Learn to Say (and Accept) “Sorry” – Politics of Reconciliation

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Class: MW 4-5:50pm
Location: Sturm 175

Course Description
In this class we will examine processes of making and accepting apologies in the political world: domestic and international. Even as individuals we may find at times that to say “sorry” (or to accept it) is not easy. The task becomes all the more daunting for nation states, for they need to tackle with past wrongs that afflicted many more people and had more dire consequences. To make and accept political apologies is a systematic project: it demands not only rhetorical gestures but also concrete policies involving bringing culprits to justice, compensating victims, educating the young on not to repeat past mistakes, etc. Political apologies could also be controversial and, if poorly handled, may exacerbate rather than soothe tensions. Given this much difficulty, it is no surprise that some political actors have chosen to ignore or even suppress outcries for redressing historical grievances.
By looking at both successful and failed reconciliation projects, we will examine the relations between victimizers and victims in varied geographical, historical, ideological, and cultural settings. In what contexts did the past grievances occur? What were their consequences? To what extent has the painful memory continued to haunt contemporary politics? Why have some political actors apologized while others haven’t? Why are some apologies accepted while others aren’t? What common lessons can we draw from these cases? These are just some of the questions we will explore in this class.

Course Objectives
This course has three objectives: first, to help students become familiar with major theoretical propositions on the themes of reconciliation and political justice; second, to broaden students’ empirical knowledge of world politics by examining reconciliation processes on a global setting; and third, to train students to conduct self-guided research by teaching them to use databases, making presentations, writing memos, and finally turning in a research paper. One general goal of this class is to stir up students’ passion on fighting for political justice without losing sights to cultural and historical nuances.

Grading Structure
1) Three short memos on readings and/or movies (10 points each; 30 points in total)
2) In-class presentations (5 points for presentation draft; 5 points for presentation; 10 points in total)
3) Research Proposal (2-3 pp.; 5 points)
4) Research project (a 12-15pp. research paper on a self-selected empirical case; 25 points)
5) Quizzes (10 points each, 20 points in total)
6) Attendance (10 points)

Total: 100 points
93-100: A
88-92: A-
85-87: B+
ASEM 2596
Syllabus

82-84: B
79-81: B-
76-78: C+
72-75: C
69-71: C-
66-68: D+
63-65: D
60-62: D-
0-59: F

Required Readings:
This class has no textbooks. Instead, you will read a collection of journal articles, book chapters, and news stories on issues pertain to reconciliation. All the readings are available at this course’s BlackBoard page, under the “Readings” tab.

Warnings (Unnecessary, I hope)
All students are expected to abide by the University’s regulations on academic honesty. Cheating, plagiarism and falsification of any assignment are serious offenses. Failure to abide by these standards will result in punishment ranging from failing the assignment, to failing the course, to expulsion from the University.

Also, to some students, the urge of checking emails or Facebook has turned out too strong to resist. Hence, I do NOT allow the use of laptop in this class, as I am sure we can still take notes by using a piece of writing utensil and paper. If you do have a documented condition that renders the use of laptop absolutely necessary, please talk to me and I would be happy to make arrangements accordingly.
 ASE M 2596
Syllabus

Schedule of Classes
01/05 Introduction (No readings assigned)

Part I Basic Concepts and Theories
01/07 Nicholas Tavuchis, *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation*, chapter one.


Part II Achieving International Reconciliation

1) The Rape of Nanking

01/19 No class (Federal holiday)

01/21 Iris Chang, *Rape of Nanking*, Part I.
Sun, *Japan and China as Charm Rivals*, Introduction.
First Memo Due

01/26 Chang, *Rape of Nanking*, Part II
Sun, *Charm Rivals*, chapter one.


02/02 Movie (title TBA)

02/04 Movie and discussion (title TBA)
Sun, *Charm Rivals*, chapter 3.

02/09 Sun, *Charm Rivals*, conclusion.
Quiz No.1
Part III Achieving Domestic Reconciliation

1) The South African Experience

02/11 Alex Boraine, *Country Unmasked: South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, chapter one.

02/16 *Country Unmasked*, chapter two.  
Second Memo Due.

02/18 *Country Unmasked*, chapter three.

02/23 *Country Unmasked*, chapter ten.  
Movie: title TBA

2) Internment of Japanese Americans

Proposal Due

03/02 *A Tragedy of Democracy*, “Redress”  
Quiz No.2

03/04 Student Presentation (Day One)  
*A Tragedy of Democracy*,  
Third Memo Due.

03/09 Student Presentation (Day Two)

03/11 Student Presentation (Day Three)

03/12 Final Research Paper Due at 2pm