

**History 493**  
**Repairing the Past: Readings in Historical Justice**  
**Mondays, 2:30-4:20**  
**Spring 2017**

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 (and by appointment)

Since the end of World War II and especially in the last thirty years, demands for recognition of historical wrongs and redress for past grievances have proliferated in communities and countries around the world. We live in an era when states have begun making official apologies for all kinds of old wrongs, when a growing number of nations have offered some kind of monetary reparations for state violence or persecution, when decades-old historic wrongs have found their way back into courtrooms, and when more than thirty countries have created truth commissions that seek to repair the damage caused by historic wrongdoing. This seminar focuses on this wave of initiatives for historical redress. The course will explore the philosophical, historical, and political questions that arise from demands for justice for historic wrongs. Questions we will consider include: What explains the emergence of a worldwide movement for historical justice in the post-WWII era? What are the benefits or limitations of the many different mechanisms that nations have used to try to redress historical injustice? What burdens should or does the past impose upon the present? Is it dangerous to focus too much on past grievances or is it dangerous to try to bury the past without addressing historic grievances? Can a community or nation suffer collective trauma, and if so, how can that trauma be repaired? We will read works by historians, political scientists, philosophers, and legal scholars that grapple with these questions as they examine the work of historical repair being done by truth commissions, material and symbolic reparations, public apologies, criminal trials, commemoration, and artistic works. The course includes readings about a range of countries, including Germany, South Africa, and the U.S.

**Required Texts:** Books are available at the bookstore and are on reserve at Mudd Library. Items marked with a \* on the syllabus are available on the course blackboard site. Please note that there will also be one film screening outside of regular class meeting time.

Al Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921* (2003)  
 Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (1999)  
 Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (2010)  
 Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (2000)  
 Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)  
 Renee Romano, *Racial Reckoning: Prosecuting America's Civil Rights Murders* (2014)  
 Richard Vernon, *Historical Redress: Must We Pay for the Past?* (2012)  
 Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (2007)

**Learning Objectives:**

- To help students develop their own view on whether, how, and why the past matters
- To understand and critique different modes of social repair
- To sharpen students' ability to critically read and analyze secondary texts
- To hone students' ability to recognize and explain historical and theoretical debates
- To develop skills in historical synthesis (putting works in conversation with each other)
- To improve writing and oral communication skills

**Course Requirements:** Your grade in History 493 will be based on the following assignments and requirements. Please note that all assignments must be completed to receive credit for the class.

**1) Participation, Attendance and Weekly Questions (25% of final grade):**

*Repairing the Past* is a discussion-based seminar. Student participation is vital to the success of the class. Students are expected to arrive at class having read all the material carefully and prepared to engage thoughtfully and respectfully in a discussion of with classmates. I consider the ability to express oneself in discussion as important as written expression. If for any reason you are uncomfortable speaking in class, please come to see me at the beginning of the semester to talk about strategies for becoming an active participant in class. Attendance is mandatory. Any unexcused absences will lead to a deduction of three points from your final grade in the class. Absences will only be considered excused in case of illness, family emergency, or some other very valid reason. I will provide written feedback on your course participation approximately five weeks into the course.

As part of your weekly participation, every student is expected to post one question, comment, or concern about the week's readings to the course blog on blackboard. The blog will keep a running log of the questions/issues that students have about the readings. Please post your question to the blog by 10am on Monday morning before class and please look over the postings of your peers before coming to class.

**2) Ten Response Papers (25% of final grade)**

For every week but two—one the week that you are doing the reading presentation and one week of your choice—you are required to write a response of no more than 500 words about the reading for that week's class. Response papers should not simply summarize the readings. Instead, they should identify important themes and arguments in the readings, explore the author's methodology and approach, and raise questions for further discussion. These papers should be thoughtful, carefully written pieces of work in which you critically engage with the various readings for the class. If there is more than one reading for a given week, your paper should explore commonalities, differences, and connections among them. You can also draw connections between the readings for one week and those done in a previous week. You may want to use the response papers to begin building the foundation for your end-of-semester synthesis paper. Response papers must be posted to the Blackboard site by **10:00pm on the Sunday** before Monday's class. Late papers will not be accepted. Response papers will be graded on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = unsatisfactory; 3 = adequate; 5 = exceptional).

