

ISS 335 H: National Diversity and Change
Memory and American History
Mondays/Wednesdays, 12:40-2:30pm
115 Berkey Hall
Fall 2015

Dr. Emily Conroy-Krutz

Email: conroyk5@msu.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:30-12, 306A Old Horticulture or by appointment

Course Summary:

According to the Integrative Studies in Social Science program, ISS courses are designed to:

- Assist students in distinguishing their personal assumptions and beliefs from conclusions based upon critical thought and the analytical exploration of human behavioral patterns and trends.
- Expand students' awareness of the ways that enduring and universal social issues and resolutions can be distinguished from those that are the consequence of specific or transient contemporary conditions.
- Provide multicultural, international and national perspectives on human behavior that address the particular challenges and opportunities for a multi-racial and multi-ethnic American society.

This section of ISS 335 will do so by focusing on the connections between history and memory in the United States, with a particular interest in the ways that academics contribute to, challenge, and attempt to shape public understandings of the past and its relationship to the present. History, though often thought of as an objective collection of facts and dates, is in fact shaped by multiple points of subjectivity. Memory is one of these, and a fascinating one for us to think about. This semester, we will think about the connections between history and memory, and the ways that memory shapes public understandings of the past as well as individuals' understandings of the past. We will think about the engagement of academic historians with questions of commemoration and memorialization, and about the role of the study of history in contemporary life. Diversity and change are at the heart of many of these questions, as we will discuss the ways that our traditional narratives of the past do and do not reflect the true diversity of the American story and the challenges of creating national (or even local) histories that value and incorporate the lives of all Americans.

The topics we will discuss include current events about which people may disagree. Accordingly, all students are expected to remember that the classroom is a safe space for discussion; all participants in the course are to be treated with respect. All students are expected to come to class having completed the readings and ready to discuss the topics for the seminar sessions prepared. As one of the goals of ISS is to help you to develop social scientific thinking, you will remember that one of the goals of academic reading, writing, and discussion is to be guided by facts and data towards informed opinions. This course will help you develop and practice your critical thinking skills.

Assignments and Grading:

This class involves active seminar discussions of readings and films; it will only be successful if you come to class ready to take part in these conversations. You are expected to come to class having completed the assigned reading for the week, to participate in class discussions, and to actively listen to lecture, in-class films, and your classmates. Your participation in discussion as well as your engagement in class throughout the semester will figure into your “participation” grade. You will be granted three “free” absences for illness, family emergency, etc. before your absences will begin counting against your grade. I keep a daily record of participation on a check/plus/minus scale. Active participation will earn you full points for that day’s class; a lack of engagement will earn you a check-minus (half-points for the day). By “active participation,” I expect that you will be clearly listening to lecture or discussion and contributing to the discussion. If you want to know how you are doing or how you might improve this part of your grade, feel free to come and discuss it with me in office hours. Altogether, your participation counts for 20% of your final grade.

You will be expected to post responses to the readings on D2L seven times over the course of the term. These must be up by 11:59pm on the night preceding the seminar session (listed on the syllabus). Your responses should be short (about a paragraph in length) and should demonstrate that you have done the readings and thought carefully about them. You may use the week’s thematic question(s) as a jumping off point, or can focus on something else that struck you. If you were confused about something in the reading, feel free to note it here and I will be sure to go over it in class. Altogether, these responses make up 35% of your grade—each of the seven is worth 5%. Please use your “off” weeks responsibly—I will be keeping track of how many posts you have made, but it is your responsibility to be sure that you have completed the assigned number. If you are not sure where you stand, please check in with me.

There will be three additional assignments in this class. The first is an oral history that you will conduct and present to your classmates, the second is an in-class debate about Thomas Nast. Each project is worth 12.5% of your final grade. You will also write a brief response to our class field trip to the Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame, worth 5% of your total grade. Further details of all assignments follow on the syllabus and are posted to the course website on D2L.

