Social Theory: Collective Memory

SYA 4011.U03
Spring 2016

Draft Syllabus

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Course Description

How does a society remember its past? How is the past intertwined with political and social processes in the present? How do major social theorists conceptualize and discuss the role of past in the present social life? How do modern nation-states, ethnic groups, and various communities construct their past to form their identities? How is memory incarnated in physically tangible and symbolically meaningful things, such as museums and memorials?

In this advanced undergraduate course of social theory, we explore these questions and develop theoretical understanding of contemporary collective memory issues. We start with a brief survey of the most significant theories and then focus on several key topics in the field, including mnemonic communities, cultural objects, symbolic practices, and individual memories. Students are expected to read the readings carefully and critically and also work on a final paper on a topic pertaining to memory of an important historical event or a social group.

Textbook and Readings

We use the following book as our major textbook:
The book can be purchased at FIU’s bookstore or from amazon.com.

Journal articles can be downloaded from the library’s website. Other readings will be distributed via email or online course management system.
Requirements

Attendance and Participation
Attendance is required. The instructor/TA will take attendance in the beginning/end of each class. Students who participate in University-sanctioned events, or have illness, or have emergency must inform the instructor in advance with appropriate verification documents. They also must make up any work they missed. Students who miss two (2) classes without reasons will only get 5 (out of 10) for attendance credit. Students who miss four (4) classes will not get any attendance credit.

Quizzes
There will be five (5) in-class quizzes, which will test your understanding of the readings and lectures.

Midterm
There will be an in-class midterm, which consists of three essay questions.

Final Paper and Presentation
The final paper should address collective memory of a historical event. The student can pick any significant historical event and then examines one of the collective memory topics covered in this course. A typical topic can be “collective memory of the Nanjing Massacre through documentaries.”

The student should not choose the events that are heavily studied by this course’s readings and lectures, such as the Holocaust and the Vietnam War. The student needs to consult with the instructor about the paper topic.

To write this paper, you need to collect the following data:

1. Press reports from major newspapers.
2. Primary data: statistics, government documents from disaster response agencies
3. Academic studies (articles and books) about the topic.

A 75% done draft of the paper will be presented in the last weeks of the course. The presentation can provide you with a good opportunity to have feedback from your peers and the instructor and improve quality of the paper in the final exam week.

Other requirements about the paper:

1. The length should be at least 15 double-spaced pages.
3. The deadline of the final paper: 5pm, American Eastern Time, April 24, 2014 (via email). No late submission will be accepted.
4. Grading criteria (raw score 100):
1) 90: paper that earns a 90 (A) is truly exceptional. It is grammatically flawless; there are no spelling errors. There is a thesis paragraph that provides a road map for the rest of the paper, which ends with a meaningful conclusion. Statements are supported by evidence, which is judiciously assembled to make a case. The writing is clear and concise; the analysis is sophisticated and thoughtful. The argument is logically developed and well organized. Complexities are recognized and addressed. Supporting sources are smoothly integrated into the body of the text. There is mature sentence variety and paragraph development.

2) 80: papers represent strong, solid work. They are well organized, comprehensive, and clear, with few grammatical errors. Complexities are recognized; supporting evidence is provided. Supporting work is incorporated, but not always paraphrased. There may be an over-reliance on quotes and secondary resources. There is adequate sentence variety and paragraph development.

3) 60-70 papers meet the minimum requirements, low Cs barely do. They are often poorly organized, which prevents a clear argument. They can fail to acknowledge more than one approach and do not harness all the available evidence. They have many grammatical and spelling errors and provide only passing reference to supporting work. They are weakened by a lack of clear purpose, thesis or conclusion. There are organizational and argumentative weaknesses.

4) Less than 60 papers fail to make an argument, or do so in such a confusing, disorganized way that the meaning is lost on the readers. They are replete with errors. The arguments provided are often contradictory. There is usually only superficial discussion of the issues.

5) Not following the Chicago Style: -10

6) Not proofread: a significant number of grammatical and spelling errors: -10

7) Involvement in plagiarism: Will receive the punishments defined in corresponding University policies.

**Grades**

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<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>20 (4 each)</td>
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Weekly Schedule

Part I Introduction and Conceptualization

January 12 Introduction: What is collective memory?
Introduction to the course
Reading: Erll Chapter I, Chapter III (III.1 Historical and social memory) (Read after the meeting)

Part II A Snapshot of Collective Memory: Sites of Memory

January 14 Sites of Memory: Film Screening
Maya Lin: Strong and Clear Vision (Documentary about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial)

January 19 Museum Visit
No class meeting. Visit the Bay of Pigs Museum and complete the observation sheet. We will NOT arrange a group visit, and you can pick any time this week at your convenience. A sign-in sheet will be available at the museum.

An essay based on the visit and observation is due on January 26 (turned in before the discussion)

Address: 1821 SW 9th Street, at SW 18th Avenue, Miami, FL.

January 21 Sites of Memory: Memorials & Museums
Reading (read before the meeting):


January 26 Sites of Memory: In-Class Discussions
The Vietnam Veteran Memorial and the Bay of Pigs Museum

Part III Major Theoretical Approaches to Collective Memory

January 28 Emile Durkheim
Reading:

Emile Durkheim. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. (Book 2, Chapter Seven, Origins of these beliefs (conclusion); Book III Chapter Five, the piacular rites)
February 2 Halbwachs
Reading:
Erl. II.1
Maurice Halbwachs. On Collective Memory. (Introduction [Coser], Chapter 3, 7,8)

February 4 Barry Schwartz I
Reading:

February 9 Barry Schwartz II
Reading:
Excerpts from Schwartz’s Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America. Introduction, Chapter 6, Conclusion.

February 11 The Left-Winged Historiography
Misztal, Pp.56-61
Excerpts from Invention of Tradition. Chapters 1 and 7.

February 16 Popular Memory and Counter-Memory
Misztal. Pp.61-67
Excerpts from Collective Memory Reader. Foucault and Popular Memory Group

February 18 Cultural Memory
Erll. Pp.27-38, Chapter IV

February 23 Discourses of Memory

Olick, Jeffrey K. Introduction to Politics of Regret.

February 25 The Interactionist Approach

March 1 In-Class Midterm Exam
Part III Major Topics

March 3 Cultural Objects of Memory: Literature and Other Objects
Excerpts from Griswold. *Cultures and Societies*. Chapter 1.

Excerpts from Erll, Chapter VI

March 8 Cultural Objects of Memory: MAUS
Reading and discussion: MAUS

March 10 Cultural Objects of Memory: Images
Erll. Chapter 5.

Excerpts from *Remembering to Forget*. Chapters 5&6.

March 22 Cultural Objects of Memory: Films
Film Screening and discussion (TBD)

March 24 Mnemonic Communities: Nation-states I
Ernst Renan. What is a nation?


March 29 Mnemonic Communities: Nation-states II

March 31 Mnemonic Communities: Sub-nation Groups I
Excerpts from Bodnar’s Remaking America. TBD

Excerpts from Warner, The Living and the Dead. TBD

April 5 Mnemonic Communities: Sub-nation Groups
The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life (online, Chapter 6)

Tangled Memories (Chapter 5,6,7)

April 7 Review and Final Paper Discussion
In-class discussions about the final paper topic and format
April 12 Commemorative Rituals

April 14 Generation and Memory
Misztal, pp. 83-91


Part 3 Final Presentations

April 19-28 Final Presentations (4 meetings)