

History 395, Section 1: American Memory Debates

Fall 2022

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:45, 224 CCC

“Who controls the past, controls the future.” —George Orwell, *1984* (1949)
“The past is never dead. It isn’t even past.” —William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951)

Prof. Rob Harper, he/him/his
rharper@uwsp.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00; Thursdays, 1:00-2:00, and by appointment.

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

This class is about historical memory: the ways people collectively explain and tell stories about the past. We will focus on memory debates: conflicts over how to tell the story of the past, especially in public. We’ll talk both about how to analyze and interpret past and present-day debates over memory and how to learn from these debates as we figure out how to commemorate our past today. After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Define historical memory and explain its significance in your life
- Describe past and present controversies over American historical memory, including participants, arguments, social and political context, and relationships to divergent narratives of the American past.
- Identify and explain specific strategies marginalized groups have used to challenge prevailing historical narratives.
- Locate and critically interpret appropriate primary sources for the study of historical memory debates.
- Become more disposed to see themselves as potential contributors to present-day and future public memory debates.

Required Materials

- Jonathan Zimmerman, *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools*, second edition (2022)
- All other readings and links to films will be posted on Canvas.

Contacting Me

*Helping you learn is the **most important** and **most rewarding** part of my job.* If you have questions about the course, or want to improve your performance, please visit me during office hours or contact me by email at <rharper@uwsp.edu> to make an appointment. Please include “History 395” in the subject line.

How to Succeed

To do well in this class, you must attend and participate regularly, complete all assigned reading, and take effective notes on readings, lectures, and class discussions. As with any three-credit course, you

should expect to spend **6-9 hours each week** on coursework outside of class. If you must miss class, please obtain notes from a classmate. You will receive a zero on any quiz or in-class work you miss, unless you make other arrangements with me in advance. To accommodate conflicts and emergencies, up to two absences and your two lowest in-class work scores will not count toward the final grade.

Grading

Attendance and participation:	10%
Short assignments:	10%
Reading journal:	20%
State standards essay:	20%
School board essay:	20%
Final project:	20%

Assignments

During the first two units of the course you will submit a total of twelve reading journals (six in each unit). In each journal entry you will write thoughtfully for about thirty minutes in response to the assigned reading, following the guidelines in the prompt (to be posted on Canvas).

You will complete two short essays, about 5 double-spaced pages each, in which you research and analyze the creation of history education policy in a specific state (the first essay) and in a specific school district (the second essay). For the first essay you may choose any state other than Wisconsin and Texas. For the second essay you may choose any school district either in Wisconsin or elsewhere. You must use newspaper and other media reports as well as public documents to determine when and how states and school boards created their history education policies (pre-2020), and to identify and explain pertinent controversies and debates. For both essays you will prepare an initial prospectus, identifying the state/school district and providing a preliminary timeline and list of sources. You will also briefly report on your work in class.

For the final project, you will build on your earlier work to create a public-facing product that addresses how contemporary memory debates shape the teaching of history. The project will in some way answer James Grossman's call for attention to the question of "what are students learning?" The specific requirements of the final project, and the content of the final weeks of the semester, will be determined by the class.

You will also complete an array of smaller assignments, in and out of class meetings, individually and in groups. Please refer to Canvas for details and updates. Assignments will generally appear on Canvas at least one week before they are due.

Students with Disabilities

I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the needs of students of all abilities. Any student requesting such accommodation must first meet with staff in the Disability and Assistive Technology Center (DATC). That meeting should take place as early in the semester as possible. No accommodation will be granted until I receive and agree to a formal plan approved by DATC.

Academic Integrity

Cases of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, will be formally reported following the policies laid out in UWSP's Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures. Plagiarism consists of submitting work created by someone else as your own. For more information on academic integrity, please ask me or consult <http://library.uwsp.edu/Guides/VRD/plagiarism.htm>. Students found to have committed academic misconduct will receive an F for the course.

Course Schedule

Specific reading assignments and deadlines will be adjusted as we go. For assignment details, guidelines, and revisions, please refer to the schedule of assignments on Canvas.

Week 1

Tuesday, Sept. 6: Introductions

Thursday, Sept. 8: Remembering, or not

- WA preface and introduction
- Wineburg, "Crazy for History" (2004)
- Grossman, "What are Students Learning? 'Divisive Concepts' in History Education" (2022), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2022/what-are-students-learning-divisive-concepts-in-history-education>

Unit 1: Think of the Children

Week 2

Tuesday, Sept. 13: Becoming American

- WA ch. 1, "Ethnicity and the History Wars"
- Ruberto and Sciora, "'Columbus Might Be Dwarfed to Obscurity'" (2020)

Thursday, Sept. 15: Birth of a Lost Cause

- Minton, "The lies our textbooks told" (2020)
- WA ch. 2, "Struggles over Race and Sectionalism"
- Cram and Gray, *Birth of a Movement* (2017, 54 minutes), https://fod-infobase-com.ezproxy.uwsp.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=151251
- Optional: Blight, "Frederick Douglass" (1989)
- Optional: Rutherford, "A Measuring Rod" (1919)

Week 3

Tuesday, Sept. 20: Progressives and their critics

State standards prospectus due

- Ravitch, "History's Struggle to Survive" (2007)
- WA ch. 3, "Social Studies Wars in New Deal America"
 - Optional: Orill and Shapiro, "From Bold Beginnings to an Uncertain Future" (2005)

Thursday, Sept. 22: Multiculturalism and its Critics

- WA ch. 4, “The Cold War Assault on Textbooks”
- WA ch. 5, “Black Activism, White Resistance, and Multiculturalism”

