

Collective Memory and Mass Violence

HIST / HGS 276/376

Spring 2022

Instructor: Thomas Kühne

Time: Wednesday, 9:00 to 11:50 am

Place: Rose Library & Kent Seminar Room, Strassler Center

Office Hours: by appointment, via Zoom or in person (your choice)

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Description

There is no present and no future without the past. This is true not least when it comes to mass violence: the way societies decide about whether to engage in war or even genocide depends on their collective experiences with mass violence in the past, and on the lessons, they have drawn from these experiences. Having suffered from complete devastation during World War II, most European societies have decisively refrained from warfare since 1945 and observed pacifist attitudes. The United States, widely untroubled by major wars on its own territory since the late 19th century, has been less reluctant to resolve political conflicts violently.

This seminar examines how societies, nations, groups, and individuals remember war, genocide, and terror. How is such memory fabricated, transmitted, and consumed? We will inquire into concepts such as collective memory, trauma and reconciliation and apply them to major events of mass violence and political terror in the 20th century: World War I, the Armenian Genocide, World War II, the Holocaust, Apartheid in South Africa, the genocide in Rwanda, slavery and the Civil War in the U.S., the Vietnam War (and the American War, as it is called in Vietnam). The difference between war and genocide will deserve attention. Comparative explorations into various regions will structure the course throughout.

The course will consider a broad range of issues and media of collective memory: legal issues of justice and injustice as they materialize in national and international trials and in international conventions; emotional consequences of trauma, mourning, shame, and guilt; the negotiation of memory in memoirs and testimonies, mass media, memorials, monuments, museums, fictional literature and popular culture (e.g., cinema and TV); the agency of survivors of genocides, war veterans, and second and third generations. These different dimensions of collective memory relate to different disciplines in the humanities and in the social and behavioral sciences. The course thus offers a chance to develop insights into interdisciplinary scholarship, i.e., into the ways different disciplines approach the same topic.



Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin, Germany, 2005

Requirements and Practical Arrangements

This course will be taught in the spirit of a tutorial: once you decided to take the class, you are expected to stick to it, come to the sessions and be well prepared. All readings are to be completed on the day assigned before you come to class. Please bring both the readings and your notes to class to be able to follow and participate in class discussions.

Apart from inquiring into the themes of this course, it also serves to introduce students more generally in techniques of historical scholarship and in practices of academic communication. Great importance is attached to skills of analyzing both primary and secondary sources critically. The required readings are carefully chosen. However, none of them should be mistaken as comprising a final truth. Rather, they are to be considered as one of many options to look at a certain topic. Thus, try to understand the basic assumptions, the main arguments, and the limitations of the texts you read. Critique is the oil of knowledge. In class, you are invited to speak up and to articulate your thoughts and ideas, whether they comply or don't comply with those of your classmates or the professor.

To facilitate informed discussion, you are required to write a short paper of one to two pages, single spaced for each session, related the assigned books and essays. It is due electronically (email attachment, word file, not pdf, to tkuehne@clarku.edu) the night before class. This paper summarizes the readings (all of them) chapter by chapter or

article by article; think of this summary as a short version of *Cliffs Notes*. The paper ends by articulating one or two 'big' questions you wish to discuss in class. The questions *must* refer closely to the readings and show that you have familiarized yourself with them.

Each session starts with a brief oral review (5 or so minutes) of the previous session presented by one student. This review may be based on minutes you take (by hand, not electronically) in class. It summarizes the major issues and *results* of our discussion, its findings, and controversies in a well-organized form (not necessarily following the chronology of the discussion). You are supposed to sign up for one of these reviews.

Finally, a research paper of 2,500 to 3,500 words (undergraduates) or 5,000 to 7,000 words (graduates & capstone undergraduates) including title page, TOC, and bibliography, double-spaced, is due no later than one week after our last class, as word document (not pdf) submitted as email attachment to the instructor. The topic of this final project may relate to one or more topics of our class discussions; you may also choose a different topic, but it must relate to the seminar and be approved by the instructor. Please refrain from recycling papers you have written in previous or other classes. It is recommended to discuss the topic and your ideas about the paper and its sources with the instructor no later than four weeks before the end of the semester.

If you are not familiar with how to write and submit such a paper, you may wish to consult J. R. Benjamin, *A Student's Guide to History* (any recent edition) or Ch. Lipson, *How to Write a BA Thesis* (ditto), or similar guides. They offer valuable assistance, not least regarding the formal shape of your paper.

