

## Director's Decision re a Learning Resource

### Course CHG38M: Genocide: Historical and Contemporary Implications

In accordance with Operational Procedure PR.532: Handling Concerns About Learning Resources, I have considered the report of the Genocide Curriculum Review Committee, dated April 23, 2008 (attached), and have decided:

- (a) That the Review Committee's Recommendations 1 to 8 be approved;
- (b) That Recommendation 9 be replaced with the following:

That the Ministry of Education be requested to immediately change the title of course CHG38M to "Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity."

Therefore, the Director decided:

1. That a course on Genocide be taught by the TDSB at the Grade 11 level;
2. That the module on the Armenian genocide be included in the course as a case of genocide, but note taken that some respected scholars disagree;
3. That the number of actual case studies not be expanded at this time;
4. That a teacher course review committee be set up in the third year with a view to re-examining the curriculum content and the course description;
5. That Barbara Coloroso's book, *Extraordinary Evil: A Brief History of Genocide*, be removed from the resource list;
6. That the resources be reviewed by a committee of academic experts as determined by Program staff and in alignment with Board procedure with a view to deleting some items and adding others;
7. That the bibliography be separated by topic as well as by nature of the work (i.e. memoirs, encyclopedia, social psychology, theoretical work) and that the resource list be grouped in items recommended for use by teachers and items recommended for use by students;
8. That a course on genocide be taught at the Secondary school level given that the genocide-related decisions of governing bodies are irrelevant to the consideration of course appropriateness;
9. That the Ministry of Education be requested to immediately change the title of course CHG38M to "Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity."

Gerry Connelly  
Director of Education

Attachment





## MEMORANDUM

**Date** April 23, 2008

**To** The Director of Education

**From** Melanie Parrack, Chair  
Genocide Curriculum Review Committee

**Subject** **REPORT OF THE GENOCIDE CURRICULUM REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**REVIEW OF COURSE CHG38M: GENOCIDE: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS**

### BACKGROUND

Ministry approval was received in August 2007 to implement the course "Genocide: Historical and Contemporary Implications". Subsequent to that, TDSB received concerns from members of the public regarding the development and content of the course.

A number of submissions was received from members of several specific communities, some advocating for the course and others objecting to the course, either in part or in its entirety. The submissions are listed in Appendix A.

In accordance with Operational Procedure PR.532CUR System Superintendent Nadine Segal received hundreds of completed Forms 532B – Request for Reconsideration of a Learning Resource. In response to these concerns and in accordance with Board approved procedure 532 "Handling Concerns about Learning Resources" the Associate Director of Education established a Review Committee in February of 2008.

### CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF REVIEW COMMITTEE

TDSB Program and Equity Department staff members were selected based on Procedure 532. Additionally, specific criteria were used to determine the selection of community resource personnel who could address the issues in an impartial way:

- At least 2 external resource persons from legal, political or academic areas;
- Background in policy and curriculum development;
- Consultation with universities that have departments of genocide studies in history, faculties of law or human rights for recommendations of scholars: McGill, Concordia, OISE, U of T, Nipissing, Western, Queens, Virginia, and Minnesota. Consultation also occurred with history departments in Ontario universities;

- Community members who previously responded either orally or in writing and members of the steering committee that developed the course were not eligible for the Review Committee.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Melanie Parrack, Chair, Executive Superintendent, Student Success, TDSB  
Karen Grose, Superintendent of Program, TDSB  
Patricia Hayes, Manager, Human Rights, TDSB  
Professor Howard Adelman\*, Professor Emeritus, Philosophy, York University  
Professor Doris Bergen\*, Faculty of History, University of Toronto  
Professor Darryl Robinson\*, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto

## **REVIEW COMMITTEE PROCESS**

Meetings were held on March 3, 2008 and April 9, 2008.  
The Committee was provided with an extensive summary of the materials received by the staff and the Board of Trustees and was afforded the opportunity to review in depth all materials received.  
Online collaboration and communication among members of the Committee was ongoing.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Review Committee took as its terms of reference that it would only deal with the issues raised by community responses to the approved course that were appropriate to a pedagogical review. Upon review of the submissions of various academic, political and community inputs, the Committee summarized twelve issues that emerged from the materials received:

- 1) Members of the Turkish and other communities and some academics do not accept the Armenian Genocide and want either the course cancelled or the module removed from the course.
- 2) A claim was made that the course was based on Barbara Coloroso's book *Extraordinary Evil: A Brief History of Genocide* and that Barbara Coloroso is not considered to be a historian.
- 3) The Ministry of Education guideline for approving a locally developed course was not followed.

