Seminar: Archives, Power, and the Writing of History in Latin America

Instructor: Carlos Aguirre
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10-12 am.
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Course Description

This seminar explores the relationship between the writing of Latin American history, the construction of competing memories and narratives about the past, and the formation, organization, destruction, and accessibility of different types of historical sources and archives. This relationship, as many scholars have posited, is critically shaped by political, social, cultural, racial, and institutional power structures and hierarchies. By looking at the process of production of historical sources, the politics of preservation and accessibility of archives and repositories, and the implicit and explicit assumptions at work in our pursuit of “truth” and interpretation, we will arrive at a more fully understanding of the production of narratives about the Latin American past and their relationship with contemporary political and cultural struggles.

Requirements

Attendance and participation (20%). Attendance is mandatory. More than one unjustified absence will automatically be penalized with one letter grade. Participation is evaluated on the basis of the student’s engagement with the discussions in class.

Oral presentation (10%). During each of our meetings, one or more students will serve as discussants, summarizing the readings and highlighting key issues for discussion.

Weekly reports (20%). Students will write 2-3 page reports, due at the beginning of each class, about the assigned readings. These reports should include: a) a short summary of the reading(s), highlighting the main arguments presented by the author(s) under review; b) a critical assessment of their contribution to the topic under discussion; and c) at least three stimulating questions for discussion in class.

Final research paper (15-20 pages) (50%). Using available printed and online sources, students will write a paper on the history of state violence and human rights violations in Latin America during the Cold War. A list of possible sources, suggestions for specific topics, and more information about the paper will be offered in class.
Course Readings

The following books will be available for purchase at the UO Bookstore, and will be placed on reserve at Knight Library.


Other materials -articles and book chapters- will be available electronically through Blackboard.

Schedule of Sessions and Readings

Week 1: Archives, Memory, History

Readings:

Week 2: Inquisition Records and Subaltern Voices

Guest speaker: Professor Pedro Guibovich (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú)

Readings:
Week 3: The Erasure and Recovery of History: Haiti and Slavery

Readings:

Week 4: Visual Archives: Photography, Classification, and the Construction of Race

Readings:

Week 5: History, Ethnography, and the Shaping of Historical Memories

Reading:

Week 6: The Archives of Terror, part I: Cold War and US intervention in Chile and Latin America

Guest speaker: Peter Kornbluh (National Security Archive, Georgetown University)

Readings:
Week 7: The Archives of Terror, part II: Truth Commissions and other paths to “Historical Truth”

Readings:


Week 8: Apprehending the Criminal: State, Policing, and the Archive

Readings:


Weeks 9 and 10: No class. Individual meetings.