For your final paper, you will select one book to read from the Charleston Syllabus and write an essay explaining how that book contributes to your understanding of current events and reflecting on the role of history and historians in contemporary life, drawing upon what you have learned in this class over the course of the semester. Further details of this assignment follows on the syllabus and are posted to the course website on D2L. This is worth 15% of your grade.

Grade breakdown:

In-class participation: 20%	Hall of Fame: 5%	Reading responses: 35%
Oral History: 12.5%	Nast Debate: 12.5%	Final Paper: 15%

4-Point Scale:

4.0	92-100%	2.5	75-79%	1.0	60-64%
3.5	86-91%	2.0	70-74%	0	0-59%
3.0	80-85%	1.5	65-69%		

Class Schedule:

Week 1: What is Memory? What is History?

Sept. 2 Course Introduction

Week 2: Public Memory vs. Private Memory

Sept. 9 Seminar Session: Defining Terms and Thinking about Memory

Reading:

- Michael Kammen, "Public History and National Identity in the United States," *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (1999): 459-475
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41157968>
- Margot Minardi, *Making Slavery History: Abolitionism and the Politics of Memory in Massachusetts* (2010), ch. 1

Thematic Questions

This week's readings include both an overview of the work of public history in the last quarter of the 20th century and an example of the scholarship of memory and American history. What is public history? How does it relate to memory? How is Minardi using the idea of memory in her discussion of antislavery in Massachusetts? What does that suggest to you about the ways that history and memory can work together—at the point of identifying "facts" about the past, at the point of writing narratives, at the point of becoming collective memories about what a community was/is like?

Week 3: Monuments and Public History

Sept. 14: Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Remembering the Civil War North and South

Sept. 16: Seminar Session: Monuments and Public Memory

Readings

- Paul Shackel, "Public Memory and the Search for Power in American Historical Archeology," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Sept. 2001): 655-670
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/683605>
- Jennifer M. Lloyd, "Collective Memory, Commemoration, Memory, and History: Or William O'Bryan, the Bible Christians, and Me," *Biography* Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 2002): 46-57 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23540709>
- Ethan J. Kytte and Blain Roberts, "Take Down the Confederate Flags, but Not the Monuments," *The Atlantic* (June 25, 2015)
<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/-confederate-monuments-flags-south-carolina/396836/>
- Tony Horwitz, "How the South Lost the War but Won the Narrative," *Talking Points Memo*, <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/cafe/how-south-lost-the-civil-war-won-narrative-confederate-flag>

Thematic Questions

The question of how to commemorate (or not) the Civil War has become incredibly important recently, but it has always been a major question that said as much about the time and place that was doing the commemorating as it said about the Civil War. Shackel and Lloyd's pieces speak to issues of commemorations, power, and particular places of historical

and personal memory. What do these pieces tell us about the importance of monuments, large and small, and the ways that they shape our experience of spaces? Kytte and Roberts directly take on the question of Confederate monuments and flags from their perspective as historians of memory in this opinion piece from *The Atlantic*. What do they have to say about the way that memory works? Do you agree with them or not? Why? What does historian Tony Horwitz's argument add to this discussion?

Week 4: Oral History: Methods and Purpose

Sept. 21 In-class film: "The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter"

Sept. 23 Seminar Session: Theory of Oral History

Reading:

- Alessandro Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History," *History Workshop*, No. 12 (Autumn, 1981), 96-107 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288379>
- Choose one of the interview transcripts to read from Berkeley's "Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Project" <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/projects/rosie/>

Thematic Questions:

What is the method of oral history, and what are some of its "peculiarities"? Do you see any of these in the interview you chose to read from the Rosie the Riveter WWII American Homefront Project? In the film, "The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter," what is the difference between the story of women in munitions factories as told by the women themselves and as told by the newsreel clips? How do these narratives compare to the public memory of women's experiences during World War II? Does hearing the women's own words change your understanding of this period?

