Course objectives

Europe is now often praised as a model case of how to overcome nationalism and war through inter-state cooperation and cultural tolerance. Yet, at the same time, the struggle to come to terms with the legacies of a ‘dark continent’ (Mark Mazower) has continued to this very day. This course engages with one of the core questions of this struggle: collective memory. The first part of the course introduces a range of key issues in the study of collective memory such as the relationship between individual and collective memory, as well as the debates about memories’ persistence and change, and the salience of memory politics. In the second and third part of the course, we turn to the empirical patterns of how Europe’s ‘dark legacies’ have left their traces in collective memories across the continent, paying equal attention to fascism and World War II on the one hand, and communism on the other hand. The analysis combines comparisons between countries and European sub-regions with a more detailed focus on specific vectors of memory such as history writing, museums and film.

By the end of the course students will be able to:

1) Appreciate the importance of ‘dark legacies’ for the development of European societies after 1945
2) Engage with theoretical concepts and debates in the study of collective memory
3) Discuss similarities and differences in how Europe’s fascist and communist past has been confronted across the continent

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and active participation (15 % of final grade)
2. In-class test (15 %)
3. Seminar presentation (15 % of final grade)
4. Two short critiques of readings (25 % of final grade)
5. Final Paper (30 % of final grade).
Course Outline

Seminar 1: Introduction

PART I: General issues and concepts

Seminar 2: Can there be a ‘collective memory’?


Seminar 3: Different concepts of collective memory


Seminar 4: Persistence and change


Seminar 5: Collective memory and politics


Seminar 6: Collective memory and ‘dark legacies’: Amnesia, trauma, denial


Seminar 7: Towards transnational memory?
PART II: Coming to terms with dark legacies in Western Europe

Seminar 8: World War II and fascism in West European collective memory: General issues


Seminar 9: National case studies (I): Germany


Seminar 10: National case studies (II): France


Seminar 11: Migrants and the memory of World War II in Western Europe


Seminar 12: Dark legacies as supranational and transnational memories


Seminar 13: Communism and West European collective memory


PART III: Coming to terms with dark legacies in Eastern Europe

Seminar 14: Dark legacies and collective memory in Eastern Europe: General issues


Seminar 15: Case studies (I): Russia


Seminar 16: Case studies (II): Ukraine


Seminar 17: Case studies (III): Hungary (Excursion to monuments on Szabadsag ter)

Seminar 18: Dark legacies in Eastern Europe and supranational/transnational memories


Seminar 19: Dark legacies in Eastern Europe and supranational/transnational memories (cont.)

PART IV: Coming to terms with Europe’s dark legacies: Vectors of memory

Seminar 20: Trials


Seminar 21: Museums


Seminar 22: History Teaching


Seminar 23: Film


Seminar 24: Conclusions