\*Academic Biographies are found in Appendix B

- 4) Representatives of the Turkish community were not consulted in the development of the course.
- 5) 1915 events regarding the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian population are disputed by historians as is the validity of some documentation.
- 6) The Government of Canada is considering changing its commitment and supports the formation of a historical commission to study the Armenian Genocide.

- 7) Armenian texts and bibliography are one-sided. Turkish resources and perspectives were not included in the course outline. Recommended historians disputing that the deaths of the Armenians constituted genocide include:
  - Justin McCarthy
  - Bernard Lewis
  - Heath Lowry
  - Barbara Lerner
  - JC Hurewitz
  - Guenter Lewy
  -
- 8) Turkish children will be victimized.
- 9) A similar course prepared by the Ottawa Board of Education was shelved.
- 10) The United Nations did not acknowledge the Armenian Genocide.
- 11) After WWII the authorities in Great Britain advised against any prosecution of Ottoman officials for want of reliable evidence of complicity in Armenian massacres.
- 12) Members of other communities advocated for inclusion of additional examples of genocides and crimes against humanity, for example the Ukrainian Famine and the mistreatment of First Nations.

## **METHOD OF THE PROCEDURE OF THE COMMITTEE**

The members of the Committee were provided with an overview and background on the development of the curriculum for the genocide course, the guidelines for course approval provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education, a set of procedures provided for selecting, approval and handling concerns about learning resources and how to deal with controversial and sensitive issues, various submissions and responses by academics, politicians and community organizations and individuals as well as some newspaper articles.

After surveying the material, Review Committee members agreed to review the material in depth and the expert academic members of the Committee agreed to undertake different specific assignments relative to the agenda items and write drafts on those different issues for distribution to the whole Committee which, upon review and revision of those drafts, would prepare its report.

The Committee determined that it would not deal with such issues as who was consulted, what other educational jurisdictions decided with respect to the Armenian deaths in the first World War, and what different levels of government or international bodies have decided about whether the Armenian deaths were defined as a genocide. The course would be assessed on its academic merit rather than on the current political context and debates.

The Review Committee decided to address the twelve issues under the following topics:

- Rationale for the Course
- Course Description and Content

- Resources for the Course
- Supplementary Issues
- Title of the Course

## **RATIONALE FOR COURSE**

Members of the Toronto educational community including teachers, administrators, trustees, students, parents, and community groups believe that the study of the tragedies and horrors of genocidal acts in the past and present must be studied and addressed. Democracy, justice, and the rule of law must be understood, claimed, and defended by each generation of citizens if we are to confront this demonstration of human evil. It is believed that a full-credit course will engage students and allow them to study genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in a systematic and thoughtful way.

Many students within the Toronto District School Board and their families have experienced bias, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination both in their home countries and here in Canada. Our community includes refugee students, as well as the children and grandchildren of people who have experienced genocidal acts and extreme human rights abuses. Given the specific multi-cultural and multi-ethnic diversity within Toronto, it is felt that it is essential that students born within and outside Canada have the opportunity to explore in depth the causes and consequences of genocide and the lived realities of the aggressors, targets, bystanders, and resisters to these horrific acts of violence. A study of these experiences will help foster a sense of empathy for the targets of these violent acts and encourage students to understand the connections they have to their fellow human beings.

The Review Committee believes that a full-credit course on genocide will foster an open exploration of the controversial and sensitive issues surrounding genocide. The course as proposed has not only pedagogical and historical value, but would be of interest to students and would possibly support the development of civic virtues in students. This exploration will provide a context for students to begin to think critically about the world they have inherited and in which they currently live. This critical reflection will provide a context for students to begin to understand the notion of moral judgment in relation to history. As well, it will allow students the opportunity to understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens and challenge them to take action to ensure that human rights are protected and that genocide be confronted.

As a record of the human past, history reflects the full range of individual and collective behaviour. It might be comforting to create a version of the past that tells us only what we want to hear, but doing so is not only dishonest, it is self-defeating. Studying history can only help deepen our understanding of the present if it is done with an open mind – and that means a mind open to acknowledging the painful realities that are part of every human life and every society. It is essential to approach the past, like the present, with respect for the complex situations that

ordinary people and leaders faced and sensitivity to the impact that our depictions of individuals, events, and societies can have on our view of the world.

