

WAR AND MEMORY ANTH 6391

Professor Sarah Wagner
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W 5:10 - 7:00

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Violent conflict, civil wars, and wars of aggression have long been the purview of historians and political scientists in attempting to understand root causes and craft preventative policies. This course approaches war differently, examining the lived experiences of violent conflict from the perspectives of perpetrators, victims, and onlookers alike, specifically through the prism of memory. Throughout the semester we will seek to answer questions about how war shapes memory and memory shapes war: How do individuals and societies remember the events and experiences of war? How do survivors articulate loss? How do mechanisms of social repair intersect with individual and collective memory? When does war end in the social memory of its survivors? What does it mean to “never forget?”



The course is divided into four general topics: war's toll and theories of memory; witnessing genocide; diasporic memory; military, memorials, and monuments. Our discussions of each will draw on a variety of sources—from memoirs, films, and documentaries, to ethnographic, historical, and political analyses. Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on reading critically and thinking abstractly, while being attentive to the specific sociohistorical contexts of each example we encounter. The final paper provides an opportunity for students to research and analyze in greater depth a topic related to the material covered in the course.

It is funny about wars, they ought to be different but they are not.
Gertrude Stein, *Wars I Have Seen*, 1945

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Exercise skills in critical reading and analytical reasoning of anthropological and historical texts relating to war, its aftermath, and the politics of memory.
2. Demonstrate a general understanding of the social theory of memory, both individual and collective.
3. Discern and analyze the specific conditions foregrounding armed conflict and the politics of memory, including nationalism, ethnic identity, and post-colonialism.
4. Communicate clearly and effectively anthropological questions and concepts about the lived experiences of war and its aftermath and the tensions between remembering and forgetting in post-conflict societies.



Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

Weekly reflections (20%)

Participation (15%)

Ethnographic exercises (25%)

Final paper (40%)

Weekly reflections: Over the course of the semester, you are to write **10** short postings to share with the class in preparation for the week's discussion. Your comments should address the assigned reading(s) and must be posted on Blackboard by 8 pm Tuesday to receive credit. You are not required to read your classmates' postings, but you may find it helpful and interesting. Please note: There are no weekly postings for Week 1, 11, and 14. Each posting is worth **2 pts** and should be a short (~200-250 words) but coherent reflection that follows one of these two formats:

Close reading (title your posting "Close reading: [name of author/s]"): Identify a passage from one of the readings that either sparks your interest, or stumps and frustrates you; explain how or why it does so; and pose an open-ended question that might help move our discussion forward to follow your inspiration or address your frustration.

Crosstalk (title your posting "Crosstalk: [topic or theme]"): Situate the session's readings within the context of the course as a whole. What new elements do they bring to our ethnographic exploration of war and memory? Which previous readings do they build upon, which do they diverge from? How do they speak to themes emerging in class discussion?

Participation: The class participation grade is based not only on participation in class discussions but also on attendance (**15 pts total** - 10 pts for participation and 5 pts for attendance). After 2 missed classes, the participation grade will be lowered a full grade with each additional absence.

Active participation is vital for a lively and engaging seminar. It comes in different shapes and forms: some people tend to speak up more often, while others listen and reflect. Push yourself to contribute to the discussion in different ways, including at times by moving out of your comfort zone. Perhaps this means that rather than seeking to answer each question posed, you try to draw out a classmate; or, if speaking in class is harder for you, come prepared with a question or a passage from the text you'd like us to examine more closely. Above all, engage with and be respectful of other people's ideas.

Ethnographic exercises: There are three ethnographic exercises; two are tied to a specific space: (1) the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (**10 pts**) and (2) the Holocaust Museum (**10 pts**). The third is a space or site of your own choosing (**5 pts**). Written instructions will be provided the week before the exercise.

Final Paper: The final research paper (20-25 pages, 1.5 spacing) will be on a topic of your choosing, but it must incorporate the themes of the course readings and discussions. I encourage students to meet with me individually to develop their paper topics and potential bibliographic sources early on in the semester; there are also two related (and graded) assignments aimed at encouraging you to develop your research and writing before the end of the semester(!): (1) outline, abstract, and annotated bibliography [due November 6th] (**5 pts**); and (2) draft of the paper [due November 27th] (**5 pts**). The final paper is due on December 11th (**30 pts**).

Grading System: Grades will be calculated according to the following range: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; etc.

Course policies

Turning in assignments: Extensions will not be granted on the final paper or any of the other written assignments. Students must hand in hard copies (paper copies not emailed attachments) before or at the beginning of class the day the assignment is due. Over the course of the term, students have **three free days** for late work. Once these days are used up, the grade will be lowered a half grade per day.

Your behavior in the classroom has to follow the rules of intellectual life as well as social life. In class, you should be *available*. If you choose to use your computer during class, use it for taking notes only; otherwise, you distract your classmates and instructor. Please make sure that your cellphone is either turned off or silenced. Please do not come to class late if you can avoid it; if you do arrive late, do your best to minimize disturbing the rest of the class.

