Syllabus

History 293
Dirty Wars and Democracy
Fall 2010

Instructor: Steve Volk

Class times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:35-10:50am; King 337

Office hours: Mon. 1:30-2:30pm; Tues., 3:00-4:00pm; Wed., 10:30-11:30am

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Electronic syllabus: http://sites.google.com/a/oberlin.edu/history293f10/home/syllabus

(A giant replica of the broken glasses belonging to Salvador Allende displayed in front of the presidential palace in Santiago in 2003)

Between 1964 and 1976, nearly all countries in Latin America fell under military rule. Four of these make up what is known as the “Southern Cone” of South America:
Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile. This course will largely focus on two of these countries: Chile (which boasted of a significantly democratic past), and Argentina (where military dictators leapfrogged with civilian leaders from the 1930s on). The course is organized around four central questions: Why do states that at least aspire to democracy succumb to periods of repressive, intolerant rule? What did those who planned, instituted and benefitted from the dictatorships have in mind when they took over? Were the goals or organization of these "dirty wars" dictatorships different from other periods of military rule in Latin America? And what are the burdens and challenges to civilian rule that dictatorships leave in their wake once they have abandoned power?

We will be examining these questions from three different perspectives, that of the collective (the state or social order); that of the individual (the personal or familial); and the outsider, you.

Studying the "dirty wars" of the Southern Cone is neither straightforward nor easy. It requires a commitment on your part to explore difficult and unsettling questions, to absorb a lot of history, and to be prepared to engage not just intellectually, but emotionally with course materials and class discussions.

Course Goals and Objectives:

Content Goals:

From a social or collective perspective

- To understand why states move from democracies to authoritarian regimes;
- To understand how authoritarian regimes think about, reflect on; and narrativize their purpose;
- To understand how authoritarian regimes organize their tasks;
- To understand what brought about the end of these specific authoritarian regimes;
- To understand the difficult and complex
post-history of such regimes.

**From an individual/family perspective:**

- To understand individual decision-making carried out within a state of repression:
  - From the perspective of those in charge of repression;
  - From the perspective of those who carry out repression;
  - From the perspective of those who suffer repression;
  - From the perspective of "bystanders" to repression.

- To understand individual decision-making after the authoritarian state ends:
  - From the perspective of those who have suffered;
  - From the perspective of those who participated in the repression;

**From an outside observer (student) perspective:**

- To think about where we position ourselves (as observers) vis-à-vis the torturer and the tortured, the repressor and the repressed;
- To think about our responsibilities as students of history and as citizens in the world.

**Skill Development:**

- To develop analytic (reading) and communication (writing, discussion, and presentation) skills;
- To develop a greater capacity to work collaboratively and cooperatively;
- To learn further how to apply historical
lessons to the challenges of local and global citizenship.

Organization of Class

Although this is a fairly large class (40 students), it is designed to be more discussion than lecture based. But (a BIG but) discussions can only happen if you are prepared to discuss. That means keeping up with the reading assignments, but it also means that I will shift this class away from traditional lectures and instead record videocasts which I will make available for download or viewing before class. Most weeks you will have one or two video lectures to watch before the week’s classes begin as well as reading assignments. I know that not everyone will get to every single video lecture on time, but my expectation is that most of you will — which will allow us to discuss the main questions of this class rather than just giving you a lot of historical narrative.
Assignments, Grading, Your Responsibilities

Your primary responsibility in this class, then, is to be ready for discussion. That means that you have done the reading, watched the videocasts, thought about what they mean.

In terms of other projects, you will have three main assignments as well as a semester-long project which will require weekly journal entries. I will provide considerably more information on each of these assignments later.

**Due Oct 5 at the start of class:** A short (3-4 page) paper which considers some aspect of the question: Why did Chile, with its democratic history, fall into dictatorship. For the purpose of this paper (only), I want you to consider domestic factors only.

**Due Nov. 16 at the start of class:** A paper or project on the authoritarian regimes in the Southern Cone. This will be a joint/collaborative project.

**Due Dec. 20 at 11:00 AM:** A paper or project on the post-history of authoritarian regimes: justice, reconciliation, memory, etc.

**Semester-long project: Avatars.** At the beginning of the semester, you will all draw a slip of paper from a box. On it you will find a few details about a subject: birth gender, birthplace, birthyear, parent’s occupations, and parent’s (or family) birthplace (if different from their current location). This subject will be your avatar. Over the course of the semester, through weekly diary/journal entries, you will report on the lived experience of that person during the period that we are covering in class (essentially the past 80 years).

**Your final grade will be determined on the following basis:**

- First Paper: 10%
- Second Paper/Project: 30%
Third Paper/Project: 30%
Diary/Journal: 30%

A+ (99-100)  B+ (87-89)  C+ (77-79)
D+ (67-69)
A (95-98)  B (83-86)  C (73-76)  D
(63-66)
A- (90-94)  B- (80-82)  C- (70-72)  F
(below 63)

Late papers turned in without prior permission — you must request an extension before the due date of the paper — will be reduced by one grade-step for each day that an assignment is late. For example, a paper due on Tuesday, Oct. 5 turned in on Oct. 6 will get a “B-” instead of the “B” that it merited; if it is turned in on Oct. 7, it will get a “C+”, etc.

