Politics of Memory and Uses of History in East European Politics: Construction and Deconstruction of National Historical Myths in Russia, Ukraine, and Poland, 1991-2011

Intended for MA students in History and Cultural Anthropology
The course will be taught in Ukrainian

In Post-Communist Eastern Europe, there are new states dealing with the common past and legitimizing their existence through the national history since 1991. They build their national identities by producing new grand narratives, history education and memory politics. My attention is mainly focused on Ukraine and its relations with Russia and Poland. History became a battleground not only in the inter-state relations it also produced internal tension between official memory strategies and social responses, new national identity and old regional and supranational ones. Collapse of the USSR and its traumatic past produced the problem of divided memories in the Post-Soviet space used by some politics to divide society politically. This historical imagery has penetrated today’s political rhetoric in Russia and Ukraine. “Nationalism itself could be seen as a political outgrowth of historicism and, more specifically, as a form of political archaeology” (Smith 2001).

There are three levels of the uses of the past in Russia, Poland, and Ukraine: 1) in domestic politics, in particularly in construction of the national identity and for the mobilization of electorate in the course of presidential and parliamentary election campaigns; 2) in the Polish-Russian-Ukrainian interstate relations; 3) in their foreign policy for the self-representation on the international political arena.

In the ‘memory boom’ that has emerged in the humanities and social sciences since 1990, five major themes have captured most attention:
(a) the relationship between politics and memory,
(b) trauma and memories of violence,
(c) the ‘mediatization’ of memory
(d) the transmission of memory and identity formation
(e) the relationship between memory, history and other concepts of the past.

In my syllabus I intend to produce a more balanced view of the uses of history – modern as well as pre-modern – in East European politics.

Objectives

I will focus my attention on the next topics:
Social and cultural dynamics that go into the establishment, use, and abuse of memory/memorials in Eastern Europe.
Basic motives, myths and images produced by the Romanticist, populist (narodnytska) and Soviet historiography and still reproduced in the national grand-narratives in Russia and Ukraine.
Strategies of remembrance and oblivion in Russia, Poland, and Ukraine.
Criteria by which events are selected for official commemorations in Russia, Ukraine, and Poland after 2004.
What are the main reasons of the contemporary “memory wars” in internal and foreign politics?
What realms of memory – events, persons, monuments, etc – are the most controversial and conflict-provocative?
How the evident dependence of electorate political preferences is reflected in or/and stimulated by the historical grand-narratives?
Comparison of Polish-Ukrainian and Russian-Ukrainian relations in the area of contested heritage and divided past after 2004.
What role is played by the “Russkiy mir” Foundation and by the Orthodox Church in the Russian-Ukrainian relations?
How is the politics of memory in Ukraine influenced by the Ukrainian overseas Diaspora?
Why history and memory issues are so important in political debates and mass-media?
How official commemorations are represented by mass-media and percept by opposition parties and different electorate groups in different regions of Russia, Poland, and Ukraine? Are there realms of memory shared by all the parties and electorate groups in Russia / in Ukraine? What and why? How are Russia and Ukraine positioning themselves in the international politics after 2004? Why is the “Great Patriotic war” so important in Russia’s foreign policy and international relations? Why is “Holodomor” so important in Ukraine’s foreign policy and international relations?

COURSE JUSTIFICATION

The course combines an introduction into the major methodological developments in the historical writing and social theory, with a thematic overview of the 1989-2011 political trends in the region. The aim of proposed course is to provide students with an understanding of the so-called revisionist approaches to the Past.
Although our focus and methodology is historical, we will also be employing the analyses of cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, cultural geography, social psychology, and film studies.

Much attention is given to:
- the interdisciplinary nature of the problems in question;
- comparative approach (to place Ukraine in European context);
- the studying of new sources and new methods to exploit them;
- active use of students’ personal experiences acquired during their previous museum, archaeological, ethnographic, and pedagogic practices and participation in political life (e.g. presidential elections);
- interactive exchange of ideas among students.

METHODS BY WHICH COURSE WILL BE TAUGHT

Effective teaching is about facilitating student learning. As Paul Ramsden pointed out: “To teach is to make an assumption about what and how the student learns; to teach well implies learning about students’ learning.” Teaching methods and assessment, much research and thinking has recently revolved around the concept of “active learning”, which emphasizes that learning is fundamentally an active process and that it is best promoted when learners are directly engaged through their own interests, enthusiasms and talents rather than expected merely to receive information.

Basic theory and information are delivered by traditional lectures. No more than half of contact hours are in the traditional lecture form. Traditional lectures are supplemented by a variety of structured seminars, problem-oriented discussions and workshops.

It is compulsory for all students, and will be taught over the spring semester. There will be one session a week. There will be lectures from 1st week to 7th, and various seminars from 8th week to 17th. Each lecture will be devoted to a particular method, followed by a short discussion. In a seminar the method is applied to historical problem. The seminars are structured loosely around the theme “History in transitive society”. Each session will last for approximately one hour and 20 minutes.