Week 5: Public Memory and Women's History

Sept. 28 Women's History and American History in Museums and Textbooks

Sept. 30 Seminar Session: Currency and Memory

Readings:

- Women on the 20s Campaign: <http://www.womenon20s.org>
- Conor Friedersdorf, "Ditch 'Old Hickory' and Put Martin Luther King on the \$20 Bill," *The Atlantic* (June 12, 2014) <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/06/put-martin-luther-king-on-the-20-bill/372623/>
- Russell Berman, "Saving Hamilton," *The Atlantic* (June 24, 2015) http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/save-hamilton-the-backlash-to-a-historic-currency-announcement/396614/?utm_content=bufferf0f60&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer
- Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, "Let's Boot Andrew Jackson Too!," *Salon* (June 20, 2015) http://www.salon.com/2015/06/20/lets_boot_andrew_jackson_too_we_could_have_rosa_parks_and_eleanor_roosevelt_on_our_currency/
- Allison K. Lange, "'Curious Monsters' on American Currency," *The Atlantic* (July 8, 2015) <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/thenew10-and-the-new-woman/397943/>

Thematic Questions:

In the readings, we see several discussions of this summer's announcement by the Treasury Department that by 2020, the US \$10 bill will feature the face of an American woman, including the online campaign (originally intended to replace Jackson on the \$20) that sparked the move. What was the impetus behind this push? What are some of the controversies related to this decision? How are historians responding to the question? What would it mean to have a woman's face on American currency?

Week 6: Oral History vs. Textual History: Sources on Slavery

Oct. 5 In-class film: "Unchained Memories"

Oct. 7 Seminar Session: Interviews and Narratives as Sources for the History of Slavery

Readings

- Edward Baptist, "Stol' An' Fetched Here': Enslaved Migration, Ex-Slave Narratives, and Vernacular History," in *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, ed. Edward Baptist and Stephanie Camp (2006)
- Sharon Ann Musher, "Contesting 'The Way the Almighty Wants It': Crafting Memories of Ex-Slaves in the Slave Narrative Collection," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (March 2001): 1-31 <http://jstor.org/stable/30041871>
- Explore the "Born in Slavery" Database: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/>

Thematic Questions:

To tell the history of American slavery from the perspectives of the enslaved, historians generally have two bodies of sources: the narratives of former slaves written in the 19th century, often for an abolitionist audience and with abolitionist editors, and the interviews of former slaves by WPA writers in the 1930s. This week, we have seen depictions of these interviews in the documentary "Unchained Memories" and explored the uses and limitations of these sources in the readings. From your reading, what are the uses of these types of documents? What are their limitations? How should we read them? What does this suggest to you about the uses of oral history in general?

Week 7: Oral History Project

Oct. 12 Individual Work, no class meeting

Oct. 14 Presentations

Assignment:

We have spent the past several weeks looking at oral histories in different contexts. This week, it is your turn to be the historian. You will conduct an oral history with someone you know about one of the following historical events/eras: the 1960s, or September 11, 2001. You will submit a transcript and a 3-page narrative summarizing the person's experiences. In class, you will present these narratives in groups according to topic, after which we will as a class discuss the themes of similarity and difference across the different accounts and reflect on what this tells us about how historians use oral history and how personal memories can and should shape historical narratives.

Week 8: The Politics of Memory, II: Thomas Jefferson

Oct. 19 Jefferson and Character

Oct. 21 Seminar Session: Monticello's Approach to Telling the Hard Stories

Reading

- "Report of the Research Committee on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings," <https://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/report-research-committee-thomas-jefferson-and-sally-hemings>
- Explore the Monticello companion website "Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello" <http://www.monticello.org/slavery-at-monticello>
- Margaret Biser, "I Used to Lead Tours on a Plantation. You Won't Believe the Questions I Got about Slavery," Vox <http://www.vox.com/2015/6/29/8847385/what-i-learned-from-leading-tours-about-slavery-at-a-plantation>

Thematic Questions

Today's readings focus on the ways that historic plantations have sought to incorporate the history of slavery into their general museum presentations. From Monticello, we can see first the 2000 report that looked at research on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings and thought about what to do with new information about the man at the center of the museum. The current website shows what is being done 15 years later. Biser's article gives another perspective, from the point of view of a tour guide discussing visitor's responses to African American history and the history of slavery. How do you think these sorts of museums ought to tell the history of slavery? Is Monticello doing a good job? What could be different?