**3) Reading Presentation (10% of final grade)**

Once during the semester, you and a partner will read an additional article and give a presentation about it to the class. Presentations should be no more than 15 minutes. They should be practiced and polished and should include the following:

- Describe the content and the argument of the article to the rest of the class. You should also convey a sense of the author's methodology and sources.
- Connect the article to the other class readings—how does this article illuminate, add to, or complicate the ideas in the other readings? Does the additional reading offer a case study that highlights how general themes we've talked about play out in a specific instance? Does it offer a counterpoint to other specific examples in that week's reading?
- Engage the class in a conversation about the themes/issues raised in your presentation reading.

There are designated “Presentation Readings” for seven of our class sessions. Students will sign up for a week of their choice at the beginning of the semester. Presenters are required to meet with one of the History Writing Associates to go over their presentation before class.

#### **4) Final Synthesis Paper, due Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:00pm (40% of final grade)**

For the final paper for History 493, you will pick either a theme that has been evident over the course of many week’s readings (for example, responsibility, guilt, slavery, the Holocaust) or a place (Germany, the US, South Africa, etc.) and creatively synthesize a minimum of six course readings related to that topic/issue in a final paper of 10-12 pages. Proposals for topics of your final paper will be due to me in class on Monday, April 10.

Your paper should seek to make the readings speak to one another in insightful and thought-provoking ways. From week to week, you should read the books and articles with and against each other in order to explore larger historiographic, political, or historical issues. What can the combined readings in the course tell us, for example, about the ways in which specific countries—like the United States or South Africa—have approached the issue of historical justice? What are the range of ways in which the authors grapple with themes like political responsibility, trauma, the importance of truth to historic justice? How are certain readings in dialogue with others? What do they agree/disagree about? Do some of these readings complicate or enrich others? Papers should be at least ten pages, double-spaced and will be due on Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 pm. I am happy to reads drafts turned in by 5:00pm on May 7<sup>th</sup>. Please email final papers to me as a Word Document.

#### **COURSE POLICIES:**

Classroom Conduct: Please come to class on time and once you are in class, please do not leave to go get a drink or use the restroom unless it is absolutely necessary. It is distracting to me and disrespectful to your classmates when students walk out in the middle of class. Because I want everyone to be focused on the classroom discussion, there will be no note taking on computers in the classroom.

Oberlin Honor Code: All work for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code, which means that it must be your own. Any cases of plagiarism will be dealt with immediately according to the letter of college policy. You must acknowledge when you use the ideas of other people (whether that be other students or published materials from websites, books, the media, etc.). If you have questions about citations, academic honesty, or the acceptability of collaborations, please see me. You should include the honor code (“I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment”) on all the written work you hand in for this class.

Educational Access: I am committed to creating inclusive learning environments and to designing a course in which all students can learn. If any aspects of the instruction or design of the course result in dis/ability-related barriers to your participation, please let me know. If you receive any specific accommodations, please provide documentation from the Disability Service Office.

Difficult Topics: Please be forewarned that a course on redressing historic violence will necessarily cover disturbing topics such as genocide and mass killings, sexual and racial violence, and torture. If you have concerns about the course content, please come meet with me.

Extra Help: There are three Writing Associates who are assigned to the History Department this term and any of them (David Kaplovitz, Kevin Lin, or Gwennie Gardiner) can assist you with the writing assignments for this class. You also invite you to meet with me if you need help or just want to discuss the reading or other topics of interest to you. Drop in to my office hours anytime or email to schedule a specific appointment.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### January 30: Introduction

#### February 6: The Ethics and Politics of Retrospective Justice

*Do we have a duty to address past injustices? If so, why? Is there a danger in too much remembrance? How have philosophers answered the question of whether and why historical justice matters? Is there a particular need or responsibility to revisit and redress collective trauma? What duty do we have to the dead and to those affected by the memory of past violence?*