Attendance at lectures and seminars is mandatory. At the end of the term, students will submit a paper on one of the session themes or on another theme agreed in advance, of up to 4,000 words. The paper is due no later then April 1.

Students should begin to work on their annual research paper topics during the Spring Term, and in assigning presentations, this research interest (as well as prior expertise) will be taken into account. Beginning from the 8th week they will be required to prepare a methodological introduction to the
course dissertation, based on the coursework and their own research. The essay should explain the historical problem addressed in the dissertation, it should describe the method chosen and justify this choice, and it should also provide some indication of the existing literature. This paper, of up to 4,000 words, should be submitted by the 1 April to the student’s supervisor. An abstract of about 100 words will also be required. The complete course dissertation should be submitted to the student’s supervisor no later than 1st of June. The dissertation will also be the subject of a twenty-minute presentation to a forum of students and faculty at a workshop in the last week of Spring Term.

Copies of majority of course readings will be available in two places: (a) on the readers and source copies shelf in the Reading room of the Department of History and Cultural Studies, and (b) the service desk in the Reading room in the Institute Library. These copies cannot be borrowed. Students are requested to return items without fail after photocopying.

Participation, presentation and written course work will all count towards “satisfactory completion” of the qualifying test, for which the pass level will be 60 percent. Assessment will be weighted as follows:
- Participation and preparation (25%);
- presentation (25%);
- written work (50%).
All submitted written work should be computer-printed.
Approximate number of students that will take the course – 50.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

1. **History and Memory** (Introductory lecture)¹

Obligatory reading:

Further reading:

2. **History and identity: kinship, ethnicity, and nationalism** (lecture)

Obligatory reading:

¹ Works published in Ukrainian or/and Russian, or translated into one or both languages are indicated with an asterisk.

Further reading:

3. **Myth-construction and deconstruction in the film-making** (group discussion)


Obligatory reading:

Further reading:

4. **Myth, Memory and History in the Construction of Community** (lecture)

Obligatory reading:

Further reading:
5. Constructing the past and social identities in pre-modern Europe (lecture)
Obligatory reading:

Further reading:
Яковенко Н.М. Паралельний світ. Дослідження з історії уявлень та ідей в Україні XVI-XVII ст. К.: Критика, 2002.

6. Romanticism: historical imagination and nation-building (lecture)
Obligatory reading:

Further reading:
7. History, identity, and revisionism (research methods seminar)

Obligatory reading:
- Nora, Pierre. Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past / Trans. and ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, 2 vols, Columbia UP, 1996*

Further reading:
- Szporluk, Roman. “Why Ukrainians are Ukrainians,” Transit 23 (2002)*

8. Historical writing and myth-making: case study of Poland (problem-oriented discussion)

Obligatory reading:

Further reading:
Wrobel, Piotr J. *Nation and History: Polish Historians from the Enlightenment to the Second World War*. 2006

**9. Historical writing and myth-making: case study of Ukraine** (problem-oriented discussion)

Obligatory reading:


Further reading:


**10. Historical writing and myth-making: case study of Russia** (problem-oriented discussion)

Obligatory reading:


Further reading:

Black, J.L. *Nicholas Karamzin and Russian Society in the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto, 1975

Ilńtzkyj, Oleh S. “The Nationalism of Nikolai Gogol’: Betwixt and Between?” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 49, nos.3-4 (September-December 2007): 349-68


11. Russian-Ukrainian “battles for history and identity” (round-table discussion)
Obligatory reading:
Kohut, Zenon. History as a Battleground: Russian-Ukrainian Relations and Historical Consciousness in Contemporary Ukraine. Saskatchewan, 2001
Plokhy, Serhiy. Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008*

Further reading:

12. Lost Golden Age: Cossack myth and national identity in Ukraine (round-table discussion)
Obligatory reading:
Plokhy, Serhiy. “Nationalization of Ukrainian Cossacks in the Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries,” Ab Imperio. 2 (2004)*

Further reading:

13. Archaeology and national identity in the post-Soviet states (group collaborative work)
Obligatory reading:

Further reading:

14. Representations of “self” and “other”: symbolic geography, “national” landscape and ethnic stereotypes (round-table discussion)
Obligatory reading:
Cosgrove, Denis. “Landscape and Landschaft,” German Historical Institute Bulletin 35 (Fall 2004): 57-71

Further reading:

15. Cultural memory and politics: World War Two myth in contemporary Russia and Ukraine (group collaborative work)
Obligatory reading:
Hrytsak, Yaroslav. More Wrong than Right: Recent Turns in Ukrainian Politics of Memory, Speech delivered at the Academy of Sciences of Vienna (October 28, 2010)
Jilge, Wilfried, Stefan Troebst (Hrsg.). Divided Historical Cultures World War II and Historical Memory in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine. Wiesbaden 2006 (= Themenheft von Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas 54 [2006], H. 1)

Further reading:
Marples, David R. “Anti-Soviet Partisans and Ukrainian Memory,” East European Politics & Societies 24, no.1 (February 2010): 26-43

16-17. Presentation and discussion of student research papers.