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter.
P2	40 - 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.

6. Academic Integrity

- **Plagiarism Rules:**

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words or ideas without proper acknowledgement. Any idea you take from a web source or from scholarly (i.e. books, book chapters, and journal articles) and other published material must be credited with the original source.

- **Participation/Attendance Policy:** Please see JSIA Attendance Policy.

- **Use of phone/ texting/ laptop**

Mobile phones and tablets are not allowed for use during class. Laptops are permitted in class solely for academic purposes and notetaking.

7. Course Material

No textbooks to be purchased. Course readings, including journal articles and book chapters, will be made available as PDF files. Web links will be provided for online articles, including policy papers and newspaper columns. Below is a non-exhaustive list of reading materials for the course.

1. Udayan Das, "What is the Indo-Pacific?" *The Diplomat*, July 2019.
2. Jessica Anania, "Transitional Justice and the Ongoing Exclusion of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by International Interveners," *International Affairs*, Volume 98, Issue 3, May 2022, pp. 893–913.
3. Catherine O'Rourke, *Women's Rights in Armed Conflict under International Law*, Cambridge University Press, 2022.
4. Ajay Bisaria, "India's Peacemaking: Will it Work?" Observer Research Foundation (2024).
5. S. Gurumurthy, "Afghanistan" and "India and the Changing World Order: An Assessment" in *India and the Changing World Order: Emerging Paradigm Shift in the Global, Political and Economic Order*, Occam, 2023.
6. P. Donnelly and E. Myers, "Forced Marriage by Non-State Armed Groups: Frequency, Forms, and Impact," International Peace Institute, April 2023
7. J. Russo and L. McGowan, "UN Tools for Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence," International Peace Institute, April 2024
8. Jonathan Short, Sexual Violence as Genocide: The Developing Law of the International Criminal Tribunals and the International Criminal Court, *Michigan Journal of Race and Law*, Volume 8, 2003.
9. Simon Chesterman, "Relief and Reconstruction," in *You, the People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
10. Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries. Women in India's Partition* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2007).

11. Julie Mostov, "Our Women/'Their Women': Symbolic Boundaries, Territorial Markers, and Violence in the Balkans," *Peace and Change* 20, no. 4 (October 1995).
12. Alan Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect," *Foreign Affairs* 79: 1 (2000), pp. 94-118.
13. Mukul Sharma, "Seeking the "Truth" in Truth Commissions," EPW, 2007.
14. Graciana del Castillo, *Rebuilding War-Torn States: The Challenges of Post-Conflict Economic Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press), 2009, pp. 29-50.
15. Peter Mardsen, "Afghanistan: The Reconstruction Process," *International Affairs* 79:1 (2003), pp. 91-105.
16. Miriam Aukerman, "Extraordinary Evil, Ordinary Crime: A Framework for Understanding Transitional Justice," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* (2002)
17. Charles T. Call, "Is Transitional Justice Really Just?" *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11:1 (2004)
18. Denov, M., & Gervais, C. (2007). Negotiating (in)security: Agency, resistance, and resourcefulness among girls formerly associated with Sierra Leone's revolutionary united front. *Signs*, 32(4), 885–910.
19. "We Lay Like Corpses": Bangladesh's 1970s Rape Camp Survivors Speak Out,' *The Guardian*, November 2019.
20. Matt Laviates, "LGBTQ Afghans Face Surge of Rape, Torture After Taliban Takeover," *ABC News*, January 26, 2022.
21. Kate Ng, "Women Systematically Raped and Tortured in Uighur 'Re-education' Camps, Says Report." *The Independent*. February 2021.
22. "UN Demands China's Answers on Discrimination Against Tibetan Women in Tibet," *Business Standard*, 2023.
23. Tricia D. Olsen et al., "When Truth Commissions Improve Human Rights," *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 4, 2010.
24. Ben Saul ed. *The Oxford Guide to International Humanitarian Law* (Oxford: OUP, 2020).