Anthropology and Sociology (ANSO)
Academic year 2019 - 2020

Dealing with the Past and Transitional Justice: Comparative Perspectives

ANSO086 - Spring - 6 ECTS

Course Description

The seminar aims at investigating through anthropological perspectives the aftermath of civil wars, genocides and dictatorships. How the ‘nation’ can be rebuilt? What is the role of civil societies and State authorities in the process at the national and local levels? How the models of State-building and reconciliation ‘exported’ by international donors help or hinder the transitions? Are they new instruments of a neoliberal governmentality in the post-colonial world?

Actually, the instruments and practices of what has come to be known ‘Dealing with the Past’ (DWP) and ‘Transitional Justice’ (TJ) have witnessed in past decades an important surge of South-South cooperation with the UN as a ‘broker’. However, after the Latin America experiences during the 1970s and 1980s, and in South Africa in the early 1990s, the legalistic models of TJ for DWP have become more and more part of the tools used by international donors for promoting a global ‘neoliberal order’.

The approach will be geographically and thematically comparative: Asia (Cambodia), Latin America (Chili and Argentina) and the Middle East (Lebanon); two contexts of past dictatorships, one case of genocide and one of post-civil war. Cinematic representations of different forms of transitional justice, documentary films and fictions will be part and parcel of the pedagogical material for the seminar.

Finally, while a consistent bulk of studies has been produced by jurists, political scientists, psychologists, and historians, the more recent critical contributions of anthropologists have helped to shed light on how the ‘social pact’ can be renegotiated in the aftermath of traumatic events.
Syllabus

1. **Organization**

   During the spring 2020, the seminar will take place each Wednesday from 4.15pm to 6.00pm, starting on the 19th of February.

   **The attendance to the sessions of the seminar is compulsory.** Students are required to read the compulsory texts and to watch the required films before each session.

   The seminar is taught primarily in **English**. Questions and oral presentations, as well as the final papers, may be formulated/written in English or in French.

2. **Sessions of the seminar and Compulsory Readings**

   The compulsory readings are available on the support material webpage; the movies will be accessible on line: students will be provided with an access password.

**SESSION 1** - February 19th

*Introduction to the problematics of the seminar* (RB)

a) Presentation of the seminar’s problematics and of the sessions’ contents.

b) Methods of work and evaluation

**SESSION 2** – February 26th

*Dealing with the Past.* (RB)


**SESSION 3** – March 4th

*On Violence, Memory and History* (RB)

Anthropology and Historical Political Sociology Perspectives.

Readings:
SESSION 4 – March 11th

**The development of Transitional Justice in the Global South (RB)**
Truth Commissions: South Africa and Peru in comparative perspective.

**Readings:**

SESSION 5 – March 18th

**‘How to read’ a Documentary Dealing with a Violent Past.**

**Invited Lecturer:**

**Film to be watched:**
tbc

**Readings:**

SESSION 6 – March 25th

**Screening of a film on Chile followed by a class debate**


**Synopsis:** When in 1998 Chilean judge Juan Guzmán was assigned the first criminal cases against the country's ex-dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, no one expected much. Guzmán had supported Pinochet's 1973 coup — waged as an anti-Communist crusade — that left the democratically elected president, Salvador Allende, and thousands of others dead or "disappeared." The filmmakers trace the judge's descent into what he calls "the abyss," where he uncovers the past — including his own role in the tragedy.
Readings:

SESSION 7 – April 1st
Dealing with the Past (Dictatorship) in Chile
Readings:

