

POSC 278

Memory and Politics

Winter 2015

Class Hours: MW: 11:10-12:20 and F: 12:00-1:00

Classroom: Willis 211

Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp

Office: Willis 418

Office Hours: MW: 3:15-5:15 or by appointment

Course Description

Memory is the backbone of individual and collective identity. However, memory can be abused and manipulated, while history can incorporate living testimony in ways that do not always serve truth and justice. Thus, memory and history (stories about the past), which are central to human action and to politics, can serve either projects of domination and escalate nationalism and violence, thus dividing human communities, or they can contribute to justice and reconciliation. In this course, we will learn about the capacity historical narratives have to justify Western superiority and imperialism, as well as claims to sovereignty. We will also learn about how the (Hegelian) idea of totalizing history (i.e., history of humankind) has been challenged, in the name of the plurality of individual and collective memories, which, the argument goes, should not be silenced in ways that justify their exclusion and domination. We will also learn about the tendency modernity has to value the excess of history and historical education and thus become aware of the ways in which this tendency can affect politics, by escalating nationalism and a culture of commemoration, which does not always serve justice and the truth.

Course objectives

- Understand Hegel's conception of history and how his idealist and totalizing narrative of the past of humanity has been used to justify Western superiority and imperialism.
- Understand the criticism of the political effects that totalizing narratives of the past of humanity can have, as reflected by Foucault's idea of counter-history and by Said's view of contrapuntal and, henceforth, liberating reading of narratives (and consequently of cultural identities).
- Understand Nietzsche's conception of the modern use and abuse of memory and history and to explore some of its political effects, such as nationalism, ethnic conflict, as well as the excess of commemoration and its distorting effects.
- Understand how narratives about the past are central to the politics of memory and how they can affect the present through the ways in which historical judgment can impact on the citizens, on both individual and collective identities.

Achieving the Course Objectives:

We will learn about the political role of memory and history, by carefully and closely reading (from) the following books:

Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Prometheus Books, 1991, ISBN: 87975631490000

Michel Foucault, *Society must be Defended*, Picador, 2003, ISBN: 978031242266

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books, 1994

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1980, ISBN: 9780915144945

Richard Kearney, *On Stories*, Routledge, 2002, ISBN: 9780415247979

Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, Princeton, 2000, ISBN: 9780691096582

Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago, 2004, ISBN: 9780226713410

Course Requirements:

Two short essays (4 double-spaced pages each):

- a) **First essay: Present Hegel's argument about the course of world history and offer one reason for which you agree with him and one reason for which you disagree (the essay is due on January 22 and it counts for 15% from the final grade);**
- b) **Second essay: Reconstruct Foucault's and Said's criticism of totalizing history and explain the political reasons that underlie their approach to Hegelian accounts of world history (the essay is due on February 10 and it counts for 20% of the final grade).**

One in-class presentation (20%). For this assignment, the students should:

- 1) Post on Moodle a group of questions that will guide and structure the class discussion.
- 2) Present in class, for maximum 20 minutes, the main ideas and points of the text.
- 3) Where relevant, the students need to show how the ideas and the argument of the text illustrate, clarify, or simply connect with the previous readings and authors that we have covered in class until that point in time.
- 4) Organize and lead class discussion.
- 5) Answer the questions their colleagues might have about the text that is under discussion.

Final Take-Home Exam (35%): The exam will be posted on Moodle on Friday, March 13 at 10 AM and will be due on Sunday, March 15 at 5 PM.

Active and informed class participation: This includes: (i) attending classes; (ii) doing the readings for the day; and (iii) in class assignments that will test your degree of familiarization with and understanding of the reading that you were requested to prepare for the current day (10%).

What is Expected from the Students?

Students will be expected to read, think, form arguments and counter-arguments, understand the fundamental concepts, and participate (in a critical and creative manner) in class discussion. That means that students must keep up in their reading assignments and attend class regularly. Students must be fully prepared *at all times* to discuss the arguments and concepts from the previous readings. The best students will be knowledgeable, critical but balanced in their critical assessments, and will develop coherent and sound arguments that they can defend in their essays, in their exams, and in class discussion.