It is also important to recognize that any historical account is incomplete. There will never be access to every piece of information about the past, nor will there ever be the wisdom to understand perfectly what is known. Given that, history cannot be revised in order to remove reference to acts of violence and destruction or to expunge the memory of people's victimization and suffering at the hands of others. This approach might serve the short-term interests of some people but could not be defended in the long run.

While it is recognized that Ministry expectations for the course include the teaching of empathy and engendering responsible citizenship, the Review Committee expressed some skepticism whether these high expectations could be realized by a single course. They are laudatory goals that might need to be recalibrated.

### **Recommendation 1**

**It is recommended that a course on Genocide be taught by the TDSB at the grade 11 level.**

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND CONTENT

This course investigates examples of genocide in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including the Holocaust, Armenia, and Rwanda. Students will investigate the terms genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes and explore them through the lens of historical analysis. Students will examine identity formation and how "in groups" and "out groups" are created, including an analysis of how bias, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination impact on various groups. As the course unfolds students will be challenged to draw appropriate connections between the history of genocide and Canadian history and between the lives of the people they are investigating and their own lives. Students will use critical thinking skills to look at the themes of judgment, memory, and legacy and will evaluate the ways in which active citizens may empower themselves to stop future genocides. Throughout the course, students will gain an understanding of the role of perpetrator, victim, bystander, rescuer, opportunist, and resister.

From the course description two issues were discussed in response to concerns raised:

- 1) Inclusion of the Armenian case study as a Genocide.
- 2) Exclusion of the Ukrainian Famine and other cases, such as the treatment of First Nations.

- 1) Inclusion of the Armenian case study as a Genocide

The Committee believes that Grade 11 students can appreciate and, more importantly, should appreciate that history is a contested area without making

everything relative. There are legitimate and illegitimate disputes. Holocaust denial is an illegitimate dispute. The labeling of the Armenian massacres as a genocide is a legitimate dispute, with reputable historians denying that the deaths of the Armenians during World War I should be characterized as a genocide. This is also true of contemporary slaughters where some scholars and members of the international judiciary dispute the characterization of the deaths of Darfurians from 2003 until the present as a genocide. Such disputes, however, do not in themselves provide reasons for not teaching a course which characterizes the atrocity as a genocide. Further, the Committee noted that currently the conclusions of the vast majority of scholars who have studied the Armenian case, particularly those who have specialized in the study of genocide, support characterizing what occurred as a genocide. Genuine historical controversies do belong in a high school curriculum and can be very beneficial in giving students an in-depth understanding and in teaching students critical thinking. Students should be taught the importance of establishing intent when characterizing a crime against humanity as a genocide, and the various indirect as well as direct ways that can be established in order to draw a conclusion whether or not a case constitutes genocide.

## 2) Exclusion of Ukrainian Famine and other cases, such as the treatment of First Nations

As a study of the dynamics of extreme violence, the course, "Genocide: Historical and Contemporary Implications", is built around three cases: the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, the Holocaust and Rwanda. These are not the only historical cases that might have been included, but, in the assessment of members of the Review Committee, this selection is appropriate for a number of reasons. Given the complexity of the subject matter, it is essential to examine specific historical cases to give concreteness to the general concepts involved. It would be very difficult to cover more than three cases in the level of detail required in a year-long course. These particular cases range geographically and chronologically from the early decades of the twentieth century to its end, from Central Asia to Europe and Africa. There is adequate documentation for each of these cases so that students and teachers can work with a variety of types of materials: eyewitness accounts, government records, and after-the-fact representations. Each of the cases is distinct, and the particularities of the historical contexts allow certain themes or patterns to be investigated and assessed. Examples of these themes and patterns may include the role of pre-existing prejudices, the role of the state and the government and international responses. Students will be expected to study other examples of genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, war crimes and human rights abuses in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries based on their own personal interest and appropriate academic resources. These examples might include Cambodia, Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, Ukrainian Famine, Bosnia, Darfur, the former Yugoslavia and others. While it is noted that more people died in the Ukrainian Famine than in all of the genocides that are included in the course, the Review Committee did not recommend



altering the course at this time but this should be considered when the course is reviewed.

### **Recommendation 2**

**It is recommended that the module on the Armenian genocide be included in the course as a case of genocide, but note taken that some respected scholars disagree.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**It is recommended that the number of actual case studies not be expanded at this time.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**It is recommended that a teacher course review committee be set up in the third year with a view to re-examining the curriculum content and the course description.**

### RESOURCES FOR COURSE

A concern was raised regarding the appropriateness of Barbara Coloroso's book, *Extraordinary Evil: A Brief History of Genocide*. The Committee determined this was far from a scrupulous text and should not be on a History course although it might be included in a course on the social psychology of genocide because of her posited thesis that genocide is merely the extreme extension of bullying.