Films to be watched:
PIÑOCHE ET SES TROIS GENERAUX de José-Maria Berzosa, 1977, 101mn. (Espanol, subt. French)
Résumé: En 1976, trois ans après le coup d'état armé contre le gouvernement d'Allende, José-Maria Berzoza rencontre le général Pinochet en voyage et lui propose un entretien filmé sur sa vie et sa pensée politique. Pinochet et trois de ses généraux confient leurs idées spontanément. Ils parlent tranquillement de leurs goûts artistiques, de leurs idées politiques, de leur vie de famille. De ces entretiens menés dans une apparente bonhomie ressort un portrait ironique et sans concessions des principaux dirigeants de la junte : leur goût de l'ordre, de l'efficacité, une sorte de «fascisme ordinaire». En contrepoint, les familles des victimes et des disparus témoignent d'une autre réalité.
FIESTAPATRIA de L. Vera, 2007, 120 mn. (Espanol subt. English)
Synopsis: 'Fiestapatria' is a metaphor for the social and moral state of Chile, and provides provocative testimony of a period that ranges from the militar regime to the present day. The film makes use of a gallery of representative characters from Chilean society to tell the story of two families that get together in a country house to celebrate the National Holiday and the engagement of their children, Macarena and Álvaro. Just before the event comes to an eagerly-awaited happy end, young Macarena discovers the family's best kept secret.

b) Presentation of the themes for the final papers

SESSION 8 – April 8th
Screening of a film on Argentina
THE OFFICIAL STORY by Luis Puenzo, 1985, 104mn. (Espanol subt. English)
Synopsis: An Argentine teacher lives in blissful ignorance of the evils perpetrated by her country's government. Over time, however, her students' rejection of the "official" versions of their history leads her to question things herself. Suspecting that her adopted daughter may have been the child of a murdered political prisoner, she attempts to unearth the truth. But her investigation reveals levels of political corruption so abhorrent that the illusions of her past life are irrevocably shattered.

Readings:
EASTER HOLIDAYS: April 10 to 19th

SESSION 9 – April 22nd

*Dealing with the Past (Dictatorship) in Argentina*

Readings:


Films to be watched:

CONFESIONES de Gualberto Ferrari, 2011, 89mn. (mp4 – Espanol subt. Français)


EL PROCESO de Roman Lejtman, 2003, 55mn. (Espanol – subtit. English)

Synopsis: Este documental es una pieza inédita e histórica, porque contiene imágenes y testimonios de la dictadura nunca vistos en la Argentina. El Proceso es un trabajo periodístico que sirve para hacer memoria, enseñar a las nuevas generaciones y evitar, fundamentalmente, que la historia vuelva a repetirse. El 24 de Marzo de 1976, un golpe de Estado terminó con el gobierno de Isabel Perón. Las Fuerzas Armadas se hicieron cargo del poder e impusieron un plan sistemático de violación de los derechos humanos.

SESSION 10 – April 29th

*Screening of a film on Cambodia*


Synopsis: Vann Nath and Chum Mey, two survivors of the Khmer Rouges’ Tuol Sleng Prison, are reunited and revisit the former prison, now a museum in Phnom Penh. They meet their former captors – guards, interrogators, a doctor and a photographer – many of whom were barely teenagers during the Khmer Rouge era from 1975 to 1979. Their appearances are in stark contrast to the two former prisoners, who are both elderly men. Vann Nath, who was made to paint portraits
of prisoners, has a full head of white hair. The guards and interrogators give a tour of the museum, re-enacting their treatment of the prisoners and daily regimens. They look over the prison's detailed records, including photographs, to refresh their memories. At one point, Vann Nath directly confronts his former captors about their actions, but they counter that they themselves were also victims, being little more than children at the time, and hold themselves blameless.

