

Rationale

Holocaust and genocide are complicated, difficult, and seemingly overwhelming topics to teach about at the middle and high school levels. This curriculum guide is intended to provide guidance, best practices, and concrete suggestions to assist in educating students and to meet the legislative mandate for genocide and Holocaust education in Arizona.

The Holocaust is the most systematically pursued genocide of the twentieth century, fueled by antisemitism and racial ideologies and implemented on a large scale across Europe, from local assaults to “industrialized” killings.

Even though genocidal violence is an ancient phenomenon, the term “genocide” itself only emerged during the Holocaust. It was coined by the Polish-born lawyer Raphael Lemkin by combining the Greek word *genos* (family, clan, people) with the Latin word *cide* (killing). It was subsequently defined as a crime under international law by the “Genocide Convention” (Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide) and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948:

The current definition of Genocide is set out in Article II of the Genocide Convention:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

For more information:

www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/GuidanceNote-When%20to%20refer%20to%20a%20situation%20as%20genocide.pdf

We recommend this definition as a curricular starting point since it is the only definition of genocide that is used by various governments and international courts. While this particular definition has a number of shortcomings (for example, neither gender nor “cultural genocide” are included; or, what if “intent” is difficult to prove?) these flaws themselves can actually be useful in helping students understand the nature of the political process in which genocide became law, the difficulty of proving genocide in court, and the limited nature of groups protected under the Genocide Convention. Furthermore, this definition highlights the varied ways in which genocide can be perpetrated.

For the purpose of teaching about the Holocaust and genocides in Arizona public schools, we recommend the study of the following examples: the Holocaust, Armenia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and the physical and cultural destruction of Indigenous Peoples of North America generally, and Arizona specifically. These recommendations are not intended to be definitive or proscriptive. There are many other cases that could be taught, but these particular examples have a number of qualities that aid in the teaching of them:

- They are widely recognized and well-known examples of genocide. This is especially true of the Holocaust.
- They have an established body of research and publications that can be consulted and used for further information.
- They are well understood in terms of the processes, dynamics, institutions, perpetrator groups, victim groups, and other essential dimensions of genocide.
- They are accessible through abundant resources, teaching modules, and other instructional materials available for teachers from a variety of sources. This is especially true for the Holocaust.
- They are relevant for Arizona with its multi-generational communities from among those groups victimized. This offers opportunities for guest speakers, exhibits, and similar kinds of local and regional support and resources.

Brief Descriptions

Holocaust: The destruction of European Jews between 1933 and 1945, in which at least six million Jews were murdered by Nazi Germany and its allies and collaborators. Other victim groups include those deemed disabled, Roma and Sinti, Africans and Asians of French colonies, Slavic people, people with different gender identities, Jehovah's Witnesses, and political opponents.

Armenia: The displacement and murder of over 1.5 million Armenians in the early stages of the Turkish nation-state between 1915 and 1923. In addition to Armenians, other minorities were targeted, such as Assyrians and Greeks. Scholars consider it the first modern genocide.

Rwanda: Hutus (Hutu Power, Interahamwe, military, neighbors, and "ordinary" killers) murdered 800,000 Tutsis between April and July 1994, in one of the fastest and most concentrated mass killings in the twentieth century. In addition, there were an estimated 250,000 rapes, which led the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) to establish systematic rape as an act of genocide ("genocidal rape").

Bosnia: The dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s led to multi-ethnic violence, the worst of which was Serbians targeting Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks). By August 1992, Serbian-run concentration camps operated under dehumanizing conditions, including physical assault and sexual violence. In the UN safe city of Srebrenica in July 1995, thousands of Bosniak men and boys were murdered in a genocidal killing. This case is also often used as an example of the related concept of ethnic cleansing.

Indigenous Peoples (North America and Arizona): Indigenous peoples and cultures were assaulted through persistent patterns of structural destruction, including colonization by settlers, physical and cultural destruction, dissolution of Indigenous societies, stolen land, and enforced boarding/residential schools. Some of these destructive patterns aimed to remove Indigenous people from their land and replace their cultures continue to this day.