ETHN 267: History and Memory     Winter 2011

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Course Description
Over the last 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 Requirement

1. Intensive preparation and active participation in seminar discussion—this goes
without saying!

2. Response Papers:
Each week, you’ll write a half-page response to and 3 discussion questions on the
assigned materials and email them to the class by Sunday evening.

3. Class Presentation. Students will work in pairs (or more, depending on class size) for
one class presentation. In your presentation, characterize the stakes, methods, and
objectives of the book and/or group of articles. Rather than summarize the assigned
readings or offer your likes/dislikes, engage others by discussing the intervention made
by the critical work(s); i.e., into which historical moment and intellectual 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 encouraged to discuss
the relationships between, and divergences among, the critical concepts and approaches
represented by different readings, or what they may provide for your own work or
projects. You are welcome to bring in additional materials, if relevant.

4. Seminar Paper:
A 15 page research paper that draws on the course themes and materials is due March 16
(Weds, finals week). Papers may be entirely theoretical (a critical literature review) or
combine theory and the analysis of a cultural artifact (memoir, film, photographs,
museums etc.) Turn in a one-page paper proposal on Jan 18 (wk. 3) and a one-page progress report on Feb 15 (wk. 8).

**Required Readings:**

**Books (available at Groundwork Books on campus)**


9) Ethnic Studies Reader -- on E-Reserve

**Schedule of Readings**

**Week 1**

**Jan 4-- Introduction**

Recommended -- Video “History and Memory” Rea Tajiri, 1991

**Week 2**

**Jan 11-- History, Memory and Questions of Power – Part I**


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

**Week 3**
**Jan 18** 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*. UC Press, 2005).


**Week 4.**
**Jan 25** –Crisis of Testimony: Literature, Theater, and Psychoanalysis


**Week 5**  
**Feb 1 --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 8 -- 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 15 -- Reading History and Trauma**


le thi diem thuy -- The Gangster We Are All Looking For


**Week 8**  
**Feb 22 -- Memory and the Body**


**Week 9**
**March 1-- The Politics of Redress, Reparation, and Recognition**


**Week 10**
**March 8 -- The Dialectics of Memory**