There is a recognition that as this is an extremely complicated subject matter and that the resources that underpin this course will need to be regularly reviewed and updated.

### **Recommendation 5**

**It is recommended that Barbara Coloroso's book, *Extraordinary Evil: A Brief History of Genocide*, be removed from the resource list.**

### **Recommendation 6**

**It is recommended that the resources be reviewed by a committee of academic experts as determined by Program staff and in alignment with Board procedure with a view to deleting some items and adding others.**

### **Recommendation 7**

**It is recommended that the bibliography be separated by topic as well as by nature of the work (i.e. memoirs, encyclopedia, social psychology, theo-**

**retical work) and that the resource list be grouped in items recommended for use by teachers and items recommended for use by students**

## SUPPLEMENTARY ISSUES

The Committee responded to two supplementary issues:

- 1) The relevance of government decisions
- 2) Consultation

- 1) The relevance of government decisions

Some petitioners have argued that, although Canadian Parliament has passed a motion recognizing the Armenian genocide, the governmental position may be changing. However, the current or future position of the federal Parliament or executive branch does not appear to be germane to the question at hand. The study of history must be based on the evidence and the quality of the critical assessment of that evidence. No legislature, in Canada or elsewhere, has jurisdiction to legislatively determine the past. Legislative motions and executive statements are, however, of interest as they can provide insights into the politics of denial, acknowledgement and debate that surround contested historical events. In this sense, the reactions of the Canadian, Turkish, Armenian and other governments are a valuable topic for inquiry and discussion in the described course.

In addition, some petitioners have argued, as a reason to withdraw references to the Armenian genocide, that the events of 1915 have not been officially recognized by the United Nations as a genocide. The premise of non-recognition is empirically open to question.<sup>1</sup> In any event, and more importantly, while there are many organizations and offices of the United Nations that may take action in response to evidence of genocide,<sup>2</sup> none are charged with making exclusive authoritative determinations of genocide, particularly with respect to events that long preceded the existence of the United Nations. A United Nations determination is not a legal prerequisite to recognition of genocide, nor is it an empirical prerequisite to evaluation and discussion of historic events in terms of the concept of genocide.

- 2) Consultation

Many complainants argued that members of the Canadian Turkish community had not been consulted in the preparation of the course materials. Some of

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<sup>1</sup> UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub. 2/416/1985/6, 2 July 1985, adopted by the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

<sup>2</sup> Examples include the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice, the Office of the Special Adviser on Prevention of Genocide, and the Human Rights Council.

the requests for reconsideration objected that Ministry procedures had not been followed. The Review Committee found that such procedural questions fell outside of its mandate and expertise and should be addressed to the Toronto District School Board. In the course of its work, the Committee did however review the objections, the responses from the TDSB, as well as the relevant procedures – such as the Ministry of Education *Guide to Locally Developed Courses, Grades 9 to 12: Development and Approval Procedures*, and found no indications of departure from the prescribed procedures. For example, some complaints or requests for reconsideration note that the course of study mentions consultations with post secondary and community partners, and raise the objection that members of the Canadian Turkish community were not consulted. As the Ministry of Education *Guide to Locally Developed Courses, Grades 9 to 12: Development and Approval Procedures* make clear, however, consultation with partners refers to “appropriate post-secondary partners (i.e. universities, colleges, trade associations or workplaces)” in connection with “destination-related courses (i.e. university, university/college, college or workplace preparation course)”. The course of study reference to community partners involved in the writing of the courses refers to organizations with teacher education outreach programs (e.g. UNICEF, Facing History and Ourselves, the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, the Canadian Centre for Genocide Education).

### **Recommendation 8**

**It is recommended that a course on genocide be taught at the secondary school level given that the genocide related decisions of governing bodies are irrelevant to the consideration of course appropriateness.**

#### TITLE OF COURSE

The Committee considered whether the course should be called “Genocide” or “Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity”. Objections to adding “Crimes Against Humanity” to the title had largely to do with the length and awkwardness as well as a reluctance to make unnecessary changes.

On the other hand, given the origin of the course, there was a determination to create a course on crimes against humanity and war crimes as well as genocide. The Committee suggests that a course entitled “Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity” might be more appropriate if only to understand that some cases of Crimes Against Humanity took far more lives than the Holocaust. Further, by inclusion in the title the phrase “Crimes Against Humanity”, one is better able to distinguish between different types of atrocities. Finally, the foremost encyclopedia on the subject is entitled *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*.