Undergraduate research papers are based on at least two scholarly books and four scholarly articles *different* from those mentioned in this syllabus. (Although these may and often should be used anyway.) Graduate and capstone undergraduate papers include at least four additional scholarly books and six scholarly articles. Instead of a book you can choose three articles, and vice versa. Make sure that your paper deals intensely with these sources. Originality of your thoughts, consistent arguments, and solid organization of the paper are appreciated, as is the proper citation of your references and sources. Any common citation style will be accepted as long as it is used consistently and includes the page numbers you refer to.

Plagiarism is a capital crime in academia; be aware of Clark's policy on academic integrity. Plagiarism refers to the presentation of someone else's work as one's own, without proper citation of references and sources, whether or not the work has been previously published. Submitting work obtained from a professional term paper writer or company is plagiarism. Claims of ignorance about the rules of attribution, or of unintentional error are not a defense against a finding of plagiarism.

Checking emails on a regular basis and staying connected with friends and the rest of the world is very important. Do not do it in class, however. Laptops, cell phones, iPods, iPads, Gameboys, DVD players and other electronic devices are inclined to distract you or others from class discussions. They are to be switched off during class.

Clark University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities equal access to all university programs and facilities. If you have or think you have a disability and require academic accommodations, you must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). If you are registered with SAS and qualify for accommodations that you would like to utilize in this course, please request those accommodations through SAS in a timely manner.

The diversity that students bring to the class will be valued as a resource, benefit and strength in and outside of class. My goal is to create an environment that supports a diversity of thoughts and perspectives and honors your diverse identities. If you have a name that differs from those that appear in your official Clark records, please let me know. Please notify me if something is said in class, either by myself or other classmates, that creates unease or that discourages your ability to thrive in our course in any way. And if you feel that experiences outside class are impacting your performance, please do not hesitate to let me know as well.

Faculty Members are “Responsible Employees”: This notice is to inform you that the faculty member(s) and teaching assistant(s) associated with this course are considered “Responsible Employees” by Clark University. As such, they are required to report all alleged sexual offenses to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. The only exceptions to this reporting responsibility are the community members who have been designated and/or trained as “Confidential” Sources. This includes the professional staff in Clark’s Center for Counseling and Personal Growth and the medical providers at the Health Center, as well as other individuals. See here, <https://www.clarku.edu/offices/title-ix/>

This course will require “ENGAGED ACADEMIC TIME” of 180 hours:

42 hours = in-class activities (14 x 3 hours)

96 hours = assigned readings + weekly papers (12 x 8 hours)

4 hours = preparation of oral session report (minutes)

38 hours = final paper.

COVID-19: Make sure to honor Clark policies on COVID-19 restrictions and mask up in class. If you need to quarantine, be in touch so that we can discuss how to guarantee your continuing progress in this class.

Grading and Attendance

A maximum of 100 points can be achieved with

- 60 points for 12 weekly papers (5 points each)
- 10 points for continuous participation in class discussion
- 5 points for presenting the minutes of one session
- 25 points for the final research paper

100-95 points=A, 94-90 points=A-, 89-85 points=B+, 84-80=B, 79-75 points=B-etc.

You are supposed to attend class on a regularly basis. Absences without sufficient reasoning will result in a deduction of five points each. Absences due to religious beliefs, especially on major holidays, will be excused with no penalty, but please notify the instructor in advance, not least to discuss the submission of your weekly paper. Note that, per university policies, students who abuse the excused absence policy by consciously misrepresenting to the instructor the reason for the absence will be considered to have committed academic misconduct. Examples of abuse include falsifying an illness or family emergency, falsely claiming that attendance at the event is required, falsely claiming to have attended an event, or falsely claiming that an absence has been approved by university officials.

Required Books

Most required texts will be available on Moodle or accessible through Goddard online resources, except the following four books, which are recommended for purchase (any edition will work):

- Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*
- Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness. Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*
- Ethan J. Kyle & Blain Roberts, *Denmark Vesey's Garden. Slavery and Memory in the Cradle of the Confederacy*
- Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies. Vietnam and the Memory of War*

Course Outline

Week 1, Jan 19

Introduction

Presentation of content and practical arrangements of class.

Week 2, Jan 26:

Trauma: Holocaust Survivors

Reading: 1) selections from Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies. The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), provided as photocopies; 2) excerpts from Lawrence Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* (1995), Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), and Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transition* (2004), as in *Theories of Memory. A Reader*, ed. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), pp. 186-211.

