CULTURAL DEFEATS

HIS 381J

Classes: Tu. 12:30 - 3:30   CAL 200

Office Hours:  GAR 3.222   TH. 11:00-12:30.

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Course Description

What is a cultural defeat? What happens after cataclysmic experiences such as war, colonization and occupation that pushes societies to conclude that that which has failed is not simply their military organization or their infrastructure but their very culture? What was the collective response of societies as diverse as Germans, Japanese, Americans, Russians and Arabs to the pain of defeat? Why a sense of euphoria and invincibility is the most immediate response to a crushing defeat? Why is it that in the aftermath of defeat the ruthless and violent aggressors often describe themselves as victims? Do defeated societies heal themselves by remembering and commemorating the catastrophe or by suppressing and forgetting it? Drawing conceptually on Trauma and Memory Studies, this seminar examines the aftermath of defeat and its cultural internalization. We will explore “slow defeats” such as in colonialism/decolonization as well as rapid ones such as quick military setbacks. Specifically, we will be looking at Post WW II Japan and France, Germany after WW I, Post-Holocaust Israel, the post 1960s Arab World, the Cultural Revolution in China and the Collapse of the Soviet World In dissecting the collective mechanisms that characterize defeated societies we will explore how the trauma of defeat is manifested in politics, literature, cinema, plastic art and history writing. Students are required to submit a final seminar paper on a relevant topic of their choice. The seminar is open to all fields.

Key Words: Cultural Defeat, Trauma, Collective Memory, Cultural Memory, Dissociation, Amnesia, Victimization, Loss.

Attendance: mandatory.

Accommodations: At the beginning of the semester, students with disabilities who need special accommodations should notify me by presenting a letter prepared by the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (SSD tel. 471-6259)

Academic Integrity: Students should maintain a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholarly work. All work handed in by students should be their own work, prepared without unauthorized assistance. All cases of academic dishonesty will be treated with due severity. For further information visit the Student Judicial Services website at http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs or call 471-2841
Assignments:
Each week two students will write a book review and lead discussion in class. The review should be around 1000 words long and should critically engage the topic of choice and the relevant reading. In addition, participants will submit a final research paper in a relevant field of interest and give a short 15min presentation about it.

Required Books available from the Co-Op (Some, however, are not in the Co-Op. Others might be on Amazon and Bookfinder)


COURSE PLAN

WEEK 1: Agenda for Inquiry (Aug. 30th)


WEEK 2: Opening the Field (Sept. 6th)

WEEK 3: Trauma and Recovery (Sept. 13th)


WEEK 4: Japan’s Total Defeat (Sept. 20th)


WEEK 5: Weimer's Post Defeat Cultural Renaissance (October 4th)


WEEK 6: France: Defeat as Victory (September 27th)


WEEK 7: Revolutionary Cures: China’s Cultural Revolution (October 11th)

- https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/11/the-cultural-revolution-50-years-on-all-you-need-to-know-about-chinas-political-convulsion

WEEK 8: After Utopia: Cuba and the Post-Soviet (October 18th)


WEEK 9: Defeated Subjectivities: The Arab World (October 25th)

- Susan Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought* (Columbia UP: 2010), Introduction. (on canvas)
Week 10: Israel: The Tragedy of Ontological Insecurity (November 1st)


WEEK 11+ 12: The Defeated Victor: On Perpetrators Trauma (November 8th and 15th)


Week 13-14: Presentations (November 22nd and 29th)

If time permits I would like add the following class for which the existing literature is a bit weak:

**Ottomans to Turks, Russians to Soviets**