

History 1R
Mon. 1:15-4:00
Trotter 303
Spring 2010

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Office Hours: M. 4-5; T. & W 3-5;
Th. 9:30-11

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR: REMEMBERING HISTORY
[A Writing Course]

"The past is what you remember, imagine what you remember, convince yourself you remember, or pretend to remember."

Harold Pinter, *Old Times* (1970)

"Remembering is not the negative of forgetting. remembering is a form of forgetting."

Milan Kundera, *Testaments Betrayed* (1993)

"the twilight zone that lies between living memory and written history is one of the favorite breeding places of mythology."

C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955).

"who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past."

George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1954)

Memory is essential to our humanity, and an inextricable part of our own personal, social, or communal identity. Memory is also vitally important to all human history. History would be impossible, and inconceivable, without memory. Nearly every scrap of evidence we have to reconstruct the past is composed of memories and filtered through memories. And the compelling human desire for history derives from a wish to frame, preserve, enshrine, control, and especially to tell and retell, memories. Yet, despite memory's necessity for history, historians frequently maintain that memory and history can be antagonistic, even contrary, impulses in any given society and culture. The very act of constructing a memory, especially the collective memory of a group of people, often involves the intentional erasure or exclusion of someone's story or history at the moment that history is supposedly preserved. Memory is all too frequently built on intentional acts of forgetting. Understanding this complex interrelationship of memory and history is the principal goal of this seminar.

This course explores the relationship between the creation of personal and collective memory and the production of history. The seminar will examine the tensions between memory and history in U.S. history, using some of the most acclaimed recent history books. Students will think critically about memoirs and autobiographies, oral histories and personal reminiscences, festivities and holidays of commemoration, historical memory in popular culture, and family lore and stories. What receives the privilege of

being remembered and what gets deliberately forgotten constitutes the essence of what we know as history.

REQUIRED READINGS

The following required readings are available at the College Bookstore:

Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*.

David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*.

Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*.

Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past*.

Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Englehardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*.

Additional required readings each week are available on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class participation: Students are expected to attend all class meetings, complete all readings, and be prepared for discussion of the assigned reading each week. Thoughtful preparation on the part of all students is essential for a seminar to be a positive learning environment for everyone. Hence, a student's participation in the seminar will be an important part of the final assessment by the professor.

Attendance: The following is the History Department policy on attendance: "Students are required to attend all classes for the successful completion of the course. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade."

Analytical Essay: Students will write an analytical essay on the theme of history and memory surrounding the defining events of early U.S. history -- the American Revolution, slavery, and the Civil War. The analytical essay will be approximately 5-6 double-spaced pages. A description of the paper assignment will be posted on Blackboard. This paper is designed to be an analytical essay, based on the course readings. No additional research is expected. A draft must be submitted to the Writing Associate, and that draft must be attached to the final paper submitted to the professor.

Research Project: Students will research and write a semester-long project on memory and history in the United States. The objective of the project is to develop an original interpretation of the relationship of memory to some aspect of American history and culture. Students can choose their own projects, but projects must be designed with the assistance and approval of the professor. Suggestions of possible research topics will be available on the course Blackboard site. For the sake of coherence, projects will usually address an event in U.S. history between 1940 and 2000 (although exceptions can be made for compelling and feasible projects in earlier U.S. history). There are as many creative ways to present these projects as there are creative students. Students are not limited to the traditional research paper format. Still, all projects must be the equivalent of at least a 12-14 page paper. A well-written and engaging work of historical analysis (i.e., a good paper), however, will always be preferred to less engaging work in a different format.

Each student will make an oral presentation (no Power Point allowed, except with permission of the professor) of his/her project during the last two weeks of the semester. Three

preliminary assignments will help each student make progress on his or her research project:
1) A prospectus & bibliography due week 8; 2) a draft of the some portion of the project due week 12; and an oral presentation either week 13 or 14.

Note: Students must complete all of the writing assignments to pass the course.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Note: I may make minor changes in this syllabus during the semester. Check the Blackboard syllabus as the final authority for the schedule & reading assignments.

Week 1 - Jan. 18: INTRODUCTION

Week 2 - Jan. 25: MEMORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Readings:

Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*.

Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,"
Representations 26 (1989), 7-24.

Week 3 - Feb. 1: WHOSE NAT TURNER? & WHICH SOJOURNER TRUTH?

Readings:

Nell Painter, *Sojourner Truth, A Life, A Symbol*, ch. 1, 12, 14-15, 17-18, 20, 26 & Coda.

Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property (2002). VHS on reserve at McCabe Library.

Remembering Slavery, audio recordings of interviews with former slaves (in class).

Week 4 - Feb. 8: "THE QUARREL FORGOTTEN": THE CIVIL WAR & MEMORY

Readings:

Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, Prologue-ch. 4, ch. 8-9, & Epilogue.

Draft of the analytical essay due to your Writing Associate, Fri., Feb. 12.

Week 5 - Feb. 15: REENACTING: STILL FIGHTING THE CIVIL WAR IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

Readings:

Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, ch. 1-4, 6, 8, 10-11, 14.

Week 6 - Feb. 22: RESEARCHING & WRITING THE HISTORY OF MEMORY

Workshop on Research & Library Skills: Melanie Maksin, Social Sciences Librarian

Readings:

Maurice Halbwachs, "Historical Memory and Collective Memory" in Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (1936?; reprint, New York, 1980).

Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "A Looming Crash or a Soft Landing? Forecasting the Future of the Memory 'Industry'," *Journal of Modern History* 81 (2009), 122-58.

Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,"
Representations 69 (2000), 127-50.

Analytical essay due.

Week 7 - Mar. 1: FAMILY LORE: STORIES AND MEMORIES

Readings:

White, *Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past*, esp., Intro + ch. 1-10, 15-16, 24, 29-36.

This American Life (NPR), episode 204, "81 Words".

Meetings with the professor in office hours to discuss research project (Mar. 1-4).

Mar. 8 - SPRING BREAK

Week 8 - Mar. 15: THE MEMOIR & PERSONAL MEMORY

Readings:

Ben Yagoda, *Memoir: A History* (2009), ch. 1 & 5.

Excerpts from two memoirs.

Jill Lepore, "Just the Facts, Ma'am," *The New Yorker*, March 24, 2008.

Prospectus and bibliography for research project due.

Week 9 - Mar. 22: WHY NOT FORGET? ENOLA GAY AND THE HISTORY WARS

Readings:

Linenthal and Englehardt, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*.

Week 10 - Mar. 29: MYTH-MAKING & HISTORICAL MEMORY IN POPULAR CULTURE

Readings:

George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (1990), ch. 3.

Michael T. Bertrand, "Elvis Presley and the Politics of Popular Memory," *Southern Cultures* 13 (2007), 62-86.

[Additional readings or films -- to be announced.]

Week 11 - Apr. 5 NO CLASS - WORK ON RESEARCH PROJECTS

Draft of first section of research project due. Individual meetings with the professor.

Week 12 - Apr. 12: WARS & CULTURE WARS: THE POLITICS OF REMEMBERING

Readings:

Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, selected chapters.

Week 13 - Apr. 19 STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

Draft of research project due to your Writing Associate.

Week 14 - Apr. 26 STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research Project Due: Friday, May. 7.

No Final Examination.