Weekly Paper #1 due.

In his classic book, the famous Holocaust scholar Larry Langer examines oral testimonies of Holocaust survivors and zeroes in on the ongoing traumatic impact of the Holocaust on them and their selves. The concept of trauma will be subject of the class discussion.

At the end of the class and in preparation of the following week, we will be watching sections from the movie *Schindler's List* (1993).

Week 3, Feb 2:

Collective Identity: American Jews and the Holocaust

Reading: Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999), pp. 1-15 and 103-281.

Weekly Paper #2 due.

In sharp contrast to Langer's findings, Peter Novick, in his highly controversial book, explores the socially constructive role of collective memory and argues that American Jews have made the Holocaust the emblematic Jewish experience to reassure Jewish identity.

The class will conclude with a brief lecture of the instructor on Holocaust memory in Germany, the reinvention of German national identity in the light of a self-reflective, "negative" memory of its evil past, and the limitations of this self-reflection.

Week 4, Feb 9:

Memory Conflicts: Holocaust, Stalinism, and Colonialism

Reading: 1) Roger Cohen, "The Suffering Olympics," *New York Times*, 30 Jan 2012; 2) Stefan Rohdewald, "Post-Soviet Remembrance of the Holocaust and National Memories of the Second World War in Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44/2 (2008), pp. 173-184; 3) *The Holocaust and the Nakba. A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), pp. 1-42 (JSTOR); 4) Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), Introduction.

Weekly Paper #3 due.

In this class, we will discuss how Holocaust memory conflicts and is entangled with collective memories of other traumatic experiences. This is the case, for instance, in East Europe and Russia, where victims of Nazi terror face victims of the communist dictatorship; in Israel, where the Holocaust trauma of the Jews conflicts with the Nakba trauma of the Palestinians; in the United States and other parts of the world that are shaped simultaneously by the memory of the Holocaust, the remembrance of slavery and anti-Black racism, and even other collective traumas.

At the end of the class, we will be watching sections from the movie *Denial* (2016), a biographical drama on historical truth and the libel lawsuit against the Holocaust scholar Deborah Lipstadt in 1996, filed by Holocaust denier David Irving.

Week 5, Feb 16:

Denial: Turkey and the Armenian Genocide

Reading: 1) Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (London: Polity, 2001), chapter 3; 2) Taner Akçam, "Turkey and the Armenian Ghost," *Armenian Weekly*, 15 December 2012; Jennifer M. Dixon, *Dark Pasts. Changing the State's Story in Turkey and Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), selections; 4) Uğur Ümit Üngör, "Lost in commemoration: the Armenian genocide in memory and identity," *Patterns of Prejudice* 48/2 (2014), pp. 147-166.

Weekly Paper #4 due.

Although widely considered a genocide, the Turkish government has refused to call the death of nearly 1.5 million Armenians during World War I that way, claiming that the intent-to-destroy clause of the U.N. Genocide Convention of 1948 does not apply. We will be examining the reasons, facets, and consequences of this denial as well as, more largely, the concept of denial, especially genocide denial, and different shades of denial, among other by comparing the Armenian genocide denial to denials of the Holocaust.



Photo from Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story. A Personal Account of the Armenian Genocide* (orig. 1918, reprint 2010). Morgenthau's caption: "Scenes like this were common all over the Armenian provinces in the spring and summer months of 1915. Death in its several forms—massacre, starvation, exhaustion—destroyed the

larger part of the refugees. The Turkish policy was that of extermination under the guise of deportation". (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Genocide)

At the end of this class, sections of the documentary movie *Forgiving Dr. Mengele* (2017) will be shown. It features the Auschwitz survivor Eva Mozes Kor, who had been a victim of the infamous Nazi doctor Josef Mengele's cruel genetic experiments but in the 1990s became an advocate of healing through forgiveness, provoking passionate opposition from other survivors.

Week 6, Feb 23:

Revenge or Reparation? Justice After Injustice

Reading: Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness. Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon, 1998).

Weekly Paper #5 due.

Is it possible for societies to restore justice and to heal after the experience of genocide, atrocities, terror, and mass-scale injustice? We will explore some of the most common yet rather different efforts to do so, including vengeance, trials of the perpetrators, forgiveness, truth commissions, reparations, restitution. We will discuss what they effect, whom they help (the victims; the bystanders; the perpetrators), their upsides and downsides.

In preparation of the following week, parts of the documentary movie *Coexist* (2010/2014) will be shown at the end of this session.

