

HI 315 CULTURAL MEMORY AND HISTORICAL POLITICS IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

Seminar Leader: Ostap Sereda

Email: o.sereda@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday (17.30-19.00) and Thursday (17.30-19.00) or by appointment

Course Description

The course will start by exploring the main conceptual frameworks in the field of memory studies and then re-examine them by discussing selected cases of cultural memory, the politics of history, and commemorative practices in the region of East Central Europe (broadly defined) after WWII, with a focus on the period after 1989/91. We will study the role of the state, academia, public intellectuals, and new mnemonic actors in the reshaping of collective memory through commemorative practices, school education, museums and monument culture, the tourism industry, the symbolic markers of urban landscapes, and the

media. We will also analyze the various political and legislative actions of historical politics in the region and the historiographic and public discussions relevant to these measures.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, accommodations@berlin.bard.edu to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed

more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

Every student is expected:

- to read texts listed as the main readings and take active part in the discussions in classroom;
- to write a mid-semester response paper to a text selected from the list of readings (1000 words long);
- to make a presentation during one of sessions, or, alternatively, at the end of semester research seminar (group presentations are allowed);
- to write an end of semester essay (4000 words long).

Assignments

The mid-term written assignment is a response paper to a text selected from the list of further readings (1000 words long).

At the end of the course students are expected to write an essay (4000 words long). The final essay can be based on a small research project undertaken and presented during the semester. Students should choose the topic of their final paper and discuss it with the instructor.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours. Students will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

The final grade will be based on the assessment of classroom participation – 30 % of final grade; seminar presentation – 20 % of final grade; response paper – 20 % of final grade; end of semester essay - 30% of final grade.

Schedule

27 and 29 January

Sessions 1-2. Introduction to memory studies

Jeffrey K. Olick, "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products," in A.Erl, A.Nünning (eds), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin 2008), 151-162.

3 and 5 February

Sessions 3-4. Cultural and communicative memory, invented traditions, sites of memory and forgetting

Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, 109-118;

Paul Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting," *Memory Studies* 1(1) (2008): 59-71;

Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in E.Hobsbawm, T.Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983), 1-14;

Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24.

Further Reading:

Maciej Górnny and Kornelia Kończal, "The (non-)Travelling Concept of Les Lieux de Mémoire. Central and Eastern European Perspectives," in M.Pakier and J.Wawrzyniak (eds), *Memory and Change in Europe Eastern Perspectives* (New York 2015), 59-76.

10 and 12 February

Sessions 5-6. Politics of memory, memory regimes, and mnemonic actors

Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik, "A Theory of the Politics of Memory," in *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration* (Oxford University Press 2014), 7-34.

Benjamin Forest and Juliet Ellen Johnson, "Monumental Politics: Regime Type and Public Memory in Post-Communist States," 27(3) *Post-Soviet Affairs* (2013): 269-288.

17 and 19 February

Sessions 7-8. Politics of memory in USSR and socialist Eastern Europe

Jose M. Faraldo, "Teutonic Knights and Polish Identity: National Narratives, National Self-Image and Socialist Public Sphere," in G.T.Rittersporn, M.Rolf, J.Behrends (eds), *Public Spheres in Soviet-Type Societies. Between the Great Show of the Party-State and Religious Counter-Cultures* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 279-306;

Iryna Sklokina, "The Politics of Remembering the Nazi Occupation in Soviet Museums. The Case of the Kharkiv Historical Museum (1943-1985)," in E.Makhotina, E.Keding, W.Borodziej, E.François, M.Schulze Wessel (Hg.) *Krieg im*

Museum. Präsentationen des Zweiten Weltkriegs in Museen und Gedenkstätten des östlichen Europa. (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 131-155.

24 and 26 February

Sessions 9-10. Transformation of memory regimes after 1989/91: general overview

Georgiy Kasianov, *Memory Crash: The Politics of History in and around Ukraine, 1980s-2010s* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2022), 68-83;

Maria Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics of Becoming European: The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe," *European Journal of International Relations*, 15(4) (2009): 653-680;

Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak, "Memory and Change in Eastern Europe. How Special?" in *Memory and Change in Europe Eastern Perspectives* (New York 2015), 1-20;

George Soroka and Felix Krawatzek, "Nationalism, Democracy and Memory Laws," *Journal of Democracy* 30(2) (2019): 157-171;

Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "The Geopolitics of Memory," *Eurozine* 10 (2007): 1-11.