Technology in the classroom: Cell phones must be silenced or turned off during the class period. The use of laptops is limited to taking notes. If you are using your laptop for any other purpose, you will be asked to shut the computer off immediately and will not be allowed to use it in the future.

Academic Integrity

All students must practice academic integrity. This means doing your own work, and when you use the words and ideas of others in any written work, you must: 1) identify direct quotations with quotation marks; and 2) indicate the source of ideas that are not your own by using social sciences notation form. If you have any questions at all about what this means, you should speak to the instructor. Plagiarism, and all breaches of academic integrity, will be severely dealt with in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. For more information on The George Washington University's policies on academic integrity, consult: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

The policy on academic integrity in this course is that if you commit a breach of academic integrity in any assignment or exam, you will receive a zero for that assignment or exam. This infraction will be reported to the University's Academic Integrity Council. You will be clearly notified by the instructor in person OR by email before the Council is informed.

Special Needs

Please let me know right away if you have any special needs with respect to how this course will be conducted. Information and resources on special needs are available at Disability Support Services (DSS) [<http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>].

Required Texts

Tim O'Brien. 1998 [1990]. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Mariner Books.

Heonik Kwon. 2006. *After the Massacre: Commemoration and Consolation in Ha My and My Lai*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Primo Levi. 1993. *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Hannah Arendt. 2006 [1963] *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Penguin Books.

Liisa Malkki. 1995. *Purity and Exile*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

All other assigned reading material are found on Blackboard in the designated weekly folder.

COURSE DESIGN

Part I. War's toll: death, loss, and theories of memory

What has happened is that time has passed. Forgetfulness, by rolling my memories along in its tide, has done more than merely wear them down or consign them to oblivion. . . . One order has been replaced by another. Between these two cliffs, which preserve the distance between my gaze and its object, time, the destroyer, has begun to pile up rubble. Sharp edges have been blunted and whole sections have been collapsed: periods and places collide, are juxtaposed or are inverted, like strata displaced by tremors on the crust of an aging planet.” Claude Levi-Strauss, “The Quest for Power,” *Tristes Tropiques*

In the first segment of the course, we will explore the social meaning of war, drawing on examples from conflicts that have shaped US sensibilities toward violent conflict, including the Civil War, the Vietnam War, and the September 11, 2001 attacks. While we will not be able to study in-depth the historical context or events of each, we will try to discern parallels and differences among the experiences of those who fought in these conflicts, as well as those who cared for the sick, injured, and dying. On a more theoretical level, we will begin our semester-long consideration of memory, reading social theory that seeks to understand how memory works on an individual and social or collective level.

Week 1

W (8/28) - Introduction

-  Drew Gilpin Faust, Chapter 1 (“Dying”), pp. 3-31, and Chapter 2 (“Killing”), pp. 32-60, in *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).
-  Lenore Barbian, Paul Sledzik, and Jeffrey Reznik. 2012. “Remains of War: Walt Whitman, Civil War Soldiers, and the Legacy of Medical Collections,” *Museum History Journal* 5(1): 7–28.
-  Selections from Walt Whitman’s *Memoranda during the War*, edited by Peter Coviello (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): “Death of a Wisconsin Officer,” pp. 43-45; “A Glimpse of War’s Hell Scenes,” p. 61-64; and “Death of a Pennsylvania Soldier—Frank H. Irwin, Co. E., 93rd Pennsylvania—Died May 1, ’65—My Letter to His Mother,” p. 89-92.
-  Ben Hubbard and Hwaida Saad, “Images of Death in Syria, but No Proof of Chemical Attack,” *New York Times*, Aug. 21, 2013 <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/22/world/middleeast/syria.html>.

Week 2

W (9/4) - How Does Memory Work? - Theory on individual and collective memory

-  Henri Bergson, “On the Recognition of Images: Memory and the Brain,” pp. 77-90, and “Of the Survival of Images, Memory and Mind,” pp. 133-177 in *Matter and Memory*.
-  Alessandro Portelli, “The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and Event,” in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, pp. 1-26.
-  Maurice Halbwachs, “Individual Memory and Collective Memory,” and “Historical Memory and Collective Memory,” in *The Collective Memory*, pp. 22-87.

Week 3

W (9/11) - September 11, 2001

-  David Simpson, *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration*, pp. 1-53.
-  “Portraits of Grief” (<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/us/portraits-of-grief.html?hp>)
-  Paul Ricoeur, “Commanded Forgetting: Amnesty,” pp. 452-456, “The Odyssey of the Spirit of Forgiveness: The Stage of Exchange,” pp. 478-486, and “Forgiveness and Forgetting,” pp. 500-506 in *Memory, History, Forgetting*.
-  Geoffrey White, “National Subjects: September 11 and Pearl Harbor.” *American Ethnologist* 31(3): 293-310.
-  In-class viewing: 11’09”11 *September 11* shorts

Week 4-6

W (9/18) - The Vietnam War

 Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*.

