

The University of Western Ontario
HISTORY 9721A — History & Memory
(The Decolonial Nature of Memory)
Fall 2026 | Mondays, 12:30–3:30 pm | Lawson 2270C
Instructor: Professor Ruramisai Charumbira | rcharumb@uwo.ca

This is a draft for consultation. Final syllabus available via course webpage.

Invocation and Land Acknowledgement

To the Sun, in whose tight embrace we and other planets and moons travel the Cosmos free of charge, we are grateful. To the Earth, the ground of our being, we are grateful. To all fellow creatures on this planet—on land, in the air, and in the waters—we are grateful; we apologize that our human ways have ravaged your ways of life. To our personal and collective ancestors, we are grateful. We are grateful to, and acknowledge, the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton Nations, among others, whose traditional territories are where this course takes place. And so, it is.

Course Description

Is the study of history an exercise of memory, or is memory a historical exercise? This graduate seminar considers the nature of historical memory, with a focus on cultures of the Global South that have historically held nature as central to their lives, histories, and memories. Before reading the canon of memory studies, we build ground to stand on — African and Indigenous philosophy, and Augustine of Hippo as the African taproot of the Western discourse on memory — and then re-read the memory studies' classics, asking what memory studies has forgotten about itself. The seminar pairs rigorous call-and-response discussion with research and writing studios, and is designed for intellectual and spiritual growth, however each and both are defined by the individual student.

Learning Objectives & Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Think from African and Indigenous philosophical standpoints to analyze the colonial foundations of historical practice and memory studies.
2. Trace the African genealogy of the Western discourse on memory and diagnose what the field has forgotten about itself.
3. Historicize scholars and their scholarship (“know the scholar”), and read across text, image, and testimony.
4. Bridge theory and archive to develop an original, publishable graduate research project.
5. Practice collaborative academic leadership, including the critical, documented use of generative AI in research and writing.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

The evaluation for this seminar is intentionally simple: 50% individual work and 50% collaborative work. The aim is to honor both the solitary labor of graduate research and the collective intellectual practice at the heart of an African-informed seminar on history and memory using the both-and paradigm more than the either-or.

Individual Work — 50%:

- Individual Research Paper (20%)
- Proposal & Annotated Bibliography (10%)
- Attendance & Active Participation (20%).

Collaborative Work — 50%:

- Team Review Essays (20%)
- Team Presentation (10%)
- Team Essay (20%).

Full reading list, weekly schedule, and assignment due dates appear in the complete course syllabus, available on Brightspace and on the first day of class.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

Health/Wellness Services: Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/index.html>

Accessibility Options: Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating people with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodation to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Request for Accommodations/Medical Issues: Students are entitled to their privacy and consequently they do not need to disclose personal information to their course professors. If students feel the need to discuss personal information, they should see the graduate chair. Unlike undergraduate students, graduate students cannot be referred to Social Science Academic Counselling to have their medical or non-medical circumstances evaluated and to receive a recommendation for accommodation. Those facilities are for undergraduates only, and there is no process beyond the department to secure recommendations for accommodation. Our process is that faculty should deal with routine requests for extensions. However, a student's request for accommodation (on medical, non-medical, compassionate grounds) should go to the graduate chair, Prof. Cody Groat (cgroat@uwo.ca) who will consult and communicate with faculty. Additionally, faculty and students should communicate with the grad chair about any case in which work is not submitted before grades are due. If the graduate chair is also the course professor, then a request for accommodation can be taken to the department chair.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI): Generative AI tools may be used productively, ethically, and strategically in this course for brainstorming, outlining, critique, proofreading, and comparing analytical frameworks. AI must not be used to ghostwrite reflection essays or final research papers, or to automate peer feedback evaluations. If in doubt, students should discuss their approach with the instructor.

Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence: Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca

NOTE: See Policies and Statements on the Graduate Section of the History Department Website, <https://history.uwo.ca/graduate/program-information/graduate-policies-and-statements.html>. This includes additional information on academic support services for health and wellness and information on other academic policies, including copyright, plagiarism, and accessibility.

GRADING GUIDE

- B or B- indicates performance below the level required of a graduate student.
- B+ indicates competent MA-level work but below the standard expected for PhD-level work.
- A- indicates good MA-level work and acceptable PhD work.
- A indicates strong to excellent graduate work showing originality and strong writing.
- A+ indicates work that is publishable, with possible revisions, and equivalent to advanced PhD-level work.

