Spring 2017

Instructor: K. Amdur

History 487SWR:
History and Memory -- Facing Up to the Past

This course poses the question of how a country’s formative experiences are remembered collectively in politics and culture. Examining events such as wars and revolutions, we will look at the various ways that societies create historical memories or “myths” and the lingering effects of these memories on subsequent history. While drawing most of its cases from modern European history, the class will pose analogies to similar patterns in America and elsewhere and invite students to choose those countries for their individual projects if they wish.

Class format will be based primarily on group discussion of our readings plus oral reports on student projects. We will also conduct a mock version in class of the David Irving trial (see our reading list) on the issue of Holocaust denial.

Writing assignments will include a short project on “Memory and Oral History,” based on a first-hand interview; a short historiographical paper to set the stage for the final project; and a term research project based on primary and secondary sources on a topic of the student’s choice. Primary sources for the term project can include fiction, film, and other media; memoirs or oral histories; and documentary or journalistic sources, to show the multiple ways that collective memory is constructed and transmitted in modern society. There will be no final exam.

Book List (available for purchase in the bookstore):

- Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*
- Dalton Trumbo, *Johnny Got His Gun*
- Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*
- Tina Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe’s Ghosts After Communism*

Additional short readings (listed under individual class sessions) are available on online reserve.

Class Schedule:

Jan. 11  Introductory session

Jan. 18  “War and Remembrance”: Illusions and Ironies

  Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*

Jan. 25  Literary Pacifism

  Trumbo, *Johnny got his Gun*; PLUS

Feb. 1   The Cult of the Past in Revolutionary Russia

Walter Laqueur, “1917: The Russia We Lost?” in his The Dream That Failed: Reflections on the Soviet Union, pp. 28-49;


Feb. 8   * MEMORY AND ORAL HISTORY:  FIRST PAPER DUE (plus oral report)*

Feb. 15   Exhuming the Past: Memories of Nazism

Film, “The Nasty Girl” (to be shown outside class time);

Ulrich Herbert, “Good Times, Bad Times: Memories of the Third Reich,” in Life in the Third Reich, ed. Richard Bessel, pp. 97-110;


Feb. 22   Denying the Past: Memory and Falsification

Lipstadt, Denying the Holocaust

Mar. 1   Memory Vindicated? The David Irving Trial

Evans, Lying About Hitler

Mar. 8     * NO CLASS -- SPRING BREAK *

Mar. 15   * MEMORY AND THE HISTORIANS:  SECOND PAPER DUE *

Papers must include a brief statement of the final research project, including a selection of appropriate sources. A brief oral report will also be presented in class.

Mar. 22   Amnesia or Obsession? Vichy in French Politics

Film, “A Self-Made Hero” (to be shown outside class time);

Stanley Hoffmann, “In the Looking Glass: Sorrow and Pity?”, introduction to film script of The Sorrow and the Pity;

Robert Gildea, “The Resistance Myth, the Pétainist Myth, and Other Voices,” in Remembering and Representing the Experience of War in 20th-Century France, ed. Debra Kelly, pp. 27-48; PLUS (assignments continued on next page) --

Mar. 29  America’s “Good War”? The Hiroshima Debate

Lifton and Mitchell, *Hiroshima in America*

Apr. 5  Reopening the Past: Russia and Glasnost


Kathleen E. Smith, “Glasnost and the Reemergence of the Stalin Question,” in her *Remembering Stalin’s Victims: Popular Memory and the End of the USSR*, pp. 41-62;


Apr. 12  *FIRST DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE; plus oral reports in class*

Apr. 19  The Culture of Forgetting: Post-Communist Eastern Europe

Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe’s Ghosts After Communism*

May 1 (Mon.)  **FINAL PAPERS DUE by 12:00 noon**

(Please turn in BOTH drafts of your papers!)

**Course Requirements:**

1) **Term project:** 18-20 pages in length (plus notes), based on primary as well as secondary sources. Primary sources can include fiction, films, and other media; memoirs or oral histories; and journalistic or documentary materials. Topics can go beyond 20th-century Europe to include other times and places, such as the U.S. Civil War; the Middle Ages; or non-Western cultures. First draft due April 12; final papers due Monday, May 1, by 12:00 noon. (Please turn in BOTH drafts of your papers.) Note that revisions should include more than mere cosmetic editing; some rethinking, reorganization, and additional research if necessary will be expected so as to make the final draft as thoughtful and articulate as possible.

2) **Final oral report:** based on the term project; in class April 12.

3) **First paper and oral report:** “Memory and Oral History” -- due in class Feb. 8. For this project, you are to interview an older friend or relative about an event in his or her memory that is related to the subjects of our course. Note that “memories” need not be from direct personal experience (for persons
too young to have lived through these events directly) but could include perceptions drawn from your interviewee’s education, from the public media (books or films), etc.

Your essay, in 4-6 pages, should summarize the memories reported and analyze them from the perspective of a historian using this account as a documentary “source.” How was the reported experience “remembered” and/or distorted in memory? How and why was the memory particularly important to the person who reported it? What special characteristics of the individual (age, gender, social position, etc.) may have shaped his/her experience and memories of the events? What changes in the person’s life or experience since the events occurred may have shaped the ways they were remembered or interpreted? How would you compare this individual’s memories to society’s “collective memory” of these events? Be sure to pay attention to the individual’s tone, emotions, and vocabulary in reporting the events. All students will also present a brief oral report to the class on the day that the paper is due.

4) Second paper and oral report: “Memory and the Historians” -- due in class March 15. For this paper, a starting point for your final project, you are to select a major scholarly work that relates to the subject of your final project. (The instructor will supply a book list with suggested titles and themes.) Your essay, in 4-6 pages, should summarize and analyze the arguments and conclusions of this work and indicate where you hope to go with this topic on your own. In other words, what are the issues that have been raised about your subject, how effectively have they been treated, and what do you hope to add to the discussion? What kinds of sources has the author used, and what sources might you use in addition or instead? Has opinion about this issue changed since the time this work was written, or does it vary according to different national, ethnic, gender, or other perspectives? What can you learn from this book that will apply to your final project? All students will also present a brief oral report to the class on the day that the paper is due.

5) Weekly discussion: a major part of this course. Since there will be no exams, regular attendance is expected. For any absence beyond the first one, a short paper summarizing and commenting on the readings for that week will be required.

6) Weekly discussion questions and reports: For each weekly set of reading assignments, one student will be designated in advance as discussion leader. Additional students will be designated in advance to introduce individual reading assignments for class discussion. These students should prepare discussion questions ahead of time and present them to the class via Blackboard by the Tuesday evening before each class.

**Grading** will be based approximately 40% on the term project, 20% on each of the short papers, and 20% on class participation and weekly discussions. Please note that grammar and composition will factor into the grading of all assignments. Be sure to proofread your work before turning it in; use a spell checker; consult with the Writing Center on campus (www.writingcenter.emory.edu) for further assistance as needed; and use proper means of quoting and crediting your sources (where appropriate) to avoid any suspicions of plagiarism. The Honor Code will apply to all assignments. No plagiarism of any kind will be tolerated. Students must acknowledge, in writing, their familiarity with all rules of appropriate citation and quotation. (These rules will be amply discussed in class.)

**Office hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30 – 2:15 p.m., or by appointment.

Bowden Hall, room 324; tel. 404-727-4457; e-mail <kamdur@emory.edu>.