### **Recommendation 9**

**It is recommended that the course title be changed when feasible and practicable to “*Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*”.**

A further discussion of the issues by the Review Committee should be pursued in Appendix B of this report.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1**

*It is recommended that a course on Genocide be taught by the TDSB at the Grade 11 level.*

### **Recommendation 2**

*It is recommended that the module on the Armenian genocide be included in the course as a case of genocide, but note taken that some respected scholars disagree.*

### **Recommendation 3**

*It is recommended that the number of actual case studies not be expanded at this time.*

### **Recommendation 4**

*It is recommended that a teacher course review committee be set up in the third year with a view to re-examining the curriculum content and the course description.*

### **Recommendation 5**

*It is recommended that the Barbara Coloroso's book, Extraordinary Evil: A Brief History of Genocide, be removed from the resource list.*

### **Recommendation 6**

*It is recommended that the resources be reviewed by a committee of academic experts as determined by Program staff and in alignment with Board procedure with a view to deleting some items and adding others.*

### **Recommendation 7**

*It is recommended that the bibliography be separated by topic as well as by nature of the work (i.e. memoirs, encyclopedia, social psychology, theoretical work) and that the resource list be grouped in items recommended for use by teachers and items recommended for use by students.*

**Recommendation 8**

*It is recommended that a course on genocide be taught at the secondary school level given that the genocide related decisions of governing bodies are irrelevant to the consideration of course appropriateness.*

**Recommendation 9 [amended, see the Director's decision]**

*It is recommended that the course title be changed when feasible and practicable to "Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity".*

Appendix A: Submissions from Community Representatives  
Appendix B: Community Resource Personnel



Submissions from Community Representatives

Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations

Turkish – Canadian Society in Vancouver

Canadian Turkish Cypriot Association

Turkish Society of Nova Scotia

Council of Turkish Canadians

Turkish – Canadian Cultural Association of Calgary

Representatives from the Turkish Community: Toronto, Ottawa, Markham, Brampton, Mississauga, Pickering, Kanata, Windsor, Turkey

Ukrainian National Federation

Canadian Ukrainian Opera Association

Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood of Canada

Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society

League of Ukrainian Canadians

Ukrainian Canadian Congress

Ukrainian Youth Association of Ontario

Representatives from the Ukrainian community: Toronto, Windsor, Kitchener

Canadian Croatian Congress

Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Student Union of Canada

Azerbaijani Community Association

Canadian Arab Federation

Canadian for Genocide Education (Canadians for Genocide Museum)

North American Bosniaks

Bosnian Islamic Association

Lithuanian Canadian Community

Serbian National Shield Society of Canada

Association of Serbian Women

Cypriot Federation of Canada

## APPENDIX B

### Community Resource Personnel

#### Professor Howard Adelman

Professor Adelman was Professor of Philosophy at York University where he was the founding Director of the Centre for Refugee Studies. He has been a Visiting Fellow at the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies. His many books and articles are on topics related to genocide, with a special focus on Rwanda, theories of explanation and the role of bystanders regarding prevention and intervention. He has written extensively on the Middle East, humanitarian intervention, membership rights and ethics.

#### Professor Doris Bergen

Professor Bergen is the Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Professor of Holocaust Studies, University of Toronto. Her research focuses on issues of religion, gender and ethnicity in the Holocaust and World War II and comparatively in other cases of extreme violence. A winner of prestigious research grants and awards for excellence in teaching, Professor Bergen is author of numerous books and articles. She has held many grants and fellowships and has taught at the Universities of Warsaw, Notre Dame and Vermont.

#### Professor Carole Anne Reed

Professor Reed has been Co-Director of the graduate diploma program of Holocaust and Genocide Education at Ontario Institute of Studies in Education. She is well known and respected in human rights circles for her work as Director of the Toronto Holocaust Centre and has years of experience as a curriculum developer and author. She has co-authored "Pax Warrior", (a teaching module on the Rwandan genocide.)

#### Professor Darryl Robinson

Professor Robinson currently teaches the international human rights law clinic in the Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto and will soon join the law faculty of Queen's University. He has served as Legal Officer at Foreign Affairs Canada, working on international criminal law, human rights law and humanitarian law. His primary focus was international criminal justice, including the negotiation of the Statute of the International Criminal Court and the development of Canadian legislation on genocide and crimes against humanity. He received a Minister's citation and Minister's Award for Foreign Policy Excellence.