Academic dishonesty:

"All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be done on your own. Note that academic dishonesty includes not only cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, but also includes helping other students commit acts of academic dishonesty by allowing them to obtain copies of your work. You are allowed to use the Web for reference purposes, but you may not copy material from any website or any other source without proper citations. In short, all submitted work must be your own.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly. Each such case will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. A formal finding of responsibility can result in disciplinary sanctions ranging from a censure and a warning to permanent dismissal in the case of repeated and serious offenses.

The academic penalty for a finding of responsibility can range from a grade of zero in the specific assignment to an F in this course."

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:

January 5:

Introduction: Memory, (Hi)stories, and Politics

Reading:

Richard Kearney, *Where do stories come from?* (e-reserve)

January 7:

Hegel's philosophy of history: an overview

Reading:

Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Introduction, 8 (III)-11, 16 (II)-33

January 9:

Hegel on the course of the world history

Reading:

Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Introduction, 33-40, 50-53, 56-57, 59-61

January 12:

Hegel on the new world and on the oriental world

Reading:

Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Introduction, 79-115

January 14:

Hegel on the oriental world (China, India, Persia, and Egypt)

Reading:

Readings:

Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 120-123, 131-133, 139-142, 144, 147-149, 155-158, 160-162, 173-181, 198-199, 204, 219-222

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 3-19

January 16:

Hegel on the Greek and Roman world or the great path of tradition

Reading:

Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 223-225, 233-235, 238-240, 250-256, 267-271, 278-282

January 19:

Hegel on Christianity and the German World

Readings:

Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 318-325, 333-336, 341-346, 377-384, 389-394, 408-411

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 31-43

January 21

Hegel on the completion of history

Western justifications of domination and imperialism

Readings:

Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 412-417, 422-424, 438-457

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 43-61

January 23:

Michel Foucault on subjugated knowledge(s)

Reading:

Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lecture One

January 26:

Michel Foucault on power relations and genealogy

Readings:

Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lectures Two and Three

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 62-82, 97-110, 131

January 28:

Michel Foucault on history and counter-history

Readings:

Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lectures Four and Five

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 209-220

January 30:

Michel Foucault: Stories of origin

Reading:

Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lecture Six

February 2:

Michel Foucault: Stories of origin

Readings:

Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lectures Seven and Eight

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 220-239

February 4:

Michel Foucault: History and politics

Readings:

Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lectures Nine and Ten

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 243-245, 248, 259, 262-281

February 6:

Nietzsche: The burden of history

Reading:

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, 7-14

February 11:

Nietzsche: monumental, antiquarian, and critical history

Reading:

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, 14-43

February 13:

Modern historical sense: finding the right balance between remembering and forgetting

Reading:

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, 43-64

February 16:

Story-telling (fictional and non-fictional): its political and moral role

Reading:

Richard Kearney, *Narrative Matters* (e-reserve)

February 18:

Uses and abuses of memory

Reading:

Paul Ricoeur, *The Abuses of Natural Memory* (e-reserve)

February 20:

Memory and history

Reading:

Paul Ricoeur, *The Dialectic of Memory and History* (e-reserve)

February 23:

Historical narratives and nationalism

Readings:

Craig Calhoun, *Nationalist Claims to History* (e-reserve)

Richard Kearney, *On Stories*, 70-102

Student-led presentations and discussions:

February 25:

Twentieth century: An overview

Reading:

Tzvetan Todorov, *What Went Wrong in the Twentieth Century* (e-reserve)

February 27:

History, totalitarianism, and moral judgment

Reading:

Tzvetan Todorov, *Two of a Kind* (e-reserve)

March 2:

Memory, history, commemoration, and moral judgment

Reading:

Tzvetan Todorov, *Preserving the Past* (e-reserve)

March 4:

What memory is for?

Reading:

Tzvetan Todorov, *The Uses of Memory* (e-reserve)

March 6:

History and Myth

Reading:

Tzvetan Todorov, *The Past in the Present* (e-reserve)

March 9:

Memory and historical narratives in democratic societies

Reading:

Tzvetan Todorov, *The Perils of Democracy* (e-reserve)

March 11: Final Review