

The Past in the Present: Historical Memory in Latin America

HIST 402, Oberlin College (Spring 2014), F 7-9pm, King 339

Professor Melanie Huska

Office Hours: and by appointment

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**“Everything is loaded in
MEMORY
Weapon of life
and of history.”**

Graffiti art at Navy Mechanics School, Argentina

Course Description

This course examines the complexity of ways in which the past is constructed, commemorated and contested in modern Latin America. It is divided into three units: the Dirty Wars in Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala; memory in oral history and testimonio literature; and historical memory in service of the nation. We will survey the ways in which scholars have characterized the relationship between trauma and memory and forgetting, the role of personal narrative and accounts in reconciliation and remembering and the challenges they pose for historians, and the role of art (literature, art, film) as a counter to state terror. In the case of Guatemala, we will examine more closely the relationship of the indigenous past to the development of national identity and the events of their Dirty War. We will also consider the evocation of history as a form of political currency in memorials, commemorations and popular culture.

Course Objectives

By the course's end, students should be able to:

1. Identify the different historical contexts which gave rise to the Dirty Wars and their varied experiences in Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala
2. Understand the complex nature of resistance to dictatorship and state terror
3. Identify the political nature of history in both times of terror and afterward
4. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of historical argumentation and understand how different types of primary sources influence analysis.

5. Understand how historical analysis changes over time, often influenced by the political and cultural climate in which historians write.
6. Communicate effectively both in written and verbal form, particularly at presenting clear, reasoned arguments supported with evidence.

Required Texts:

Ricardo Piglia, *Artificial Respiration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

Steve Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973–1988* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Diane M. Nelson, *Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala* ((Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

Ksenija Bilbija, Leigh A. Payne, Neil L. Whitehead (eds), *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life, History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

** All additional readings will be posted on our Blackboard site.

Course Requirements

1. **Informed class participation:** Class Participation will be worth 35% of your final grade for the course and is will be evaluated based on 4 components: attendance, participation, and discussion leading.

Attendance: Because we only meet for thirteen substantive sessions and because participation in discussions is so central to this class, you are permitted only two absences before your grade will be adversely affected. Please see me if you plan to be absent for a session or have been absent. If you have a planned excused absence, assignments and responses are still due on time, so plan your time accordingly.

Participation: Your success in this course will rely on your active participation. You will be expected to take an active role in both larger class discussions and smaller group work, and to actively participate in other in-class activities and assignments. Please bring any notes you take while reading, the assigned course readings for the day's discussion, and talking points and/or questions that you have regarding the week's topic. Remember, participation is not about just how often you speak, but also what you have to say. Asking an intelligent and thought-provoking question can be as much of a contribution as answering one.

Discussion Leading: Twice over the semester you will lead discussions on the assigned readings. You are required to meet with me no later than the MONDAY before you are scheduled to lead discussion in order to go over your proposed questions. As discussion leader, you should be prepared to guide the class through the key issues of the assigned

reading for that day and offer both praise and critique of the author's analysis of the topic at hand.

When reading and preparing for class, consider these questions:

- What is the major argument of each article or the book? What argument is the author making about historical memory in this reading and how does it compare to previous readings?
 - What is the historiographical context of the book? For example: Where do the authors place themselves within the literature? What key concepts, conversations, and arguments do they draw upon?
 - What sources, methodologies, and analytical frameworks do they employ to support their arguments?
 - What did you like and dislike about the reading? Think about this in terms of the questions the authors ask, the theoretical and methodological approach, the sources used, and your critical response.
2. **Book Review** (3-4 pages): This assignment requires you to write a scholarly review of **ONE** of the course's five assigned monographs. You will sign up for your preferred monograph in week two. **Due:** the week after we read the monograph as a class.
 3. **Countering Terror with Creativity** (4-5 pages): This assignment requires you to consider how state terror can be and has been employed as a form of resistance, using both primary and secondary sources. You may select primary sources used in class (Piglia's novel, mail art at Art library), or you may select your own source. **Due: March 12**
 4. **Historiography Paper** (8-10 pages): The assignment requires that you identify and select an appropriately narrow topic and consult materials outside the course (library and online) in order to familiarize yourself with how historians engage in scholarly conversations on historical memory, trauma, memorials and commemorations, etc. The historiography assignment is completed in stages in order to foster positive research and writing habits, including: 1. **Topic proposal** (Feb. 19); 2. **Research question/hypothesis** (Mar. 5); 3. **Draft** (Apr. 16); 4. **Final paper** (Apr. 30); 5. **Oral presentation** (May 7).

Grades for the course will be apportioned as follows:

Participation		30%
In-class participation	20%	
Discussion Leading (5% x 2)	10%	
Book Review		15%
Countering with Creativity Assignment		20%
Historiography paper		35%
Proposal	P/F	
Research question/hypothesis	P/F	
Draft	10%	
Final Paper	20%	
Oral Presentation	5%	

* All assignments must be completed to receive credit for the course.

** All work is governed by the Honor Code and must state, “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment” at the top of the first page of all written work. For more information, see http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html.

Format: Unless noted otherwise, your assignments should be double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, and use Chicago Style citations. Include your name, date, course information, course assignment, and honor code on the upper left hand corner. There is no need for a title page.

Late Work: Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on their due date. No assignments will be accepted electronically. Late work will be graded as submitted and penalized 1/3 letter grade for each day late. For example, a B paper handed in 1 day late would earn a B-.