Richard Vernon, *Historical Redress* (entire)

David Rieff, "The Cult of Memory: When History Does More Harm than Good," *The Guardian*, March 2, 2016\*

#### February 13: Why Historical Justice? The Emergence of a Movement to Redress the Past

*Why does historical justice emerge as a global phenomenon? What factors help explain an interest among nations in revisiting the past? What different interpretations and explanation do these authors put forth to explain the popularity of historical justice? What's the difference between historical justice and transitional justice?*

John Torpey, "An Avalanche of History: The 'Collapse of the Future' and the Rise of Reparations Politics," in Manfred Berg and Bernd Schaefer, *Historical Justice in International Perspective: How Societies are Trying to Right the Wrongs of the Past* (Cambridge, 2009), 21-38\*

Pierre Hazan, *Judging War, Judging History*, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 7-62

Elazar Barkan, "Restitution and Amending Historical Injustices in International Morality," in John Torpey, ed., *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 91-102\*

James Campbell, "Settling Accounts: An Americanist Perspective on Historical Reconciliation," *American Historical Review* 114:4 (October 2009): 963-977\*

**Presentation Reading:** Jeffrey Olick and Brenda Couhglin, "The Politics of Regret: Analytical Frames" in *Politics and the Past*: (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 37-62\*

#### February 20: "Wiedergutmachung" or the German Effort to Come to Terms with Nazism (240)

*How do nations that have engaged in horrific acts move forward and construct a national identity? Is it possible for the nation responsible for the Holocaust to craft a positive national identity? Why did West and East Germany adopt different approaches to "overcoming the past?" Who should be considered responsible for the Holocaust?*

Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (entire)

**Presentation Reading:** Hans Gunter Hockerts, "Wiedergutmachung in Germany: Balancing Historical Accounts, 1945-2000," in Dan Diner and Gotthart Wunberg, *Restitution and Memory* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 323-381\*

## February 27: Trauma, Forgiveness, and Intergenerational Repair

*How do historical injustices continue to affect later generations? Can trauma be passed from generation to generation? What does forgiveness mean in relation to historical wrongdoing? Who has the right to forgive? Is their power in extending or withholding forgiveness? How does political forgiveness differ from individual forgiveness?*

Martha Minow, "Between Vengeance and Forgiveness," 3-29\*

Ricardo Ainslie, "Trauma, Community, and Contemporary Racial Violence: Reflections on the Architecture of Memory," in Michael O'Loughlin, ed., *The Ethics of Remembering and the Consequences of Forgetting* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 309-323\*

Mona Sue Weissmark, excerpts from *Justice Matters: Legacies of the Holocaust and World War II* (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 38-54, 65-78, 163-180\*

*Film Screening Before Class: "The Milk of Sorrow"*

**Presentation Reading:** June O'Connor, "Fostering Forgiveness in the Public Square: How Realistic a Goal?," *Journal of the Society for Christian Ethics* 22 (Fall 2002): 165-182\*

## March 6: Case Study: The Trauma of Slavery

*Are there certain histories that are so traumatic that they cannot be fully represented? How might art or literary representations offer different ways to address intergenerational trauma? Can fiction offer truths that the historical record may not be able to provide? How might Hartman characterize the significance of the intervention made in *Beloved*?*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (entire)

Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe*, no. 26 (June 2008): 1-14\*

**\*Visit to Allen Art Museum to see Fred Wilson installation**

## March 13: Modes of Historical Repair—Truth Commissions and Historical Justice

*Why are truth commissions such a popular mechanism among societies seeking to come to terms with their past? Are truth commissions a reasonable alternative to prosecutions? Should perpetrators be offered amnesty in exchange for "truth"? What role does truth-telling play in historical repair? Is reconciliation possible without truth? How should we measure the success or failure of truth commissions?*

Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths* (entire)

Margaret Urban Walker, "How Can Truth Telling Count as Reparations?" in Klaus Neumann and Janna Thompson, *Historical Memory and Justice*, pp. 130-145\*