Week 7, March 2:

The Limits of Reconciliation: Rwanda after the Genocide

Reading: 1) Phil Clark, "Rwanda's Recovery. When Remembrance Is Official Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 97/1 (2008), pp. 35-41; 2) Rene Lemarchand, "The Politics of Memory in Post-Genocide Rwanda," *After Genocide. Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond*, ed. Phil Clark & Zachary D. Kaufman (New York: Hurst, 2009), pp. 65-76; 3) selections from *After the Genocide in Rwanda. Testimonies of Violence, Change and Reconciliation*, ed. Hannah Grayson et al. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019). 4) Jennie E. Burnet, "(In)Justice. Truth, Reconciliation, and Revenge in Rwanda's *Gacaca*," *Transitional Justice. Global Mechanisms and Local Realities after Genocide and Mass Violence*, ed. Alexander Laban Hinton (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 95-118.

Weekly Paper #6 due.

After the genocide, the Rwandan government has fostered national unity and reconciliation between Tutsis and Hutus, and perpetrators and victims of the genocide. Not all Rwandan citizens are pleased with this top-down reconciliation. Based on the

readings and the documentary movie *Coexist* (2010/2014) that tells the story of five survivors and five perpetrators and how they live together today, we will be discussing the chances and limitations of reconciliation in a post-genocidal society. In addition to the mandatory readings, you'll find on Moodle Mishy Lesser, *CoExist Teacher's Guide. Using Film to Help Bystanders become Upstanders* (2016) for further information.

At the end of this class, the subject of the following week will be introduced by considering selected contributions to the recent debates in the U.S. on the removal of Confederate monuments.

Week 8, March 16:

Divided Memories: Slavery and the Civil War

Reading: Ethan J. Kyle & Blain Roberts, *Denmark Vesey's Garden. Slavery and Memory in the Cradle of the Confederacy* (New York: New Press, 2018).

Weekly Paper #7 due.

Denmark Vesey was a black revolutionary who led a slave insurrection in 1822 and founded the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC, the church where in June 2015 the white supremacist Dylann Roof murdered nine worshippers, after having visited sites that reminded of the Civil War and the history of slavery. Probing into Charleston's public rituals, monuments and memorials, newspapers, textbooks, and Charlestonians personal recollections, *Denmark Vesey's Garden* will allow us to discuss the conflicting memories of slavery and Civil War in the U.S. from the 1860s to the present.

Class will conclude selections from the Vietnam war movie *The Deer Hunter* (1978) in preparation of the following week.

Week 9, March 23:

Gendered Memories: Vietnam and American Identity

Reading: 1) Robert Jay Lifton, *Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans—Neither Victims nor Executioners* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), Introduction and chapter 3; 2) Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America. Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. xi-xv, 168-186; 3) Robin Wagner Pacifici & Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past," *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (1991), pp. 376-420 (Goddard online); 4) Kim S. Theriault, "Go Away Little Girl: Gender, Race, and Controversy in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Prospects* 29 (2005), pp. 595-617; 5) Rebecca Onion, "The Secret Cohesion of White Supremacists," *Slate*, 11 April 2018.

Weekly Paper #8 due.

The Vietnam War left the United States deeply disturbed, humiliated, and divided. Traditional values such as heroic masculinity and political superiority seemed to be moot in the mid-1970s. We will be examining the impact of the Vietnam trauma on society including the homecoming veterans and discuss the revitalization of those heroic ideals and of concepts of national identity in popular culture from the late 1970s on as well as the struggle for, and the debate about, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in D.C.

A mini lecture of the instructor will draw some comparisons to the way the German society responded in the 1920s and 1930s to the disastrous defeat in 1918.



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C., USA

Week 10, March 30:

Remembering Others and One's Own: The American War in Vietnam

Reading: Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies. Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016).

Weekly Paper #9 due.

Proceeding from the idea “that all wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory,” Viet Thanh Nguyen examines the cacophony of memories of the American War (as the Vietnam War is called in Vietnam) in Southeast Asia and ponders an idea of reconciliation that is based on sharing not only our

humanity but also our inhumanity. Contrasting western and non-western ways of memorializing violent pasts will be one of the challenges of this class.

