

AS 100.706
Seminar in Comparative History:
History and Memory in African and Latin American Historiography

Johns Hopkins University
Department of History
Spring 1999

Professor: Pier M. Larson
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Scope and Purpose

This course is a study in the philosophy of history. Its primary purpose is to explore the methodological and conceptual boundaries of the historical profession by examining how scholars have defined the relationship between history as a profession and social memory. Broadly speaking, social memory refers to the way in which a society collectively remembers its past through a variety of forms, including narrative (myth, oral tradition, life history, popular history), ritual, commemorative acts, bodily practices, spatial organization, and the arts. How should professional historians relate to these ways of remembering the past? To what extent and how can memory be incorporated as evidence in professional historical narratives? How different is memory from history? These are some of the basic questions we will struggle with in this course.

Traditionally, historians have striven to differentiate their practice of history from memory; for decades memory has been history's "other." By exploring the relationship between history and memory in Africanist and Latin Americanist scholarship, then, we will be exploring how scholars have defined the boundaries of the historical profession. This course is multidisciplinary; in fact, most of our reading is produced by anthropologists, who have more consistently than historians sought to find common ground between memory, traditionally considered the domain of anthropologists, and history. It is poor tribute to the inflexibility of historians and history as a profession that fewer historians have seriously attempted to bridge the methodological and theoretical distance between history and anthropology. I hope this course will help you to bridge this gap as it relates to your own work.

Requirements

1. Attendance. I expect all class members to attend class. If you cannot attend I expect to hear from you by email or telephone before class.
2. Weekly informal thought papers. Thought papers are informal and may be one or two pages. They should demonstrate you have read and considered the week's reading by reflecting on that reading and raising issues and questions for discussion in the class. Please leave the professor a copy of your weekly paper at the end of class.
3. Co-leading a course discussion with the professor. Each student will pick a week to help lead discussion.
4. A project. Projects are entirely individual and will be tailored to your individual interests and needs. Ideally, you will work on some research or writing you are already working on (first year paper, dissertation proposal, dissertation) and relate it in some way to the work we are doing in the course. I expect every member of the class to meet with me before the end of the second

week of classes to discuss their project.

Required Books

- Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). ISBN 0674874463
- Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). ISBN 0521484634
- Pier M. Larson, *Becoming Merina in Highland Madagascar: History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement, 1770-1822*. (Forthcoming, Heinemann, 1999).
- Paul Stoler, *Embodying Colonial Memories: Spirit Possession, Power, and the Hauka in West Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995). ISBN 0415908779
- David Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). ISBN 0226112780
- Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). ISBN 0520203763
- Thomas A. Abercrombie, *Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History among an Andean People* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). ISBN 0299153142
- Joanne Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory: Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). [out of print]
- Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986). [out of print]
- Regina Harrison, *Signs, Songs and Memory in the Andes: Translating Quechua Language and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). ISBN 0292776284
- Matthew Restall, *Maya Conquistador* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998). ISBN 0807055069

January

28: Course Introduction

February

4: History and Memory: Starting Points

- M.I. Finley, "Myth, Memory, and History," *History and Theory* 4,3 (1965), 281-302.
- Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 37-51.
- Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* No. 26 (1989), 7-25.
- Hayden White, "The Burden of History," in Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 27-50.
- Peter Heehs, "Myth, History, and Theory," *History and Theory* 33 (1994), 1-19.
- Peter Burke, "History as Social Memory," in Thomas Butler, ed., *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 97-113.

- Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," in Richard Johnson, et. al., eds., *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 205-52.
- Paula Hamilton, "The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History," in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, eds., *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 9-32.

11: Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory*

Irene Silverblatt, "Political Memories and Colonizing Symbols: Santiago and the Mountain Gods of Colonial Peru," in Jonathon D. Hill, ed., *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 174-94.

18: Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*

Daphna Golan and Dalvan M. Coger, "Inventing Shaka: Using History in the Construction of Zulu Nationalism," *African Studies Review* 40,1 (1997).

25: Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*

David William Cohen, "The Undefining of Oral Tradition," *Ethnohistory* 36,1 (1989), 9-18.

March

4: Cohen, *The Combing of History*

11: Abercrombie, *Pathways of Memory and Power*

25: Larson, *Identities of a Crisis*

April

1: Adorno, *Guaman Poma*

Wyatt MacGaffey, "The West in Congolese Experience," in Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa and the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), 49-74.

8: Harrison, *Signs, Songs and Memory*

Jonathan D. Hill and Robin M. Wright, "Time, Narrative, and Ritual: Historical Interpretations from an Amazonian Society," in Jonathon D. Hill, ed., *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 78-105.

15: Fabian, *Remembering the Present*

Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Painting in Zaire: From the Invention of the West to Representation of Social Self," in Susan Vogel and Ima Ebong, eds., *Africa Explores: Twentieth-Century African Art* (New York: Center for African Art, 1991), 130-51.

22: Restall, *Maya Conquistador*

Gary Urton, "From Knots to Narratives: Reconstructing the Art of Historical Record Keepers in the Andes from Spanish Transcriptions of Inka khipus," *Ethnohistory* 45,3 (1998), 409-38.

29: Stoler, *Embodying Colonial Memories*