

POSC 278

Memory and Politics

Fall 2021

Class Hours: TTH: 1:15-3:00

Classroom: Anderson Hall 329

Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp

Office: Willis 418

Office Hours: TTH 3:15- 5:15 PM and Wednesday, 4:00-5:00 PM (on Zoom)

Course Description

Memory is the backbone of individual and collective identity. However, memory can be abused and manipulated, while history can incorporate living testimony in ways that do not always serve truth and justice. Memory and history (stories about the past), which are central to human action and to politics, can serve either projects of domination and escalate nationalism and violence, thus dividing human communities, or they can contribute to justice, reconciliation, and the creation of a cosmopolitan ethos. At the debut of the 21st century, the concept of cosmopolitan memory was coined around the paradigmatic remembrance of Shoah (the Holocaust). Since then, with the rise of nationalism and xenophobia, the idea of cosmopolitan memory came under attack both in politics and in the scholarly literature. In this class we will explore the idea of cosmopolitan memory and its criticism. We will explore the cultural, social, and psychological factors that might make it problematic, while attempting to rethink, against a different set of assumptions, some of its promises. In the second part of the class, we will analyze two case studies: the memory of the Holocaust and the Naqba in Israel and Palestine and the memory of the Holocaust in Romania. In the case study of Romania, we will look at how literature and film can undo nationalism and bring forgotten and buried voices, counter-histories back into the public realm, in ways that contribute to a cosmopolitan ethos and to what Tzvetan Todorov calls critical memory.

Course objectives

- To explore and understand the notion of cosmopolitan memory and its criticism
- To explore alternatives to cosmopolitan memory and analyze their viability
- To rethink the idea of cosmopolitan memory
- To understand how memory can be abused, controlled, and manipulated
- To understand how societies remember and how the act of remembering needs to be considered along the continuum of past-present-future
- To explore the ways in which individuals and societies deal with traumatic memories, with application to the memory of the Holocaust and the Naqba.

Achieving the Course Objectives:

We will learn about the political role of memory and history, by carefully and closely reading the following books:

Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, Princeton University Press, 2000, ISBN: 9780691096582

Tzvetan Todorov, *Memory as a Remedy for Evil*, Seagull Books, 2010, ISBN: 9781906497439

Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and the Memory in the Global Age*, Temple University Press, 2006 ISBN: 9781592132768

Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (eds), *The Holocaust and the Naqba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, Columbia University Press, 2019, ISBN: 9780231182973

Norman Manea, *The Hooligan's Return*, Yale University Press, 2003, ISBN: 9780300197808

Course Requirements:

Two short essays (1300 words each):

First Essay:

In *Hope and Memory*, Todorov develops the concept of critical memory against the attempts to control and manipulate, to politicize the past. On page 173 of the book, he succinctly states: “The right use of memory is one that serves a right cause, not one that merely reproduces the past.” Do you agree with his argument? To make your point, please, choose an example of the use and abuse of memory in the US today. **(The essay is due on October 8, and it counts for 20% of the final grade).**

Second Essay:

What do you think are the promises and dangers of the concept of cosmopolitan memory, its strong and weak points? Do you agree with Bull’s and Hansen’s criticism of cosmopolitan memory? How would you vindicate the concept of cosmopolitan memory? **(The essay is due on October 29, and it counts for 20% of the final grade).**

One in-class presentation (20%). For this assignment, the students should:

- 1) Email me in advance a group of questions that will guide and structure the class discussion.
- 2) Present in class, for maximum 20 minutes, the main ideas and points of the text.
- 3) The students need to show how the ideas and the argument of the text illustrate, clarify, or simply connect with the theory that we discussed in the first part of the class.
- 4) Organize and lead class discussion.
- 5) Answer the questions their colleagues might have about the text that is under discussion.

Final Paper (2600 words) about a topic of your choice from the two case studies that we discuss in our class (The paper is due on Wednesday, November 24, at 5:00 PM Central Time and it counts for 40% of the final grade)

What is Expected from the Students?

