

***The psychology of violence:***  
***A search for the sources of violence***

**PSY 367** Explores a psychological study of what is needed to control the tendencies of violence. Will question and probe the relationships between the concepts of impotence and violence, and innocence and power. Solutions will be offered to such contemporary problems as drug addiction, police brutality, and senseless violence by stressing the positive, creative aspects of power and innocence. (3 cr)

A proposal for a new course  
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## **A Psychology of Violence**

Violence is here,  
In the world of the sane,  
And violence is a symptom.  
I hear it in the headlong weeping of men  
    who have failed.  
It is in the terrible dreams of boys  
Whose adolescence repeats all history.

~Jacob Bronowski, *The Face of Violence*

### ▪ **Week 1 Madness and Powerlessness**

Wherever I found the living,  
there I found the will to power.  
    ~ Friedrich Nietzsche Thus Spake Zarathus

1. Powerlessness Corrupts
2. Madness and Society
3. Powerlessness and Drugs
4. The Cry for Significance
5. The Argument of the Course

### ▪ **Week 2 Innocence and the End of an Era**

It is always and forever the struggle: to perceive somehow our own complicity with evil is a horror not to be borne. [It is] much more reassuring to see the world in terms of totally innocent victims and totally evil instigators of the monstrous violence we see all about. At all costs, never disturb our innocence. But what is the most innocent place in any country? Is it not the insane asylum?...The perfection of innocence, indeed, is madness.  
    ~ Arthur Miller, "With Respect for Her Agony--but with Love"

1. The Greening and the Parching of America
2. Other Forms of Innocence

### ▪ **Week 3 Language: The First Casualty**

As a poet, there is only one political duty, and that is to defend one's language from corruption. And that is particularly serious now. It's being so quickly corrupted. When it is corrupted, people lose faith in what they hear, and this leads to violence.  
~ W. H. Auden

1. The Distrust of Words
2. Obscenity and Violence
3. Words and Symbol
4. Words and Experience

### ▪ **Week 4 African-American and Impotent: The Life of Mercedes**

The real tragedy for the Negro is that he has not taken himself seriously because no one else has. The hope of the Negro is now that he is asserting that he is really a human being, and is demanding the rights due to a human being. If he succeeds in winning these rights he will

respect and trust himself, but he cannot win the right to human dignity without the ability to respect and cherish his own humanity in spite of pervasive rejection.

~ Kenneth Clark, *Dark Ghetto*

1. The Missing Anger
2. The Rites of Rebirth
3. Violence as Life-destroying and Life-giving

#### ▪ **Week 5 The Meaning of Power**

To be alive is power,  
Existing in itself,  
Without a further function,  
Omnipotence enough.

~ Emily Dickinson

1. Defining Power
2. Power and the Intellectuals
3. Kinds of Power
  - A. Exploitative
  - B. Manipulative
  - C. Competitive
  - D. Nutrient
  - E. Integrative
4. Power and Love

#### ▪ **Week 6 The Power to Be**

-...For everyone who does not know

How to control his inmost self would feign control His neighbor's will according to his own conceit.

~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust II*

1. Origins of Power in Childhood
2. The life of Oliver (a graduate student)
3. Self-Affirmation
4. Self-Assertion

#### ▪ **Week 7 Aggression**

A man walked into a tobacco store in Brooklyn at 9:00 at night. The store was owned and run by an elderly couple who had survived a concentration camp in Germany before escaping to this country. The man asked for money and the elderly couple answered that they had practically none in the store. He shot them in cold blood and walked out.

~ Item from *New York Times*

My style of painting is this: First I had to annihilate the form by reducing it to lines, color, and circles. ...The I had to destroy the color....The I had to tear out the circles to leave only the planes and lines....My art consists of the purest possible line and proportion.

~ Modern artist Piet Mondrian in a letter to James Johnson Sweeney of the Guggenheim Museum

1. The Meaning of Aggression
2. Varieties of Aggression
3. The Psychology of Aggression
4. Destructive Aggression
5. Constructive Aggression

▪ **Week 8 Ecstasy and Violence**

At the heart of our violence, in act or in feeling, lies the wish to show ourselves men with a will. [But] the complexity of society makes man lose heart. Nothing he does any longer seems to be a skill to be proud of in a world where someone else always hits the headlines. This is a plausible picture/ in despair of which men cheerfully join any private army which will offer them the ambivalent identity of a uniform: the right to salute and be saluted.

~Jacob Bronowski, *The Face of Violence*

1. Violence in Literature
2. Ecstasy in War
3. The Search for Recognition

▪ **Week 9 The Anatomy of Violence**

Violence and suffering are critical in a democratic society, in heightening antipathy for violations of democratic values and in heightening sympathy for the victims of such violations.

~ Silvan Tomkins, "The Constructive Role of Violence and Suffering"

1. The Psycho-neurological Aspects of Violence
2. Varieties of Violence
3. Destructive Violence
4. Constructive Violence

▪ **Week 10 Innocence and Murder**

Murder rarely fits the stereotype of an unsuspecting, helpless, passive victim stalked by a cold, calculating killer. Most homicides are preceded by angry quarrels in which the victim plays an active part in bringing about his own death.

~ Elton B. McNeil

"Violence Today"

1. The Tragic Day at Kent State
2. The Guardsmen
3. Bill Budd's Tragic Flaw
4. Virgins and Dragons

**Week 11 The humanity of the rebel**

The love of violence is/ to me, the ancient and symbolic gesture of man against the constraints of society. Vicious men can exploit the impulse, but it is a disaster to treat the impulse as vicious. For no society is strong that does not acknowledge the protesting man; and no man is human who does not draw strength from the natural animal. Violence is the sphinx by the fireside, and she has a human face.

~ Jacob Bronowski, *The*

*Face of Violence*

1. Civilization Needs the Rebel
2. Rebel and Society: A Dialectic
3. The Artist as rebel
4. The Limits of the Rebel

▪ **Week 12 Toward a New Community**

We cannot avoid  
Using power,  
Cannot escape the compulsion  
To afflict the world,  
So let us, cautious in diction  
And mighty in contradiction,  
Love powerfully.

~ Martin Buber, "Power and Love"

1. Farwell to Innocence
2. "If I could have only found my tongue"
3. Love and Power
4. Toward a New Ethic

From: Rollo May, *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence*, W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 1998.