Week 4

Tuesday, Sept. 27: State standards reports, part 1

Thursday, Sept. 29: State standards reports, part 2

Week 5

Tuesday, Oct. 4: Backlash

- “Great Textbook War” (2010), <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/textbooks/>
- Laats, “Save the Children” (2015)

Thursday, Oct. 6: God in the Constitution

State standards essay due

- WA ch. 7, “School Prayer and the Conservative Revolution”
- Fea, “History for the Faithful” (2011), 57-75
- Optional: Davis and McMearty, “The Use and Abuse of Founders' Quotations” (2005)

Week 6

Tuesday, Oct. 11: Fables and Forgetting

- Harding, “Beyond Amnesia” (1987), 468-76
- Theoharis, “How history got the Rosa Parks story wrong” (2015)
- Vowell, “You, Sir, are no Rosa Parks” (2001),
<http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,96988,00.html>
OR listen to the audio version at <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/226/reruns/act-three-0>

Thursday, Oct. 13: Memory in the 1990s

- Rosenzweig, “Everyone a Historian” (1994)
- Fuller, “Debating the Present through the Past” (2005), 167-92

Unit 2: Today’s memory debates

Week 7

Tuesday, Oct. 18: Where things stand

- WA ch. 9, “Twenty-first-century culture wars”
- Rosenfeld, “Illiberal Memory” (2021)
- Selections from “History, the Past, and Public Culture: Results from a National Survey” (2021)

Thursday, Oct. 20: Messing with Texas

- Thurman, *The Revisionaries* (2013, 93 minutes)
- “Two States. Eight Textbooks” (2020)
- “Students Push Texas to Adopt an Anti-Racist Curriculum” (2020)

- Optional: Chancey, “Rewriting History for a Christian America” (2014), 325-53

Week 8

Tuesday, Oct. 25: Debating Women’s Rights activists

School board prospectus due

- Kitchener, “Was Susan B. Anthony antiabortion?” (2020), <https://www.thelily.com/was-susan-b-anthony-antiabortion-two-sides-are-dueling-over-the-answer-and-the-definition-of-feminism/>
- “Conservative Members of Congress Demand Immediate Removal of Margaret Sanger Bust from Display” (2015), https://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=2476
- “Planned Parenthood in N.Y. Disavows Margaret Sanger Over Eugenics” (2020)
 - Optional: “Margaret Sanger is Awarded Medal” (1931)
 - Optional: “Margaret Sanger Answers Questions on Abortion” (2012), https://sanger.hosting.nyu.edu/articles/ms_abortion/
 - Optional: “Opposition Claims About Margaret Sanger” (2021), https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer_public/cc/2e/cc2e84f2-126f-41a5-a24b-43e093c47b2c/210414-sanger-opposition-claims-p01.pdf

Thursday, Oct. 27: Debating Civil Rights activists

- Watch DuVernay, *Selma* (2014, 128 minutes), <https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/uwsp299375/watch/C4C94081D1BE02CA>
- Califano, “The Movie ‘Selma’ has a Glaring Flaw” (2014)
- Sorkin, “Why ‘Selma’ is More than Fair to L.B.J.” (2015)
- Joseph, “‘Selma’ Backlash Misses The Point” (2015), <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/01/10/376081786/selma-backlash-misses-the-point>

Week 9

Tuesday, Nov. 1: Re-presenting enslaved people

- Biser, “I used to lead tours at a plantation” (2017)
- Watch “America’s First Museum Dedicated to Telling the Story of Slavery” (2016, 12 minutes), <https://youtu.be/tcUgM-NLuHo>
- Twitty, “Dear Disgruntled White Plantation Visitors, Sit Down” (2019), <https://afroculinaria.com/2019/08/09/dear-disgruntled-white-plantation-visitors-sit-down/>
- Watch Dungey, “Ask a Slave,” episode 4 (2013, 4 minutes), <https://youtu.be/ik-fXNjxw58>
- Williams, “My Body Is a Confederate Monument” (2020)
- Hyllton, “Why We Must Stop Referring to Enslaved People as ‘Slaves’” (2020), <https://humanparts.medium.com/why-we-must-immediately-cease-and-desist-referring-to-enslaved-people-as-slaves-85b0ddfc5f7b>

Thursday, Nov. 3: Contending with colonialism

- Savage, “When the Culture Wars Hit Fort Wayne” (2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/07/31/culture-wars-fort-wayne-373011>
- Waziatawin (Dakota), “Co-Opting the Memory of the Dakota 38+2”

- Garfield, “Wausau West parent says history teacher mimicked Native American during classes” (2021)

Week 10

Tuesday, Nov. 8: School board reports part 1

Thursday, Nov. 10: School board reports part 2

Unit 3: Memory Debates and History Teaching

Week 11

Tuesday, Nov. 15: 1619

- Hannah-Jones, “The Idea of America” (2019)
- Harris, “I Helped Fact-Check the 1619 Project. The Times Ignored Me.” (2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/03/06/1619-project-new-york-times-mistake-122248>
- Serwer, “The Fight over the 1619 Project is not about the Facts” (2019)

Thursday, Nov. 17: CRT

- Wallace-Wells, “How a Conservative Activist Invented the Conflict Over Critical Race Theory” (2021)
- “Educational Gag Orders” (2021)

Week 12:

Tuesday, Nov. 22:

School board essay due

Thursday, Nov. 24: No class. Give thanks.

Week 13: TBA

Week 14: TBA

Week 15: TBA

Final project: due during final exam period, Monday, Dec. 19, 8:00-10:00 am.