

POSC 278

***Memory and Politics***

Winter 2019

Class Hours: MW: 1:50-3:00 and F: 2:20-3:20

Classroom: Weitz 233

Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp

**Office: Willis 418 (last floor of Willis on the right!)**

**Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday: 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, reconciliation, and the creation of a cosmopolitan ethos. 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 the culture of commemoration, which does not always serve justice and the truth. At the same time, we will explore the possibility of collective memory to promote cosmopolitanism and transnational politics.

**Course objectives**

- To explore and understand the criticism of the political effects that totalizing narratives of the past/history of humanity (such as Hegel's) can have and, henceforth, to grasp the liberating effects on history and the politics of memory of Foucault's idea of counter-history and of Said's view of the contrapuntal.
- To understand how narratives about the past are central to the politics of memory and how they can affect the present, both individual and collective identities.
- To explore the ways in which memory is used and abused in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the construction of national identity and in remembering conflicts and traumatic events, such as the Holocaust and the Gulag.

### **Achieving the Course Objectives:**

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

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

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

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

Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans*, Princeton University Press, 2003

### **Course Requirements:**

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

##### ***First 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 5 and it counts for 25% of the final grade**).

##### ***Second Essay:***

Choose one line of argument from Tzvetan Todorov's book, *Hope and Memory* and provide one reason for which you agree with Todorov and one reason for which you think he is wrong (**the essay is due on February 26 and it counts for 15% of the final grade**).

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

- 1) Email me in advance 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) The students need to show how the ideas and the argument of the text illustrate, clarify, or simply connect with the theory that we discussed in the first part of the class.
- 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 Saturday, March 16 at 10 AM and will be due on Monday, March 18 at NOON.**

**Active and informed class participation:** This includes: (i) attending classes; (ii) doing the readings for the day; and (iii) participating in class discussion (**5%**).

## **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:**

### **Some Theoretical Background**

#### **January 7:**

Introduction: *Memory, (Hi)stories, and Politics*

**Reading:** Richard Kearney, *Where do stories come from?* (Moodle)

#### **January 9:** *Hegel's philosophy of history: a very short overview*

**Reading:** Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Introduction, 8 (III)-11, 16 (II)-33, 33-40, 50-53, 56-57, 59-61(Moodle)

**January 11:** *Memories: Domination and Entanglement*

**Reading:** Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 3-19 and 31-43

**January 14:** *Western justifications of domination and imperialism*

**Reading:** Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 31-61

**January 16:** *Michel Foucault on subjugated knowledge(s)*

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

**January 18:** *Michel Foucault on power relations and genealogy*

**Readings:** Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lectures Two and Three and Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 62-82, 97-110, 131

**January 21:** *Michel Foucault on history and counter-history*

**Readings:** Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lectures Four and Five and Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 209-220

**January 23:** *Michel Foucault: Stories of origin 1*

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

**January 25:** *Michel Foucault: Stories of origin 2*

**Readings:** Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lectures Seven and Eight and Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 220-239

**January 28:** *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

**January 30:** *Twentieth century: An overview*

**Reading:** Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, What Went Wrong in the Twentieth Century

**February 1:** *History, totalitarianism, and moral judgment*

**Reading:** Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, Two of a Kind

**February 4:** *Uses and Abuses of Memory*

**Reading:** Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, The Uses of Memory

**February 6:** *History and Myth*

**Reading:** Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, The Past in the Present

**February 8:** *Memory and historical narratives in democratic societies*

**Reading:** Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, The Perils of Democracy

### **Applications (Student Presentations)**

**February 13:** *Excluded and Marginalized Voices*

**Readings:** Ayşe Gül Altınay and Yektan Türkyilmiz, “Unravelling layers of gendered silence: Converted Armenian survivors of the 1915 catastrophe,” Christine Philliou, “The Ottoman Empire’s absent nineteenth century: Autonomous subjects,” and Robert Shannan Peckham, “Internal colonialism: Nation and region in nineteenth century Greece.” (Moodle)

**February 15:** *Memory and Nationalist Narratives*

**Readings:** Ana Barbulescu, “Ethnocentric Mindscapes and Menmonic Myopia,” and Mirela Luminita Mungescu, “Memory in Romanian History: Textbooks in the 1990s” (Moodle)

**February 18:** *The Holocaust, Public Space, and Memory*

**Readings:** Simon Geissbühler, “‘Wanting-Not-to-Know’ about the Holocaust in Romania: A Wind of Change?”, (Moodle) Birga U. Meyer, “The Universal Victim: Representing Jews and Roma in a European Holocaust Museum,” and Andrej Kotljarchuk, “The Memory of the Roma Holocaust in Ukraine: Mass Graves, Memory Work, and the Politics of Commemoration” (library e-book)

**February 20:** *Memory from Exile: Between Purity and Hybridity*

**Reading:** Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile*, Introduction and Chapter One

**February 22:** *Remembering Conflicts*

**Reading:** Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile*, Chapter Two

**February 25:** *Remembering Conflicts*

**Reading:** Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile*, Chapters Three and Four

**February 27:** *Making Memory*

**Reading:** Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile*, Chapter Five

**March 1:** *Making Memory*

**Reading:** Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile*, Chapters Six

**March 4:** *Making Memory*

**Reading:** Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile*, Chapter Seven

**March 6:** *Making Memory*

**Reading:** Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile*, Chapters Eight and Epilogue

**March 11:** *Entangled Memories, Europeanization, and Cosmopolitanism*

**Readings:** Gerard Delanty: *The European Heritage: A Critical Re-Interpretation*, Introduction: the past in the present and Konraud H. Jarausch, “Nightmares or Daydreams: A Postscript on the Europeanization of Memories” (Moodle)

**March 13:** *Final Review: Why Historical Narrative Matters?*

**Reading:** Richard Kearney, *Narrative Matters* (Moodle)