History 9809B - Social Memory in Europe and North America

Prof. Jonathan F. Vance (jvance@uwo.ca)                                      Candlemas (or Hilary) Term
Lawson Hall 2247                    Monday 9:30 - 11:30
661-2111 ext. 84974                  Lawson Hall 2270C

This research course is an introduction to the phenomenon of social memory in various modern societies. It will address such matters as the commemoration of historical events and the meanings conferred on them, conflicts over different versions of history, the construction of collective identities around historical events, and the influence of historical events on modern nationalisms. In each case, there will be an attempt to understand the continuing impact of the past on the present. The seminar readings will be divided into themes, with each week’s readings examining a different case study of the theme.

**Texts:**
Students are not required to purchase texts for this course. All readings are available on the course website, in the periodicals section of the D.B.Weldon Library, or on two-hour reserve in the D.B.Weldon Library.

**Assignments:**
The Blue Plaque (due 3 February) 20%
Major research essay (due date TBA) 70%
Participation / Presentation 10%

**The Blue Plaque:** In the United Kingdom, the organization English Heritage uses the Blue Plaque to signify a place (usually a birthplace or long-term residence) that is connected to a person of historical significance. You should select any person, from any city in the world, and prepare a document (of no more than five pages) supporting the installation of a Blue Plaque at a specific site. It should outline the individual’s significance and the reasons why that particular site has been selected. In preparing your rationale for commemoration, you should try to anticipate objections that might be raised by community groups or individuals, on whatever grounds. In selecting your subject, you should avoid people who have already been so recognized and people who, for want of a better phrase, are famous simply for being famous.

**Major Research Essay:** Students will write a major research paper (based on significant work in primary materials) on a topic of their choice, to be arrived at in consultation with the instructor. In selecting an essay topic, you should be as imaginative and innovative as possible while bearing in mind the availability of relevant primary sources and the soundness of the topic in a theoretical sense. The final draft of the paper should be 20-25 pages in length and must be presented in proper scholarly format. The due date will be announced in January. As part of the assignment, a two-page outline must be submitted on 24 February.
**Participation / Presentation:** The success of the seminar depends on the willingness of students to keep up with the readings on a weekly basis and to take part fully in the discussion. Your participation will be assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the term. In addition, each student will make a short presentation on an aspect of the week’s reading (the precise topic will be given to you the week before your presentation). You should sign up on the sheet on my office door for the week of your choice.

**Seminar Schedule**

6 January - Introduction

13 January - How Societies Remember

**MEMORY AND THE MARKETPLACE**

20 January - The Titanic
Steven Biel, *Down With the Old Canoe: A Cultural History of the Titanic Disaster* (1996): part II

27 January - Memory and Public History
3 February - Touring the Third Reich **Blue Plaque due**
Rudy Kosher, Germany’s Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century (1998): ch. 6
Brian Ladd, The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape (1997): ch. 4
John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster (2000): ch. 3 & 4
Sharon Macdonald, Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond (2009): ch. 7

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY
10 February - Gunfighter Nation
Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory (2001): ch. 8 & 9

17 February - No class - Conference Week

24 February - Scottishness ** essay outline due **
Charles Withers, “The Historical Creation of the Scottish Highlands” in Ian Donnachie and Christopher Watley, eds., The Manufacture of Scottish History (1992): 143-56
3 March - Centennial and Bicentennial

WAR AND MEMORY
10 March - The War to End War
Alfred Herbert John Andrews diary, at
Teresa Iacobelli, “A Participants’ History?: The CBC and the Making of In Flanders’ Fields”

17 March - Enola Gay

24 March - Pearl Harbor and 9/11

31 March - Vietnam

7 April - Conclusion

Please note the University Senate’s statement on plagiarism: “Students must write their own essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever a student takes an idea or a passage of a text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see the Scholastic Academic Offence Policy in the University’s academic calendar). The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for this purpose.”