ETHN 289: History and Memory          Winter 2007

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Office Hours: Weds. 11:30-12:30; Thurs: 12:30-2:30

Course Description
Over the last twenty or twenty-five years, “memory” has become a central concept for analyzing problems of historical representation and identities. In this course, we will analyze the specific ways in which the concepts of power and memory have been appropriated in diverse narrative forms – including literature, theater, personal testimonies, monuments, museums, and memorials. We will focus especially on those writings that examine the ways in which the mutually-constituted processes of remembering and forgetting work in the production of official discourses of nationalism, history of colonialism, and memory of violence, as well as in the construction of subaltern subjectivities. We will grapple with the difficulties and risks inherent in the methods and techniques of reading and of listening to “ghost stories”—that is, to “truths” that are unspoken or unspeakable. By paying special attention to histories whose traumatic consequences are still actively evolving in today’s world, this course, to cite Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, “is looking not so much for answers as for new enabling questions, questions that would open new directions for research and new conceptual spaces for the yet unborn answers.”

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and active participation.
2. Lead one class discussion. In your presentation, characterize the stakes, methods, and objectives of the book and/or group of articles. Rather than summarize, discuss the interventions the critical works are making; i.e., into what debates are the pieces intervening, how and why, and for what ends? Which disciplinary or theoretical conventions are being criticized, and which employed? You are welcome to bring in additional materials, if relevant.
3. Writing Assignments/Project. You have the following options:
   a) Three 5-pp response papers, one of which may be written on your presentation and due on the same day. Response papers are due on the day that the readings will be discussed in the seminar. The attached guideline also provides guidelines for your response papers.
   b) A 15pp. research paper that draws on the course themes and materials. Turn in a one-page research prospectus by week 3.
Required Reading:

Books (available at Groundwork Books on campus)

8) Ethnic Studies Reader -- on E-Reserve

Schedule of Readings

Week 1. Jan 11 -- Introduction
   Video “History and Memory” Rea Tajiri, 1991

Week 2. Jan 18 -- History, Memory and Questions of Power – Part I


- Ernest Renan. “What Is a Nation?” In Homi Bhabha’s Nation and Narration.

Week 3. Jan 25 -- History, Memory and Questions of Power – Part II

- Tiya Miles. Ch. 2 (pp. 25-43) and Appendix one: Research Methods and Challenges (pp. 207-213) in Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom by Tiya Miles. UC Press, 2005.

Week 4. Feb 1 --Crises of Testimony: Literature, Theater, and Psychoanalysis


Week 5. Feb 8—Landscapes of Remembering: Monuments, Museums & Memorials


Marita Sturken. “Conversations with the Dead: Bearing Witness in the AIDS Memorial Quilt,” Ch. 6 (pp. 183-219) in Marita Sturken’s Tangled Memories.


Week 6. Feb 15 -- Embodied Memory: Performance and Remembering


Martin Manalansan. “‘To Play with the World’: The Pageantry of Identities.” Ch. 5 in Manalansan’s Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora (126-151).

Week 7. Feb 22 -- Nationalism and Battles over Memory


Week 8. March 1 -- Memory and the Body


Week 9. March 8 -- The Politics of Redress, Reparation, and Recognition


Week 10. March 15 -- The Dialectics of Memory