Support for Student Writing: I strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center and to meet with their writing associates to hone your skills. For more information, see <http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/rhetoric/writing-associates-program/writing-center.dot>

Disabilities: I am committed to working with students with disabilities to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disability conditions (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements.

If you feel emotional or mental distress this semester, you are welcome to talk to me about your situation. However, I am not a therapist and will most likely try to inform you to the best of my ability of the resources we have on campus, because your health is key to your success.

Classroom Conduct: It is our responsibility to foster a safe classroom environment which is conducive to learning. Although lively discussion and disagreement with your colleagues can and should be part of the learning process, students who create a hostile environment for others through discourteous, threatening, harassing, or aggressive behaviour will be asked to leave and counted absent. Please be respectful and do not engage with your phone or laptop (unless for notetaking).

Contacting me: I am delighted to be teaching this course, and I look forward to getting to know each of you better. Please visit me during office hours with questions or concerns about the course. If your schedule conflicts with my posted office hours, please email me or speak to me following class to set up an alternate meeting time. Please note that I will not be checking my email after 6 pm and on the weekends, so plan accordingly.

I am happy to discuss your assignments or review papers with you. However, I will not review any assignment within 24 hours of the due date. If you have a question about your grade you must set an appointment with me at least one day after receiving your graded paper. At the appointment I expect you to have read all the comments on your paper and to have specific questions that you wish to discuss.



Artwork at Navy Mechanics School; Pro-Allende Supporter celebrates Pinochet's death

★★★SCHEDULE★★★

Week 1 (Feb. 5): Introduction

Week 2 (Feb. 12): Theoretical Approaches to Historical Memory

Joan Tumblety, "Introduction: Working with Memory as a Source and Subject," *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as a Source and Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, "Collective Memory — What Is It?," *History & Memory* 8:1 (1996), 30-50.

Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, Daniel Levy (eds), *The Collective Memory Reader* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2011).

Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," 271-274.

Paul Connerton, "How Societies Remember," 338-342.

Pierre Nora, "Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory," 437-441.

Greg Grandin, "The Instruction of Great Catastrophe: Truth Commissions, National History, and State Formation in Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala," *The American Historical Review* 110:1 (2005): 46-67.

UNIT 1: DIRTY WARS

Week 3 (Feb. 19): Argentina

"The Repression," 9-27; "Death as a Political Weapon," 209-215; "Creation and Organization of the National Commission on the Disappeared," "The Doctrine behind the Repression," and "Recommendations," 428-449 in *Nunca Más: The Report of the National Commission on the Disappeared* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986).

Diana Taylor, Chps 4 and 6, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 91-118 AND 139-182.

Margerite Feitlowitz, Chp. 1, *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21-72.

Historiography paper topics due (typed)

Discussion Leaders:

Week 4 (Feb. 26): Argentina

Ricardo Piglia, *Artificial Respiration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

Discussion Leaders:

**screening *The Secret in Their Eyes* at 1:30 in King 341

Week 5 (Mar. 5): Chile

Steve Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973–1988* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), Intro, Chps 1-3

Film: excerpt from *Machuca*

Research Question/Hypothesis Due

Discussion Leaders:

Week 6 (Mar. 12): Chile

Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds*, Chps 4-6, plus one extra chp of your choosing (not yet assigned).

Countering with Creativity Paper Due

Discussion Leaders:

Week 7 (Mar. 19): Guatemala

Diane M. Nelson, *Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala* ((Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

***Battling for Hearts and Minds* Review Due**

Discussion Leaders:

★ ★ ★ Week 8: SPRING BREAK ★ ★ ★

Week 9 (Apr. 2): Marketing Dirty War Memories

Ksenija Bilbija, Leigh A. Payne, Neil L. Whitehead (eds), *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

***Reckoning* Review Due**

Discussion Leaders:

UNIT 2: ORAL HISTORY and TESIMONIO

Week 10 (Apr. 9): The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy

Rigoberta Menchú I Rigoberta Menchú, an Indian Woman in Guatemala (New York: Verso, 1984), selections.

David Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2008). Prefaces, ix-xxv.

“The Story of all Poor Guatemalans,” 1-12.

“Rigoberta’s Secret,” 189-200.

Afterword 285-301.

Accounting for Violence Review Due

Discussion Leaders:

Week 11 (Apr. 16): Life Histories

Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life, History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

Historiography Draft due (bring to class)

Discussion Leaders:

UNIT 3: HISTORICAL MEMORY IN SERVICE OF THE NATION

Week 12 (Apr. 23): Political Power of Historical Narrative

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

***Doña María's Story* Review Due**

***Class may be cancelled or rescheduled for director screening of *Dictator in the Dock*. TBA

Week 13 (Apr. 30): Monuments, Memorials, and Commemoration

Benjamin Thompson, Chps. 5 and 6, "Monument ," AND "History" *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth, and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 117-151.

Daryle Williams, Chps. 5 and 6, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930–1945* (Durham: University Press, 2001), 135-251.

***Silencing the Past* Review Due**

Historiography Due

Week 14 (May 7): Popular Culture

Mark D. Szuchman, "Depicting the Past in Argentine Film: Family Drama and Historical Debate in *Miss Mary* and *The Official Story*," *Based on a True Story: Latin American History at the Movies* (Wilmington: SR Books, 1997), 173-200.

Francie R. Chassen-López, "Distorting the Picture: Gender, Ethnicity, and Desire in a Mexican Telenovela (*El vuelo del águila*)," *Journal of Women's History* 20:2 (2008), 106–129.

****Final Historiography Presentations**