

History 4889F
Social Memory: How Societies Remember
Fall 2026

Instructor: Professor Jonathan F. Vance

Tuesdays 10:30AM to 12:30PM – location TBA

Office Hours: Mondays, 1 – 2PM, Wednesdays noon – 2PM

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This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

This research course is an introduction to the phenomenon of social memory in various modern societies. It will address such themes as the commemoration of historical events, competing versions of history, the construction of collective identities around historical events, and the commodification of the past. 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.

Prerequisite(s): none

Antirequisite(s): none

Methods of Evaluation

Short essay	20% (week of 20 October)
Assignment proposal	20% (week of 3 November)
Major assignment	40% (week of 8 December)
Participation & presentation	20%

Short Essay:

You should select a national holiday that has been observed for at least a century in one city, then choose any three years during that period, trying to cover as broad a time span as possible. Using newspapers from that city, describe how the observance has changed over time, what has caused those changes, and their impact. The essay should be a maximum of eight pages in length, including bibliography.

For the major assignment, students have two choices:

Heritage Minute: Students may write a short research paper (6-8 pages) and accompany it with the story board, script, and camera directions for a Heritage Minute on the same subject. It should follow the general form and standards of the Heritage Minutes – historically sound and informative, but also visual, entertaining, and even amusing. The assignment will be graded on content, creativity, and overall impact. With the permission of the instructor, this assignment may be done in pairs or small groups.

Major Research Essay: Students may 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 roughly twenty pages in length and must be presented in proper scholarly format.

For either major assignment, a proposal, consisting of a number of tentative research questions, a discussion of the main primary sources to be used, and a short list of representative secondary sources, must be submitted. The proposal should be a maximum of two pages in length.

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 evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the term, as will your performance in a number of simulation exercises and the concluding Social Memory Olympics. In addition, each student will make a short presentation on an aspect of the week's reading (of no more than 10 minutes – time limits will be enforced). The precise topic will be given to you the week before your presentation. You should sign up on the course website for the week of your choice.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Course Materials

Students are not required to purchase texts for this course. All readings are available on the course website.

Seminar Schedule

15 September – Introduction

22 September – How Societies Remember

Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, eds., *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (1989): 1-32

Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, eds., *The Myths We Live By* (1990): 1-22

MEMORY AND THE MARKETPLACE

29 September – The *Titanic*

Jason Grek-Martin, 'Conjuring the "Ship of Dreams": Spatial narratives and Making the Absent Present around and within Titanic Belfast,' *Memory Studies* 18/1 (2025): 92-108

James Guimond, 'The *Titanic* and the Commodification of Catastrophe' in Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver, eds., *The Memory of Catastrophe* (2004): 79-90

Pete Hodson, 'Titanic Struggle: Memory, Heritage and Shipyard Deindustrialization in Belfast,' *History Workshop Journal* 87 (2019): 224-49

Andrew Wells, 'Sinking Feelings: Representing and Resisting the *Titanic* Disaster in Britain, 1914-ca 1960,' *Journal of British Studies* 52 (2013)

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6 October - Heritage Tourism

Irene Furlong, 'Excavating the Emerald Isle: The Use of the Past in Irish Tourism' in Terence Dooley, ed., *Ireland's Polemical Past* (2010): 160-75

Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (1997): ch. 2 & 9

Laura Hodsdon, "'I expected ... something': Imagination, Legend, and History in TripAdvisor Reviews of Tintagel Castle,' *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 15/4 (2020): 410-23

****simulation exercise****

13 October – Reading Week – no seminar meeting

20 October – Dark Tourism of Nazi Germany

Rudy Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century* (1998): ch. 6

John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster* (2000): ch. 3 & 4

Colin Philpott, 'Relics of the Reich: Dark Tourism and Nazi Sites in Germany,' *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* 9/2 (2017): 132-45

**** short paper due****

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY

27 October – Gunfighter Nation

Dydia deLyster, "'Thus I salute the Kentucky Daisey's claim": Gender, Social Memory and the Mythic West at a Proposed Oklahoma Monument,' *Cultural Geographies* 15 (2008): 63-94

Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (1985): ch. 1 & 2

Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (1992): ch.2

****simulation exercise****

3 November – Scottishness

Andrew Blaikie, 'Imagining the Face of a Nation: Scotland, Modernity, and the Places of Memory,' *Memory Studies* 4 (2011): 416-31

David McCrone, Angela Morris, and Richard Kiely, *Scotland – The Brand: The Making of Scottish Heritage* (1995): 73-109

Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland' in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (1983): 15-41

****major paper outline due****

10 November – Postage Stamps

Ivan Greenberg, 'Postage and Power: U.S. Nationalism and the 1970s "Bicentennial" and "Americana" Stamp Series,' *Journal of Social History* 49/1 (2015): 53-76

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- Henio Hoyo, 'Fresh Views on the Old Past: The Postage Stamps of the Mexican Bicentennial,' *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 12/1 (2012): 19-44
- Uri Rosenheck, 'Philatelic Remembrances: Stamps, National Identity, and Shifting Memories of WWII in Brazil,' *Latin Americanist* 60/1 (2016): 115-37

WAR AND MEMORY

17 November – The World Wars

- Rafiq Ahmad and Anne Hertzog, 'Itineraries of the Great War and the Rise of the Local on the Western Front: Memory, Commemoration and the Shifting Regimes of Remembrance Tourism,' *Memory Studies* 13/6 (2020): 1168-82
- Keith Robbins, 'Commemorating the Second World War in Britain: Problems of Definition,' *History Teacher* 29/2 (1996): 155-62
- Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (1997): 202-25
- **simulation exercise****

24 November – Pearl Harbor and 9/11

- Ross Poole, 'Performing Trauma: Commemorating 9/11 in Downtown Manhattan,' *Memory Studies* 13/4 (2020): 452-69
- Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (2003): pt II
- Geoffrey M. White, 'National Subjects: September 11 and Pearl Harbor,' *American Ethnologist* 31/3 (2004): 293-310

1 December – Bad War / Good Warrior?

- Gary Baines, "'South Africa's Vietnam'?: Literary History and Cultural Memory of the Border War,' *South African Historical Journal* 49 (2003): 172-192
- Gary Baines and Gemma Barkhuizen, 'South African Defence Force Veterans' Modes of Remembering and the Ethics of Post-Apartheid Nostalgia,' *Memory Studies* 13/4 (2020): 662-76
- Ako Inuzuka and Thomas Fuchs, 'Memories of Japanese Militarism: The Yasukuni Shrine as a Commemorative Site,' *Journal of International Communication* 20 (2014): 21-41

8 December – Conclusion: The Social Memory Olympics

****major paper due****

Additional Statements

Students **MUST** obtain permission before using generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, for any assignment in this course. Such tools must be plainly acknowledged in your paper. Using these tools without prior permission and/or without acknowledgement may be considered as a case of academic dishonesty.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.

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