Week 9: The Politics of Memory, II: Nat Turner

Oct. 26 In-class film: "Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property"

Oct. 28 Seminar Session: Fiction, History, and Memory

Reading:

- Neil L. York, "Son of Liberty: Johnny Tremain and the Art of Making American Patriots," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 6, No. (2008), 422-447 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/eam/summary/v006/6.2.york.html>
- Michael Vorenberg, "Spielberg's Lincoln: The Great Emancipator Returns," *Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Dec. 2013): 549-572 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cwe/summary/v003/3.4.vorenberg.html>
- Craig A. Warren, "Lincoln's Body: The President in Popular Films of the Sesquicentennial," *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 2014): 146-154 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cwe/summary/v004/4.1.warren.html>

Thematic Question:

This set of readings takes on one of the major issues raised in the documentary about Nat Turner, namely what happens when historical figures and events are fictionalized for new audiences in the future. What is at stake in the historical fiction depictions of real people and events? How do these authors suggest the new interpretations speak to new generations? Do you think this is a problem? In the case of the York essay in particular, how do fictional stories about historical events serve to shape people's understanding of their own time and place?

Week 10: **The Hall of Fame and Memory**

Nov. 2 Seminar Session: The Meaning of a Hall of Fame

Reading:

- Esther Katz, "The Editor as Public Authority: Interpreting Margaret Sanger," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Winter, 1995), 41-50
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3378350>
- National Women's Hall of Fame website: <https://www.womenofthehall.org>
- George Gmelch, "Susan MacKay, Registrar, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum," *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*, Vol. 18, NO. 2 (Spring 2010): 203-208 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nin/summary/v018/18.2.gmelch.html>

Thematic Questions:

This week we will be talking about Halls of Fame as sites of spreading historical information to the public. Esther Katz's piece discusses her role in the discussion of Margaret Sanger's induction into the Arizona Hall of Fame. From a different type of Hall of Fame, we have the profile of Susan MacKay of the National Baseball Hall of Fame. In preparation for Wednesday's visit to the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame, we also have the website for the National Women's Hall of Fame. What brings these different types of institutions together? What is their purpose? How do they tell stories about history and memory?

Nov. 4 CLASS VISIT to Michigan Women's Hall of Fame

Tour will begin at 1pm; be there by 12:50

Meet at The Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame
213 West Malcolm X Street, Lansing, MI

Week 11: The Politics of Memory, II: Thomas Nast

Nov. 9 Group Work, no class meeting

Nov. 11 In-class activity, debate

Assignment:

In 2011, Thomas Nast was nominated for the fourth time to take a place in the New Jersey Hall of Fame. Each time, his nomination was rejected due to considerable controversy about how he ought to be remembered. Nast was an important political cartoonist of the nineteenth century, when he created the illustration of the Republican elephant and Democratic donkey and many cartoons about Reconstruction politics. His work was also marked by a deep anti-Catholicism. How ought the legacy of this artist, and other people of the past like him, be remembered by people today? For this assignment, you will be divided into two groups and have an in-class debate on Wednesday considering the question of whether Nast deserves to take a place in the Hall of Fame for his contributions as an artist. Full details are posted on class website.

Week 12: Historical Archeology

Nov. 16 In-class film: “Jane: Starvation, Cannibalism, and Endurance at Jamestown”

Nov. 18 Seminar Session: Archeology, Power, and Imagining the Past

Reading:

- James A. Delle and Jason Shellenhamer, “Archaeology at the Parvin Homestead: Searching for the Material Legacy of the Underground Railroad,” *Historical Archeology*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2008), 38-62 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25617495>
- Cheryl J. La Roche and Michael L. Blakey, “Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground,” *Historical Archeology*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (1997), 84-106 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616551>

Thematic Question:

This week’s documentary and readings introduce us to the field of historical archeology. How does archeological evidence alter our understanding of the past? What is the role of this kind of study in contemporary discussions? What does the story of “Jane” tell us about early America that we didn’t know before? Why does it matter? What do the readings suggest about the ways that contemporary power dynamics shape these projects?