Two additional points to keep in mind:

(1) You may request an Incomplete in the class ONLY to complete the final paper/project. To be counted, all other work which had yet to be turned in must submitted by 4:30 PM on the last day of the Reading Period, December 17.

(2) All work must be completed for you to receive a passing grade in the class; this is true whether you are taking the course for a letter grade or the Pass/Fail option. In other words, to pass the course, you must do all the assignments.

Plagiarism and the Honor Code:

All students must sign an “Honor Code” for all assignments. This pledge states: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.” For further information, see the student Honor Code which you can access via Blackboard>Lookup/Directories>Honor Code. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, particularly in the context of joint or collective work, please see me or raise it in class.

Attendance, Tardiness, Class Behavior, Accommodation
I expect that you will attend the class regularly because you want to, because you understand that you can’t fully participate in your own learning if you’re not there; and because you understand that in a class of this nature you have a responsibility to your classmates to contribute. I also understand that you may have to miss an occasional class. I take attendance every day as a way to learn your names and to keep track of absences. While I don’t have a specific policy on absences (i.e., only “x” number of absences are allowed), I do reserve the right to factor excessive absence from class into your final grade.

As for coming in late, texting in class, surfing the internet, loudly slurping your morning coffee, etc., I have one central rule: be considerate to those around you and to me. If you would rather use class time to change your Facebook status or check out what Jon Stewart said last night, that’s up to you. But if it is distracting to those around you, than it’s up to more than you, so don’t do it.

Finally, if you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.

“Dirty Wars” Blog: http://languages.oberlin.edu/hist293/

I have run a public blog (“Dirty Wars and Democracy: When the Past Informs the Present”) for a number of years. I generally use it to post current and breaking news that relates to “dirty war” regimes in Latin America. Feel free to bookmark the site and to contribute your own thoughts or news stories.

Books Recommended for Purchase [All these books are on reserve at the library, can be requested via OHIOLink, or can be purchased at the bookstore or through any on-line bookseller]


Alicia Partnoy, The Little School: Tales of Disappearance and Survival in Argentina,


**SYLLABUS**

Sept 7: Introduction [NOTE: There is no class on Thursday, Sept. 7, for Rosh Hashanah]

Sept 14, 16: Strengths and Weaknesses in Civilian Democracies: Chile before the Coup

Cathy Lisa Schneider, "The Making of the Chilean Left," in *Shantytown Protest in Pinochet’s Chile* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), Ch. 2 (pp. 17-71)


Some scenes from "Battle of Chile"

(March in Santiago, scene from Patricio Guzmán's "Battle of Chile")

**Sept 21, 23: Strengths and Weaknesses in Civilian Democracies: Argentina before the Coup**


Xerox:


"To Save Dan Mitrione Nixon Administration Urged Death Threats For Uruguayan Prisoners": 
http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB
Sept 28, 30: Understanding Torture; Organizing Coercion, Chile


Pablo Policzer, The Rise and Fall of Repression in Chile (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), Chs. 4 & 5 (pp. 68-99).

October 5: First Paper Due: Why Did Chile become a Dictatorship?

Oct. 5, 12, 14: Life under Pinochet [NOTE: I'll be out Oct. 7]

Constable and Valenzuela, A Nation of Enemies, Chs. 2-10.

Oct. 19, 21: The Argentine Dictatorship


(Generals Pinochet [Chile] and Videla [Argentina])

Oct. 26, 28 [FALL BREAK]

Nov. 2, 4: Internationalizing Terror


Nov. 9, 11: After the Dictators


Nov. 16: Second Paper Due: The Nature of Authoritarian Regimes

Nov. 16, 18: Neither Truth Nor Reconciliation: Accounts of the Torturers


Nov. 23, 30, Dec. 2: Is Justice Possible?


Dec. 7, 9, 14: History & Memory, Memory & History

Susana Kaiser, Postmemories of Terror: A New Generation Copes with the Legacy of the ‘Dirty War’ (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), Introduction (pp. 1-3); Ch. 2 – “Conversations about Fear” (pp. 43-63); Ch. 5 – “Conversations about Impunity” (pp. 101-115); Ch. 6 – “Conversations about Indifference” (pp. 117-129); Ch. 7 – “Conversations about Justice” (pp. 131-146).

Elizabeth Jelin, State Repression and the Labors of Memory (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2003), Ch. 3 – “Political Struggles for Memory” (pp. 26-45); Ch. 4 – “History and Social Memory” (pp. 46-59).

Monday, Dec. 20, 11:00 AM: Final written projects due: Dealing with the Past