

COURSE OUTLINE
Anthropology 9214A
Memory, History and Reconstructions of Identity
Fall 2018

Lectures: Tuesdays 9:30–12:30 pm

Classroom: SSC 3227

Instructor: Dr. Randa Farah

Office: SSC-3423

Office hours: Please refer to the course site in OWL.

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Credit value: 0.5 credit

Calendar Course Description:

The course examines the reproduction of the past, whether professional historical productions or popular memory, as entwined to present givens and interests. It similarly assumes that identity constructions inevitably invoke the past. The course includes readings on how memory is reproduced in the context of migration/diaspora, the political aspect of memory, and the struggle for and against power. Eligible for credit towards the MER Collaborative graduate program

Course Syllabus:

This course examines the three interlinked concepts of history, memory and identity. The literature on memory/history and its twin forgetting on the one hand, and identity on the other is vast: it crosses disciplinary boundaries and has emerged as a significant area of scholarly debates. Thus, the theories, methods and questions raised are eclectic and useful for students of diverse backgrounds and interests. In this course, we focus on the political, social and cultural aspects of memory and less on the psychological or biological dimensions. The surge in memory/identity studies is attributed to different reasons. Nora, for example, suggested we are obsessed with memory, because little of it is left. Others link our interest in identity- and by implication memory - to the postmodern turn and the deconstruction of meta-narratives. In this explanation, History gave way to 'fragmented' identities, memories and histories. Older theories (e.g. Halbwachs and Nora) distinguished between memory and history, where the latter was

assumed to be factual and objective as opposed to the former conceived as more subjective. However, today scholars agree that the boundaries between the two are porous, and that all past constructions are mediated by subjects, despite fundamental differences among them about the nature of the real world and its representation. Anthropologists in particular contributed significantly to memory and/or identity studies: they paid particular attention to non-elite reproductions of the past and despite the problematics of representation, 'gave voice' to those absent in hegemonic discourses and narratives. Anthropologists are interested in how ordinary people draw on the past to *re-present* their 'identities' as individuals located within shifting social relationships, and thus identities are - in Stuart Hall's words - always changing and always incomplete. The class will challenge the idea that all non-elite versions of history are necessarily 'oppositional'. We will also read and discuss issues that are underpinned by 'identity politics' which in today's world appears in struggles over religious, ethnic loyalties and other groups loyalties. Led by political organizations, such collective struggles are often made to lay claim over territorial, political or economic power. In the process, the past, sometimes even ancient histories are invoked to justify such claims. Whenever possible, the readings take into consideration the students' academic interests and areas of research. Although the course does not cover psychological approaches, and it does not purport to cover all aspects of history, memory and identity, it provides students with a good grasp of the major debates, including such themes as memory and place/landscape, oral history, memory and violence/trauma.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the course students will be able to:

Identify some of the theoretical approaches and debates on memory, history and identity.

Critically analyze the relationship between history/memory and identity.

Problematize the concepts, especially 'identity' and the distinctions between memory and history.

Analyze the aforementioned concepts as gendered and as related to power.

Examine critically some of the writings and case studies on memory/history and identity.

Provide critical interpretations on how memory/history and identity overlap with other concepts such as space and place, forgetting, trauma and violence.

Analyze the reproduction of the past by ruling elites and official discourses in relation to how the past is invoked by ordinary people.

NB: A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's OWL site before the first day of class.

Course Materials:

Registered students will be able to access all readings through the course's on-line OWL site (Course Readings).

Assignments and Evaluation:

Presentations on Readings and Discussion -40%

Each week two or three students will present on the assigned readings for that week, (assignments will be rotated among students). The duration of the presentation is 30 minutes (15- 20 min presentation and 10-15 min class discussion). Presentations should have three components: a) a brief summary, focusing on the author's main argument; b) the students' critical evaluation of the work (positive and/or negative); and c) two questions related to the reading for class discussion. The number of presentations each student will have during the term will depend on the final number of students enrolled. Nonetheless, it is expected that all students will read the weekly assignments, in order to have a meaningful and interesting class discussion. During the first class, we might modify or change some of the readings. If you have an article that you think is useful to your area of research and related to themes in the course, please let me know, we might add it to the existing readings, or substitute with another.

Essay – 40%

Choose a topic related to the course and ideally one that is related to your area of interest or research. It is always wise not to leave the essay to the last week, so begin thinking and writing early on. (10 - 12 pages double-spaced, Times New Roman).

More information will be made available to students on the course OWL site.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Short Paper OR Book Review – 20%

Write a 4-5 short paper which applies theoretical and empirical knowledge acquired in the course to your own research, in ways that are useful to develop your own research proposals or project.

OR,

Write a 4-5 page review on a book that is useful to your research, but has a significant component that overlaps with the themes of the course.

Course Specific Statements and Policies:

Statement on Seeking Special Accommodations:

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

Statement on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and medical accommodation. [These policies are outlined with links to the full policies on the Anthropology website.](#)