Readings:

SESSION 11 – May 6th
Dealing with the Past (Genocide) in Cambodia

Readings:

Films to be watched:
DUCH, LE MAITRE DES FORGES DE L’ENFER by Rithy Panh, 2011, 103 mn.
Synopsis: Between 1975 and 1979, the Khmer Rouge was responsible for the death of nearly 2 million people - a quarter of the Cambodia population. Kaing Guek Eav, known as Duch, directed both the M13 and S21 centers where tens of thousands of people were tortured and executed. He also is the first Khmer Rouge leader to be brought before an international criminal justice court; he was found guilty and sentenced to 35 years in prison. Panh’s film is likely one of the most elaborate discussions with someone responsible for mass genocide. “Duch” describes a highly bureaucratic apparatus of death, where testimonies culled from tortured prisoners are scrutinized, corrected, and then sent to party headquarters to be examined by defense minister Son Sen and, occasionally, by Pol Pot himself. The film is most telling when Duch holds up copies of his own handwritten lists of slaughtered prisoners, revealing how an entire life was reduced by the Khmer regime into a single stroke of ink.

KHMERS ROUGES, UNE SIMPLE QUESTION DE JUSTICE de Rémi Lainé et Jean Reynaud, 2011, 90 mn.

SESSION 12 – May 13th
Dealing with the Past through Amnesia: The Case of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)

Readings:


Films to be watched:


Synopsis: Beirut is under reconstruction. A surprising pink palace is threatened of being destroyed to be replaced by a commercial center. This ambitious project divides the neighborhood. As the personal stories of those living in the pink house unveil, the wounds and dreams of a strange postwar period appear.


Summary: There is a notorious derelict district called Karantina on the outskirts of Beirut. A massacre took place there during the Lebanese Civil War, in January 1976, and it then became an empty space in the city's topography. This documentary essay explores the district's history by looking at just a few buildings - a tannery, a slaughterhouse, a hospital and a nightclub called BO18 - and uses it as a metaphor for the whole country's constitution. It combines contemporary and historical footage with soundscapes of music and noise, as well as the reflections of a psychiatrist, a journalist, and the architect Bernard Khoury who thinks of the district as a laboratory for urban development. Karantina becomes the terrain upon which the suppressed traumas and the collective unconscious of Lebanon are concentrated.

WE WANT TO KNOW by C. Mansour, 2012, 42mn. Audio: Arabic subt. English

Synopsis: the documentary is the narration of journeys taken by Lebanese high school students across the memory of the war in Lebanon (1975-1990) through the eyes of their parents, grandparents, relatives, and neighbours. It is the uncovering of silences about what daily life was like during periods of war, bombing, curfews, and kidnappings, and what it was like living under the constant threat of death and loss. The documentary traces the stories of daily life during the country's violent civil war through the recollections of four middle-aged characters (Iman, Widad, Nadim, and Mona) who lived, lost, and struggled through it; a war that ended abruptly without addressing its causes, results, and consequences. An entire generation, now in their 40s and 50s had never spoken about the war to their children. For many, this was the first time the past is uncovered and shared.

SESSION 13 – May 20th

**Dealing with the ‘Missings’ during the Civil War in Lebanon**

Readings:


Films to be watched:


Synopsis: Des centaines de personnes ont été portées disparues lors de la guerre civile au Liban. Dans la plupart des cas les corps n’ont jamais été retrouvés et les circonstances autour de leurs disparitions restent incertaines. Lamia Joreige nous emmène à Beyrouth parmi les habitants à qui elle pose une question : « Quelqu'un ici a-t-il été enlevé pendant la guerre ? » Son investigation la
mène à travers les nombreux quartiers autour de la « ligne verte » qui divisait la ville d’est en ouest, près des postes de contrôle des milices, lieux de nombreux enlèvements et crimes.