 Christina Schwenkel, "Commodified Memories and Embodied Experiences of War," in *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation* (Bloomington, ID: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 79-101.

 Vietnam Veterans Memorial - ethnographic exercise (begin)

W (9/25) - The "American War in Vietnam"

 Heonik Kwon, *After the Massacre: Commemoration and Consolation in Ha My and My Lai*.

 Discussion of the film, *Hearts and Minds* [Note: you are to watch the film outside of class.]

 Vietnam Veterans Memorial - ethnographic exercise (continue)

W (10/2) - The Vietnam War cont. - guest lecturer Dr. Sarah Daynes

 Sigmund Freud, "Screen Memories," in *The Uncanny*, pp. 3-21.

 Marita Sturken. 1991. "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Representations* (35): 118-142.

 Paulette Curtis. 2011. "Filling in the Blanks: Deriving Meaning from Objects in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection." *Practicing Anthropology* 33(2): 11-15.

 Vietnam Veterans Memorial - ethnographic component (due in class)

Part II. Witnessing Genocide: "Never Again," "Never Forget"

I have learnt that I am Häftling. My number is 174517; we have been baptized, we will carry the tattoo on our left arm until we die.

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

Across time and space, societies have established parameters of acceptable forms of combat (e.g., who can fight; who and what are appropriate targets for violence; how to punish transgressors). In the twentieth century, driven in large part by the horror of the Holocaust, states adopted an international code prohibiting certain acts of state-sponsored violence, among them genocide. In this segment of the course, we examine the singular crime of genocide, its legacies of harm, the act of witnessing, and the insistence on remembering (or at least not forgetting) its annihilating effects.

Week 7-8

W (10/9) - The Holocaust

 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* [*Se questo è un uomo*] (New York: Collier Books, 1993).

 Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), pp. 15-40.

* Trip to the Holocaust Museum

 Holocaust Museum - ethnographic exercise

W (10/16) - Its reckoning

 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

 In-class viewing of *Obedience*

 Holocaust Museum - ethnographic exercise due

Week 9

W (10/23) - Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

 Slavenka Drakulić, “Introduction: Not a Fairy Tale,” “Triumph of Evil,” and “One Day in the Life of Dražen Erdemović,” in *They Would Never Hurt a Fly: War Criminals on Trial at The Hague* (New York: Viking, 2004).

 Lara Nettelfield and Sarah Wagner, “Srebrenica in Court,” in *Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide* (New York: Cambridge University Press), pp. 217-249.

Part III. When wars travel: the politics and practice of diasporic memory

“The diaspora is a society in which the absent are a constant incitement to discourse about things moving.” - Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*

Week 10

W (10/30) Forced migration and diasporic memory

 Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

 Engseng Ho, “The Society of the Absent,” in *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 3-26.

Week 11

W (11/6) Ethnonationalism recalled, maintained, and re-presented

 Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile* cont.

 Lara Nettelfield and Sarah Wagner, “Srebrenica Abroad: Diaspora Connections, Activism, and Controversies,” in *Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide*, pp. 149-181.

 In-class viewing of *Lost Boys in Sudan*

 Abstract, outline, and annotated bibliography due for final paper

Part IV. The “work of remembering”: Military, memorials, and monuments of war

Only the mourning and the mourned recall
The wars we lose, the wars we win;
And the world is—what it has been.
Randall Jarrell, “The Range in the Desert”

Making sense of violent conflict, of wars and their consequences, is an anthropological endeavor: it takes place at the intersection of individual and social identity, through communal and individual acts of what historian Jay Winter has called the “work of remembrance.” Often that work centers on those who carried out violence and experienced violence, including and especially members of the military. We consider the military as both an object and site of national remembering. We will explore the politics of memory in postwar societies by looking to Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC and through an individual ethnographic exercise.

Week 12

W (11/13) - The military as object of study

 Andrew Bickford, *Fallen Elite: The Military Other in Post-Unification Germany* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2011).

 Recommended film: *The Lives of Others*

Week 13

W (11/20) - The “work of remembrance”

 Jay Winter, Chapter Four, “War Memorials and the Mourning Process” in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 78-116.

 Sarah Wagner, “The Making and Unmaking of an Unknown Soldier” *Social Studies of Science* [Online First, May 2013, pp. 1-26].

 Final ethnographic exercise

Week 14

W(11/27)

No class (Thanksgiving)

 Draft of final paper due: hard copy dropped off in my mailbox (HAH main office)

Week 15

W (12/4) - Virtual and prosthetic memory

 Alison Landsberg, Selections from *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

 In-class viewing of *Section 60: Arlington National Cemetery* (2008, 53 min.)

 Final ethnographic exercise due

Final papers are due on December 11, 2013. Please note that you are required to turn in both a hard copy and an electronic copy through Safe Assign.