In preparation of the following class, the last part of this class will serve to consider footage and photos documenting 'dark tourism,' i.e., mass travel to sites of genocide, war, and disaster such as the Auschwitz camp sites in Poland, the Cu Chi Tunnel in Vietnam, and the Oklahoma City National Memorial in the U.S., e.g.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISbywX6vIRI>,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76GseW1eI8>



Youths at Auschwitz Memorial Museum, Poland

(Photo: <https://forward.com/culture/311188/will-selfies-make-you-free-debating-the-appropriateness-of-narcissistic-photo/>)

Week 11, April 6:

Dark Tourism: Commemoration or Amusement?

Reading: 1) "Dark tourism: why murder sites and disaster zones are proving popular," *The Guardian*, 31 Oct 2013; 2) Richard Sharpley, "Shedding Light on Dark Tourism," in Philip Stone & Richard Sharpley, *The Darker Side of Travel. The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Bristol: Channel View, 2009), pp. 3-22; 3) Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History. Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 1-34. 4) Bayo Holsey, "Slavery Tourism. Representing a Difficult History in Ghana," *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*, ed. James B. Gardner and Paula Hamilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 479-491.

Weekly Paper #10 due.

Battlefields and other sites of mass death, destruction and disasters have attracted travelers since the 19th century, and in the past few decades this kind of travel has grown into a veritable business, often of significant cash value for the surrounding communities. Examples of such sites include the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, the Chu Chi tunnels in Vietnam, Ground Zero in New York City, and Robben Island Prison in South Africa. In this class, we will be examining the motives and experiences of 'dark tourists,' the moral implications of dark tourism, and the ways it shapes the memorialization of traumatic pasts.

Selections of the movie *The Downfall* (2004) and a selection of parodies on this movie to be watched at the end of this class in preparation of week 13.

Week 12, April 13:

Normalizing Terror: Hitler and Popular Culture

Reading: 1) Virginia Heffernan, "The Hitler Meme," *The New York Times Magazine*, 24 Oct 2008; 2) Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *Hi Hitler! How the Nazi Past is Being Normalized in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), chapter 6; 3) selections at your choice from Art Spiegelman, *Maus I and II. A Survivors Tale* (New York: Pantheon, 1991).

Weekly Paper #11 due. Instead of summarizing the readings, use this paper to elaborate on the opposing ways of representing Nazi evil in Spiegelman's *Maus* and in internet memes and alike as analyzed by Rosenfeld.

A very special type of 'remembrance' of trauma is the subject of this session: the aestheticization, trivialization and even humanization of figures such as Hitler, in movies, Internet memes and other media. Taking up some results of the previous session on Dark Tourism, we will be considering ethical aspects and political consequences of this way of dealing with traumatic pasts and exploring why it has become so popular. We will be contrasting this type of trivializing traumatic pasts with examples of the genre of Holocaust comics, especially the most famous and most complex one, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. Sections from the German movie *Look Who's Back* (*Er ist wieder da*) (2015, English subtitles) will be watched in class.

Week 13, April 20:

Holocaust Education: Teaching Genocide, Learning Tolerance?

Reading: 1) Simone Schweber, "Education," Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies, ed. Peter Hayes and John K. Roth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 695-708. 2) Monique Eckmann, "Is Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust Relevant for Human Rights Education?" *As The Witnesses Fall Silent: 21st Century Holocaust Education in Curriculum, Policy and Practice*, ed. Zehavit Gross & E. Doyle Stevick (Cham: Springer, 2015), pp. 53-66. 3) Simone Schweber, "'Holocaust Fatigue': Teaching It Today," *Social*

Education, 70/1 (2006), pp. 44-50; 4) Dan Fleshler, "Does Education Fuel Anti-Semitism," *Forward*, 17 February 2012, <https://forward.com/opinion/world/151531/does-education-fuel-anti-semitism/>; 5) excerpts from Michael Marrus, *Lessons of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016).

Weekly Paper #12 due.

In many U.S. states, schools are required by law to provide Holocaust education, supported by powerful national and international organizations, such as Facing History and Ourselves and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance that promote education, memorialization, and curricula about the Holocaust and other acts of mass violence to spread tolerance, diversity, inclusion, and human rights. And yet we experience, in the U.S. and in many other countries around the globe, a new wave of hatred, bigotry, racism, antisemitism. This class serves to discuss the impact of Holocaust pedagogy specifically and more largely whether we can learn from past at all.

The class concludes with a review of the previous sessions and with preparations for the following week. By now, you should have established the topic and some ideas about the content of your paper.

Week 14, April 27

DISCUSSION OF FINAL PAPERS

Please submit a one-page outline of your as email attachment to the instructor the night before (April 26, 12:00 am) and be prepared to present and comment on the outline in class in five or so minutes.