**Presentation Reading:** Onur Bakiner, "Promoting Historical Justice through Truth Commissions: An Uneasy Relationship" in Klaus Neumann and Janna Thompson, ed., *Historical Justice and Memory* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 146-165\*

## March 20: NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

## March 27: The South African Truth Commission: A Case Study

*What does the South African TRC illustrate about the benefits and limitations of truth commissions? What did the TRC offer to the victims of apartheid? What did it offer to the perpetrators? How did the TRC process affect South African culture and society?*

Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull* (entire)

*Watch before class "Long Night's Journey Into Day?" (Kanopy Streaming)*

### April 3: Modes of Historical Repair--Reparations

*Is monetary or some other kind of material compensation a reasonable response to historical injustices? When are reparations feasible or necessary? Do reparations represent an unseemly commodification of suffering? What are barriers to reparations? Are they a "noble lie"?*

Alfred Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland* (entire)

Angelika von Wahl, "The Politics of Reparations: Why, When, and How Democratic Governments Get Involved," in Berg and Schaefer, ed., *Historical Justice in International Perspective*, 39-65\*

Gary Bass, "Reparations as a Noble Lie," *Nomos* 51(2012): 166-179\*

**Presentation Reading:** Sharon Lean, "Is Truth Enough? Reparations and Reconciliation in Latin America," in *Politics and the Past*, 169-191\*

### April 10: Modes of Historical Repair—Apologies [Paper topic proposal due]

*Can apologies offer a meaningful form of redress for past injustice? What makes an apology meaningful versus simply ceremonial? When are states willing to offer apologies? What makes them reluctant to do so? Can a collective like a state express meaningful remorse?*

Melissa Nobles, *The Politics of Official Apologies*, Chapters 1, 3-5, pp. 1-41; 71-154

Janna Thompson, "Apology, Justice, and Respect: A Critical Defense of Political Apology," in Mark Gibney, et al ed., *The Age of Apology: Facing Up to the Past* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 31-44\*

Jean-Mark Coicaud and Jibecke Jonsson, "Elements of a Road Map for a Politics of Apology," in *The Age of Apology*, 77-91\*

**Presentation Reading:** Julie Fetter, "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France," in Berg and Schaefer, *Historical Justice in International Perspective*, 135-163\*

### April 17: Modes of Historical Repair—Trials

*What kinds of redress of historical injustice are possible through a criminal trial? How does the law shape the process of historical redress? What brings a historical injustice back into the courtroom? What do civil rights trials tell us about how the United States reckons with its history?*

Renee Romano, *Racial Reckoning* (entire)

Martha Minow, "Trials" in *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* (Beacon Press, 1998), 25-51\*

### April 24: Modes of Historical Repair—Memorialization, Museums, and Public Art

*What are memorial museums and why have they become so popular in recent years? To what extent can museums or memorials shape historical consciousness or serve as sites of social repair? How should we think about public space in considering repair from historic violence? How important are "symbolic reparations?"*

Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (entire)

Zayd Minty, "Post-apartheid Public Art in Cape Town: Symbolic Reparations and Public Space," *Urban Studies* 43:2 (February 2006): 421-440\*

**Presentation Reading:** Robyn Autry, "The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory in South Africa The Voortrekker Monument," *Theory, Culture & Society* (2012): 1-19\*

**May 1: The Role of Historians in the Process of Historical Justice**

*Should historians become involved in efforts to redress the past? What challenges do historians face when they become witnesses or advocates for historical justice? In what ways does the quest for historical justice challenge the work of academic historians? What is the relationship between historical scholarship and historical justice?*

Rafael Verbuyst, "History, Historians, and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *New Contree*, 66 (July 2013): 1-26\*

Henry Rousso, "Justice, History, and Memory in France: Reflections on the Papon Trial," in Torpey, ed., *Politics and the Past*, pp. 277-293\*

Elazar Barkan, "Historians and Historical Reconciliation," *American Historical Review* 114:4 (October 2009): 899-913\*

\*We will spend the last 45 minutes of class in small groups discussing your final papers.