Further Reading:

James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (Yale, 2010), selected chapters;

3 and 5 March

Sessions 11-12. Decommunization and decolonization? Dealing with the Soviet legacy in the Baltic states, Poland, Russia and Ukraine around the turn of the 21st century

Jacek Chrobaczyński and Piotr Trojański, "Auschwitz and Katyn in Political Bondage. The Process of Shaping Memory in Communist Poland," in M.Pakier and J.Wawrzyniak (eds), *Memory and Change in Europe. Eastern Perspectives* (New York 2015), 246-263; Jade McGlynn, *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia* (London 2023), selected chapters;

Eva-Clarita Pettai, "Debating Baltic Memory Regimes: A Discussion of Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik: Twenty Years after Communism. The Politics of Memory and Commemoration," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 47 (2) (2016): 165-178; Oxana Shevel, "No Way Out? Post-Soviet Ukraine's Memory Wars in Comparative Perspective," in H.Halle and R.Orttung (eds.), *Beyond the Euromaidan: Comparative Perspectives on Advancing Reform in Ukraine* (Stanford 2016), 21-40.

Further Reading:

Ammon Cheskin, "History, Conflicting Collective Memories, and National Identities: How Latvia's Russian-Speakers Are Learning to Remember," *Nationalities Papers* 40(4) (2012): 561-584; Georgiy Kasianov, *Memory Crash: The Politics of History in and around Ukraine, 1980s-2010s*, 193-247;

Andriy Portnov, "The Soviet Past in Ukrainian Politics of Memory (1991-2017)," in *Revolution and War. Ukraine and the Great Transformation of Modern Europe*, 130-164.

10 and 12 March

Sessions 13-14. Confronting the 'difficult past.' Holocaust memory and memory wars in East Central Europe

Mila Dragojević, "Re-Remembering the Holocaust in Eastern Europe," *Nationalities Papers* 52/1 (2024): 222-224;

John-Paul Himka, "Obstacles to the Integration of the Holocaust into Post-Communist East European Historical Narratives," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 50 (3/4) (2008): 359-372;

Maciej Janowski, "Jedwabne, July 10, 1941: Debating the History of a Single Day," in *The Convolutions of Historical Politics* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2012), 59-89;

Hana Kubatova and Jan Lanicek, "Memory Wars and Emotional Politics: 'Feel Good' Holocaust Appropriation in Central Europe," *Nationalities Papers* 53/2 (2025): 335-353.

Further Reading:

Joanna Michlic, "The Jedwabne Debate: Reshaping Polish National Mythology," in *Holocaust Denial* (Berlin 2012), 67-84;

Yuliya Yurchuk, "Reclaiming the Past, Confronting the Past: OUN-UPA Memory Politics and Nation-Building in Ukraine (1991-2016)," in J.Fedor et al (eds.), *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cham 2017), 107-137.

17 and 19 March

Sessions 15-16. Displaced memories in East Central Europe

Barbara Törnquist Plewa (ed), *Whose Memory? Which Future? Remembering Ethnic Cleansing and Lost Cultural Diversity in Eastern, Central, and Southeastern Europe* (2016), selected chapters;

Anna Wylegała, "Forced Migration and Identity in the Memories of Post-War Expellees from Poland and Ukraine," in T. Sindbæk Andersen and B. Törnquist Plewa (eds), *Disputed Memory Emotions and Memory Politics in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe* (De Gruyter, 2016), 177-201;

Emine Ziyatdinova, "Reclaiming the History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatars through One Family Story," in V. Sereda (ed.), *War, Migration, Memory. Perspective on Russia's War against Ukraine* (Bielefeld 2025), 367-380.

24 and 26 March

Sessions 17-18. Memory conflicts in the old and new media

Volodymyr Kulyk, "Negotiating Memory in Online Social Networks : Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Russian Discussions of Soviet Rule and anti-Soviet Resistance," in T. Sindbæk Andersen and B. Törnquist Plewa (ed), *Disputed Memory Emotions and Memory Politics in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe* (2016);

Mykola Makhortykh, "Remediating the past: YouTube and Second World War Memory in Ukraine and Russia," *Memory Studies* (2017);

Oleksandr Zabirko, "The Magic Spell of Revanchism: Geopolitical Visions in Postsoviet Speculative Fiction (*Fantastika*)," *Ideology and Politics* 1(9) (2018): 66-134.