**Synopsis**: la fiction examine la situation des 'disparus' de la guerre civile lorsque l’un de ces derniers, Ramez, se retrouve libéré après 20 années de détention et projeté dans le monde actuel, avec toutes les conséquences et les bouleversements qu’implique 'l’après-retour'. En effet, la famille et le monde qu’il a quittés lors de son incarcération ont changé, évoluté - d’où un décalage marqué entre certains souvenirs figés dans le temps que Ramez a conservés et la réalité, difficile à assumer pour ce dernier. Diminué physiquement et mentalement, il se retrouve face à sa femme qui a, tant bien que mal, élevé 20 ans durant leurs deux enfants. Des enfants qui ont entre-temps grandi et sont devenus en âge de poser des questions, notamment vis-à-vis du retour de ce père qu’ils ne connaissent pas. Le film s’intéresse également aux dommages irréparables provoqués par la guerre civile. Le personnage de Nayfeh Najjar, inspiré de la vraie histoire d’une journaliste d’As-Safir dont le fils a été kidnappé pendant la guerre, et celui de Zeinab, autre femme de disparu, fidèle à la mémoire de son mari, illustrent également les ravages causés par la guerre sur la vie des civils.


**Synopsis**: Two people marked by the civil war - a man and a woman, perpetrator and victim - form the two opposing poles of this highly-charged film: Assaad Chaftari, a former senior intelligence official of a right-wing Christian militia responsible for countless deaths, and Maryam Saïdi, the mother of a communist partisan who went missing in 1982 at the age of 15. Both have gone against the rule requiring silence on the war: In 2000, Chaftari publicly acknowledged his culpability and Saïdi speaks unflinchingly and loudly about the search for her son's whereabouts and her pain. The dauntless filmmaker arranges for the two to meet. The confrontation throws open the question of forgiveness and reconciliation. Apart from the individual aspect, light is also shed upon the social dimension: Scenes featuring Chaftari's wife and son, his parents, the "Red Bishop" Haddad, a British psychotherapist and her "Garden of Forgiveness," as well as Chaftari's former militia cohorts hunting rabbits, and a silent former communist commander give an overall impression of Lebanese society. This is a cinematic statement against state-sanctioned collective forgetfulness.

**SESSION 14 - May 27th**

**Presentations of individuals’ and groups’ works in class**

(this session will last until 8.00pm, and will be followed by a cocktail)

**3. Evaluation and Grading**

The evaluation is based on regular attendance, participation in the debates, texts' and movies' critical presentations during the seminar, the pre-final oral presentation of the paper during the last session of the seminar, and the final written paper.

For the final group papers, students will work around a number of topics developed during the seminar. These will be presented in class.

The final papers will be co-signed by groups of 3-4 students and finalized by early January.

Students will be graded according to their presence, participation, class presentation (30%), on the one side, and for their final papers (70%) on the other side.
This course is granted 6 ECTS: attendance/participation (1 ECTS), presentations of texts and movies during the seminar (2 ECTS) and final paper (3 ECTS). Each ECTS is equivalent to 25-30 hours of work.

4. Academic Code of conduct

The written assignments must represent an original work, with the use of all resources properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating or violation of the academic honor code will NOT be tolerated, and will be dealt with according to Institute rules’ policy.

Student assignments will be randomly selected to be checked using software designed to identify academic plagiarism. Please, note that assignments that are confirmed to contain plagiarized material will be given a ‘O’ grade.

Background Bibliography

RAMIREZ-BARAT, Clara and DUTHIE, Roger (eds.), 2017, Transitional Justice and Education. New
York, Social Sciences Research Council.


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**ANNEX**

**THE QARQ (Quote, Argument, Relation, Question) MODEL**

Students introducing the texts and the films for the debate will be invited to:

**Quote** – Cite a sentence or two from each text (and from the films) which reflects the author(s)’ main argument(s).

**Argument** – synoptically present author’s argument in your own language. If relevant, mention which thesis the author is defending and which one he/she is arguing against.

**Relation** – When possible, connect the argument of the text or film under discussion with those of the same sessions or texts previously discussed. Show how author’s argument supports or undermines argument of other authors. Also when pertinent, connect the argument of the texts with the discourse/analysis provided in the film.

**Question** – frame a question about the position or consistency of the argument: a) e.g., an issue which the author is silent about, and why this silence, and b) question about a dimension in the text that may not be amply addressed. Ideally, question should be internal to the text.