

WAR AND MEMORY ANTH 6391 - FALL 2016

Professor Sarah Wagner
Room: HAH 202
W 4:10-6:00pm

Office: 301 HAH
Office Hours: W 3:00-4:00
or by appointment
sewagner@gwu.edu

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?” What are the effects of privileging the past in the present?



The course is divided into four general topics: war's toll and theories of memory; witnessing genocide; diasporic memory; military, memorials, and commemorating war dead. 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 13. 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 then connect that passage to the text's broader argument.

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 anthropological 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?

Note: both formats are aimed at getting you to engage with key ideas from the entire text (not merely one passage within it), and so you will want to make sure your posting includes synthesis as well as in-depth analysis.

Participation: The class participation grade is based on participation in class discussions and attendance (**15 pts total**). After two 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 9th] (**5 pts**); and (2) draft of the paper [due November 30th] (**5 pts**). The final paper is due on December 16th (**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. *Note: These days cannot be used towards postings.* 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: <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

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): <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

Required Texts

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

Viet Thanh Nguyen. 2016. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University 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.

Diana Allan. 2014. *Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Andrew Bickford. 2011. *Fallen Elite: The Military Other in Post-Unification Germany* (Palo Alto: Stanford University 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 (8/31) - 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).
-  Selections from Walt Whitman's *Memoranda during the War*, edited by Peter Coviello (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): "Introduction," pp. xviii-xxiii; "Death of a Wisconsin Officer," pp. 43-45; "A Glimpse of War's Hell Scenes," pp. 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.

Week 2

W (9/7) - 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* (New York: Zone Book, 1991).
-  Maurice Halbwachs, "Individual Memory and Collective Memory," and "Historical Memory and Collective Memory," in *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 22-87.
-  Paul Connerton, "Bodily Practices," in *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 72-104.

Week 3

W (9/14) - 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>)
-  Alessandro Portelli, "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and Event," in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 1-26.
-  Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, Paul Kecskemeti, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1952), pp. 276-322.
-  In-class viewing: *11'09"11 September 11* shorts

Week 4-6

W (9/21) - 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 (9/28) - The "American War in Vietnam"

 Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*.

 Heonik Kwon, Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 7 in *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; it is available on YouTube.]

 Vietnam Veterans Memorial - ethnographic exercise (continue)

W (10/5) - Remembering the Vietnam War

 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.

 Kristin Hass. 1998. Chapter 1, 4, and 5 in *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 7-33, 87-124.

 Patrick Hagopian. Selection from Chapter 3, "The Discourse of Healing and the 'Black Gash of Shame,'" in *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), pp. 93-110.

 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 (10/12) - 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.

 Alison Landsberg, Selection from "The 'Object' of Remembering," in *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Experience in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 129-139.

(W 10/12 continued)

 Holocaust Museum - ethnographic exercise

* *Trip to the Holocaust Museum (optional class trip on Saturday or Sunday)*

W (10/19) - Its reckoning, its memory

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

 Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider. 2002. "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5(1): 87–106.

 Holocaust Museum - ethnographic exercise due

Week 9

W (10/26) - Former Yugoslavia, international war crimes trials and witnessing atrocity

 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 J. Nettelfield and Sarah Wagner, "Srebrenica in Court," in *Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 217-249.

 Eric Stover, Chapters 1, 2, and 5 in *The Witnesses: War Crimes and the Promise of Justice in The Hague* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), pp. 1-32, 71-91.

 Richard Wilson. 2007. "Humanity's Histories: Evaluating the Historical Accounts of International Tribunals and Truth Commissions." *Politix: Revue des Sciences Sociales du Politique* 20(80): 31-59.

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 (11/2) Forced migration and diasporic memory

 Liisa Malkki. 1992. "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees." *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1): 24-44.

 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.

 Diana Allan, *Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

Week 11

W (11/9) Ethnonationalism recalled, maintained, and re-presented

 Diana Allan, *Refugees of the Revolution* continued.

 Abstract, outline, and annotated bibliography due for final paper

Part IV. The “work of remembrance”: 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, D.C. and through an individual ethnographic exercise.

Week 12

W (11/16) - The military as object of study

[Guest speaker - author Dr. Andrew Bickford]

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

 Recommended film: *The Lives of Others*

 Final ethnographic exercise (assignment distributed)

Week 13

W (11/23)

No class (Thanksgiving)

Week 14

W (11/30) - The “work of remembrance” (and forgetting?)

 Jay Winter, Chapter 4 “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.

 Michael Dolski, Chapters 7 and 8 in *D-Day Remembered: The Normandy Landings in American Collective Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2016), pp. 159-212.

 Geoffrey White, “Cultures of Commemoration,” in *Memorializing Pearl Harbor: Unfinished Histories and the Work of Remembrance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 77-127.

 Alison Landsberg, “Introduction,” and “Prosthetic Memory,” from *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 1-48.

 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* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

 Draft of final paper due (hard copy and submitted through SafeAssign)

Coda: Death's remains

Week 15

W (12/7) - The dead, their remains, and the politics of their memory

-  Katherine Verdery, Chapter 2, "Dead Bodies Animate the Study of Politics," pp. 23-53 in *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
-  Thomas Laqueur, "Introduction: The Work of the Dead," pp. 1-27 in *The Work of the Dead* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
-  Sarah Wagner. 2015. "A Curious Trade: The Recovery and Repatriation of U. S. Missing In Action from the Vietnam War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57(1):161–190.
-  Francisco Ferrándiz. 2013. "Exhuming the Defeated: Civil War Mass Graves in 21st-century Spain," *American Ethnologist* 40(1): 38–54.
-  Natan Sznaider and Alejandro Baer, "Antigone in Leon: The Drama of Trauma Politics" in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (London: Routledge, 2016).

 Final ethnographic exercise due

Final papers are due on December 14, 2016. Please note that you are required to turn in both a hard copy and an electronic copy through Safe Assign on Blackboard.