Week 13: History, Experts, and Facts

Nov. 23 Seminar Session: “History on Trial”

Nov. 25 NO CLASS, Happy Thanksgiving!

Reading:

- Alice Kessler-Harris, “Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Sears, Roebuck and Company: A Personal Account,” *Feminist Review*, No. 25 (Spring, 1987,) 46-69 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1395035>
- Brief of *Amici Curiae* Historians in *Obergefell v. Hodges* http://www.oah.org/site/assets/files/5849/obergefell--_oah_amicus.pdf
- Skim the decision of *Obergefell v. Hodges* http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf

Thematic Questions:

The readings today all focus on the work of historians as experts in major court cases, though from a range of perspectives. Kessler-Harris’s piece is a personal account of her experience serving as an expert, including her reflections on how her testimony differs from her scholarship. In the *Obergefell* brief, we see the ways that a group of historians have used their scholarship to try and contribute to the thinking of the justices; in the decision, we see the ways that Justice Kennedy actually used this information. Based on these different perspectives, what is the use of history to current affairs and policy? How should historians act to serve the public, and how much should history bear on today?

Week 14: #CharlestonSyllabus and the Public Role of Historians

Nov. 30 Culture Wars and Historical Revisionism

Dec. 2 Seminar Session: The Public Role of Historians

Reading:

- Keisha N. Blaine, “#CharlestonSyllabus and the Work of African American History,” African American Intellectual History Society, <http://aaihs.org/charlestonsyllabus-and-the-work-of-african-american-history/>
- Benjamin Park, “Charleston and the Potent Symbol of the Black Church in America,” The Junto <http://earlyamericanists.com/2015/06/18/the-charleston-shooting-and-the-potent-symbol-of-the-black-church-in-america/>
- Emily Suzanne Clark and Matthew Cressler, “Writing about Charleston,” Religion in American History <http://usreligion.blogspot.com/2015/06/writing-about-charleston.html>
- Douglas Egerton, “Before Charleston’s Shooting, a Long History of Attacks,” The New York Times http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/magazine/before-charlestons-church-shooting-a-long-history-of-attacks.html?_r=0

Thematic Questions:

As we spend the end of the term thinking about the question of what gets included and excluded from syllabi, it is appropriate to think a bit about the ways that education can respond to current events. This summer, historians responded to the tragedy in Charleston, SC by creating the “Charleston Syllabus.” (There is also a #FergusonSyllabus and a #blkwomensyllabus for more excellent book recommendations.) What is the purpose of such lists? In addition, you are reading several early responses of historians to the event. What does their perspective add to the public discussion of current events? What is the role of historians in the wake of public tragedies such as this?

Week 15: Debating the Curriculum

Dec. 7 Seminar Session: Responding to the Core Curriculum and AP Standards

Readings:

No readings for homework; I will bring texts to class for us to discuss. Work on the reading for your final paper.

Thematic Questions:

Are the culture wars behind us? As the debates around the AP standards and Core Curriculum suggest, there are still differing opinions in this country about the role of history in education and public life. What is the role of history in education?

Dec. 9 Presentations

Extra Credit Opportunity:

For extra credit, you may sign up to present the material from your final paper to the class. This will require your having read significant portions of the book and coming to class prepared to talk your fellow students through what the book discusses, what you learned, and how it helps you to understand current events.

FINAL PAPER: Due Thursday, Dec. 17 12:45pm

For your final paper, you will visit the online Charleston Syllabus (<http://aaihs.org/resources/charlestonsyllabus/>) and select one of the listed books to read independently. You will then write a paper explaining how this work helps you to understand the current state of race relations in this country in general or the specific events of the Charleston shooting of June 17, 2015 in particular. In the paper, you will answer the following questions:

- What is the difference between history and public memory?
- What is the role of history for helping us to understand the world in which we live today?
- What is the value of projects such as the Charleston Syllabus and other public history projects that you have encountered this semester?