7 and 9 April

Sessions 19-20. History Textbooks and School Curricula

Gross, M. "Rewriting the Nation: World War II Narratives in Polish History Textbooks," *Post-socialism is Not Dead:(Re) reading the Global in Comparative Education; International Perspectives on Education and Society*, 14, (2010): 213-245;

Korine Amacher, "History Textbooks in Russia (1992-2019): Between Multissided and Imperial Perspectives," in K. Amacher, A. Portnov, V. Serhiienko (eds), *Official History in Eastern Europe* (Osnabrueck 2020), 105-133;

G. Pirický, "The Ottoman Age in Southern Central Europe as Represented in Secondary School History Textbooks in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society*, 5(1) (2013): 108-129.

14 and 16 April

Sessions 21-22. Urban Spaces, Memorials, and 'Decommemoration'

Stuart Burch and David J. Smith, "Empty Spaces and the Value of Symbols: Estonia's 'War of Monuments' from Another Angle," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59/6 (2007): 913–936; Sarah Gensburger and Jenny Wüstenberg (eds), *De-Commemoration: Removing Statues and Renaming Places* (Berghahn Books, 2024), selected chapters; Serhii Plokhiy, "Goodbye Lenin: A Memory Shift in Revolutionary Ukraine" (<https://gis.huri.harvard.edu/leninfall>)

Further Reading:

Martin Ehala, "The Bronze Soldier: Identity Threat and Maintenance in Estonia," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 40/1 (2009): 139-158; Oleksandra Gaidai, "Leninfall in Ukraine: How Did the Lenin Statues Disappear?" *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 38, no. 1/2 (2021): 45–70; Siobhan Kattago, "War Memorials and the Politics of Memory: the Soviet War Memorial in Tallinn," *Constellations* 16/1 (2009):150-166; Zivile Makailiene, "Memory Culture and Memory Politics in Lithuania (1990-2018): The Case of Lukiskes Square in Vilnius" in *Official History in Eastern Europe*, 237-266.

21 and 23 April

Sessions 23. Memory on Display. Museums as the Site of Memory Politics

Sara Jones, "Staging battlefields: Media, authenticity and politics in the Museum of Communism (Prague), The House of Terror (Budapest) and Gedenkstätte

Hohenschönhausen (Berlin)," *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 4/1 (2011): 97-

111;

Daria Mattingly, "Enforcing National Memory, Remembering Famine's Victims.

The National Museum "Holodomor Victims Memorial", in S.M.Norris (ed),

Museums of Communism. New Memory Sites in Central and Eastern Europe

(Indiana University Press 2020), 189-213.

Session 24. A study tour to the Pilecki Institute

28 and 30 April

Sessions 25-26. War and the Culture and Politics of Commemoration

Misha Gabowitsch, Mykola Homanyuk, *Monuments and Territory: War Memorials in Russian-Occupied Ukraine* (2025), selected chapters;

M. Mälksoo, "'Memory Must Be Defended': Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security," *Security Dialogue* 46(3) (2015): 221-237;

Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "The Monumental Commemoration of St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir in Ukraine, Russia and Beyond: The Nationalization of the Past, the Orthodox Church and 'Monumental Propaganda' before and after the Annexation of Crimea," in *Official History in Eastern Europe*, 173-218.

Further Reading:

Julie Fedor, Markku Kangaspuro, Jussi Lassila, and Tatiana Zhurzhenko (eds), *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (New York 2017), selected chapters; Alexandr Osipian, "World War II Memory Politics in Russia and Ukraine and Their Use During the Conflict in the Donbas (Spring-Summer 2014)," in *Official History in Eastern Europe*, 267-289.

5 May

Session 27. Student research seminar

7 May

Session 28. Concluding discussion

Marci Shore, "With Eyes Wide Open: An Antidote to Memory Politics," *Social Research* 89/2 (2022): 447-456.

Essay Deadlines

The deadline for a mid-semester response paper is **March 26, 2026**.

The deadline for the end of semester essay is **May 4, 2026**.

Grades Submission

- Final grades for graduating students are due on **May 6, 2026**
- Final grades for all students are due on **May 29, 2026**.

Library and Book Purchase Policies

Most of the readings will be uploaded in electronic format in the Google Classroom.

Some other texts will be available in the library reserve collection.