Students will be expected to read, think, form arguments and counterarguments, understand the fundamental concepts, and participate (in a critical, responsible, and creative manner) in class discussion. That means that students must keep up in their reading assignments and attend class regularly. Students must be always prepared to discuss the arguments and concepts from the previous readings. The best students will be knowledgeable, critical but balanced in their evaluative assessments, and will develop coherent and sound arguments that they can defend in their essays, in their exams, and in class discussion.

Academic dishonesty:

"All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be done on your own. Note that academic dishonesty includes not only cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, but also includes helping other students commit acts of academic dishonesty by allowing them to obtain copies of your work. You are allowed to use the Web for reference purposes, but you may not copy material from any website or any other source without proper citations. In short, all submitted work must be your own.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly. Each such case will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. A formal finding of responsibility can result in disciplinary sanctions ranging from a censure and a warning to permanent dismissal in the case of repeated and serious offenses.

The academic penalty for a finding of responsibility can range from a grade of zero in the specific assignment to an F in this course."

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:

Theoretical Background

September 16:

Introduction: *What are the uses and the abuses of memory? Can memory work as a remedy to evil?*

Readings: Paul Ricoeur, *The Abuses of Natural Memory* and Tzvetan Todorov, *Memory as a Remedy to Evil*

September 21: *The 20th century: An overview*

Reading: Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, Chapters One and Two

September 23: *Why and how do we remember?*

Reading: Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, Chapters Three and Four

September 28: *How to judge the past? Lessons for the 21st century*

Reading: Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, Chapters Five and Six and Epilogue

September 30: *What is cosmopolitan memory?*

Reading: Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Introduction and Chapter 2

October 5: *The Holocaust, the Jewish diaspora, and the state of Israel*

Reading: Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Chapters Three and Four

October 7: *The Holocaust between representation and institutionalization*

Reading: Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Chapters Five and Six

October 12: *Consequences and limits of cosmopolitan memory*

Readings: Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Chapter Seven and Anna Cento Bull and Hans Lauge Hansen, "On Agonistic Memory"

October 14: *Not only hope, but also nostalgia*

Reading: Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Chapters 1, 4, 5, and 6

Case Studies: Israel-Palestine and Romania (Student Presentations and Guest Speakers)

October 19: *The Holocaust and the Naqba*

Reading: *The Holocaust and the Naqba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, edited by Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, *Introduction*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4

October 21: *History and Counter-History: Finding bridges across traumas*

Reading: *The Holocaust and the Naqba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, edited by Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, Chapters 6, 7,8, and 9

October 26: *Nationalism and the Memory of the Holocaust in Romania*

Readings: Ana Barbulescu, “Ethnocentric Mindscapes and Menmonic Myopia,” Mirela Luminita Mungescu, “Memory in Romanian History: Textbooks in the 1990s,” and Simon Geissbühler, “‘Wanting-Not-to-Know’ about the Holocaust in Romania: A Wind of Change?”

October 28: *Literature and Memory*

Readings: Astrid Erll, *Literature as a Medium of Cultural Memory* and Norman Manea, *The Hooligan’s Return*, 3-134.

November 2: *Memory and trauma*

Reading: Norman Manea, *The Hooligan’s Return*, 134-251

November 4: *Language and memory*

Reading: Norman Manea, *The Hooligan’s Return*, 251-315

November 9: *Nostalgia, home, exile, and memory*

Reading: Norman Manea, *The Hooligan’s Return*, 315-380

November 11: NO CLASS!

November 16: *Film and Memory*

Reading and Film Screening: Astrid Erll, *Media and Memory* and Radu Jude, *I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians* (movie)

November 18: *Film and Memory. Guest Speaker: Adrian Cioflâncă*

Film Screening: *The Exit of the Trains*, Radu Jude and Adrian Cioflâncă