

HIST 407/507
Winter 2019
Professor Carlos Aguirre
333 McKenzie Hall, caguirre@uoregon.edu
Office Phone: 346-5905
Office hours: Thursdays, 10-12 and by appointment

Human Rights and Memory in Latin America

Course Description

Between 1960 and 2000, various countries in Latin America experienced long-term political violence, military/authoritarian regimes, and massive human rights violations. State terror was systematically used in order to crush different types of social movements and insurrectionary groups that were trying to effect radical social change. Kidnapping, torture, imprisonment, exile, extrajudicial executions, and the disappearance of persons were among the most widely-used forms of state terror. The same period witnessed the emergence of revolutionary movements and the consolidation of the Cuban revolution, which became an inspiration for many individuals and movements seeking radical social change.

In the post-authoritarian era, a “battle for memory” has been taking place among various groups of civil society, political organizations, military institutions, and state agencies. Newly-established democratic governments attempted, with varying degrees of zeal, and under pressure from Human Rights organizations, to identify political and legal responsibilities for the atrocities of the recent past and sought to foster a culture of reconciliation. In order to accomplish such goals, a number of “Truth Commissions” were formed in various countries such as Argentina (1983-84), Chile (1990-91, 2003), Guatemala (1994-99), El Salvador (1992), and Peru (2001-03). These semi-independent bodies were in charge of investigating and revealing the “truth” about what had happened, but operated within both explicit and unspoken legal and political constraints. Their work and final reports became highly contested as different actors struggled to shape both historical memory and the political and legal processes of justice and reparation. At the same time, other efforts from civil society are trying to either contest or supplement these efforts: museums, memorials, artistic forms of expression, testimonials, documentaries, and many other forms of memorializing are used to give voice to different actors (victims, relatives, human rights activists, archivists, historians, and others) and decenter and complicate the memories of past atrocities.

This seminar will explore these multiple forms of memory building in Latin America during and after the Cold War period and will interrogate their context and effects in the midst of efforts towards the democratization of social relations and the dissemination of a culture of human rights in the region.

Required readings

The following books will be available for purchase at the UO bookstore and on reserve at Knight Library:

Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

Steve Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile. On the Eve of London 1998* (Duke University Press, 2004).

Leigh Ann Payne, *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America* (Duke University Press, 2011).

Andrew C. Rajca, *Dissensual Subjects. Memory, Human Rights, and Postdictatorship in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay* (Northwestern University Press, 2018).

In addition, a number of articles and papers will be available electronically through Canvas.

Course Requirements

Attendance is mandatory. More than one unjustified absence will result in a grade penalty. Participation is a central component of this course, so students must read all the materials assigned and come to class prepared to discuss them. In addition, students must turn in a weekly 2-3 page reaction paper summarizing the readings and highlighting the authors' contributions and potential areas of criticism. At least three questions for class discussion must also be included. In addition, each student will be in charge of introducing the reading materials during one of our class meetings. A 20-page research paper on a topic related to our theme is the most important outcome of this course. Research papers will have to use primary sources. (More information will be offered in class). An abstract and a preliminary bibliography for your papers will be due on week 4.

Grade breakdown

Attendance and participation: 10%
 Weekly reaction papers and questions for discussion: 10%
 Oral presentation: 20%
 Paper abstract and bibliography: 10%
 Final research paper: 50%

What you can expect to learn in this course

- A basic knowledge of the history of Latin America between c. 1959 and 2000, including major social processes and events such as the Cuban revolution, US intervention, revolutionary projects, and military dictatorships.

- The impact Cold War in the region and its relationship with local and regional political, economic, social, and cultural processes
- An overview of the history of human rights in the region and their relationship with the above-mentioned processes
- A deeper understanding of the connection between the writing of history and the contentious processes of memory construction.
- How to assess the role and legacy of violence in contemporary Latin America.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1 (1/9) Introduction: Cold War, Revolution, State Terror, and Memory in Latin America

Week 2 (1/16) How Memory Works?

Readings:

Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003)

David Berliner, "The Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78, 1, 2005.

Week 3 (1/23) Truth Commissions: History, Memory, Politics, and Justice.

Readings:

Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (Routledge, 2002), pp. 1-31, 72-85.

Greg Grandin, "The Instruction of Great Catastrophe: Truth Commissions, National History, and State Formation in Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala," *American Historical Review*, 110, 1, 2005.

Lisa J. Laplante and Kimberly Theidon, "Commissioning Truth, Constructing Silences. The Peruvian Truth Commission and the Other Truth of 'Terrorists,'" in *Mirrors of Justice*, Kamari Maxine Clarke and Mark Goodale, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Emilo Crenzel, "Between the Voices of the State and the Human Rights Movement: *Never Again* and the Memories of the Disappeared in Argentina," *Journal of Social History*, 44, 4, summer 2011.

Week 4 (1/30) Archives and Memory: The Case of Guatemala

Readings:

Greg Grandin, "Chronicles of a Guatemalan Genocide Foretold: Violence, Trauma, and the Limits of Historical Inquiry," *Nepantla*, 1, 2, 2000.

Kirsten Weld, "Dignifying the Guerrillero, Not the Assassin: Rewriting a History of Criminal Subversion in Postwar Guatemala," *Radical History Review*, 113, spring 2012.

George Lovell, "The Archive that Never Was: State Terror and Historical Memory in Guatemala," *The Geographical Review*, 103, 2, 2013.

Documentary, *Keep Your Eyes on Guatemala*, by Gabriela Martínez

Week 5 (2/6) Battles for Memory in Post-Pinochet Chile

Reading:

Steve Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile. On the Eve of London 1998* (Duke University Press, 2004).

Week 6 (2/13) Women, Resistance, Memory

Readings:

Barbara Sutton, "Women, State Terror, and Collective Memory," "Telling Terror," and Body, Survival, Resistance, and Memory," from *Surviving State Terror. Women's Testimonies of Repression and Resistance in Argentina* (New York University Press, 2018).

Week 7 (2/20) Peru: Conflicting Memories of the Dirty War

Readings:

Peruvian Truth Commission and Reconciliation, "General Conclusions"

<http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/ifinal/conclusiones.php>

Wendy Coxshall, "From the Peruvian Reconciliation Commission to Ethnography: Narrative, Relatedness, and Silence" *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 28, 2, 2005.

Committee to Support the Revolution in Peru (CSRV) "The Truth about the 'Truth Commission'"

Cynthia Milton, "At the Edge of the Peruvian Truth Commission: Alternative Paths to Recounting the Past," *Radical History Review*, 98, spring 2007.

Deborah Poole and Isaías Rojas Perez, "Memories of Reconciliation: Photography and Memory in Postwar Peru," *e-misférica*, 7, 2, winter 2010.

Week 8 (2/27) Memory and Museums

Reading:

Andrew Rajca, *Dissensual Subjects: Memory, Human Rights, and Postdictatorship in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay* (Northwestern University Press, 2018).

Week 9 (3/6) The Marketing and Commodification of Memory

Reading:

Ksenija Bilbija and Leigh A. Payne, eds. *Accounting for Violence. Marketing Memory in Latin America* (Duke University Press, 2011).

Week 10 Individual meetings with students to discuss research projects

Final Papers Due: March 22, 2019

SAMPLE ONLY