

HIST 3305: Desaparecidos in History, Fiction, and Law

Fall 2022

TuTh 2:30PM-3:45PM

SLC 2.203

Professor: Amy Kerner

Office Hours by appointment -- Amy.Kerner@utdallas.edu



Course Description

The coordinated violence against civilians of late twentieth century Latin American dictatorships augured in a new, traumatic political concept: the *desaparecido* or disappeared person. In the 1970s and '80s, a contested number of people – in the thousands of Latin American civilians -- were taken into custody, tortured, and murdered, yet their fates remained unknown for years, decades, or still today. This course examines the historical contexts that produced the figure of the *desaparecido*, through a focused study of the Argentine Dirty War (~1974-83).

We will read historical scholarship and literary texts to understand, first, the historical origins of this period: the ideological and political orientation of the modern Argentine state, the movements, parties, and events that together made of the conditions of possibility for the escalating violence of the 1960s and '70s. Once we understand how the Dirty War was possible and what, exactly, it was, we will learn about the social, political, and aesthetic responses of Argentine and global society to the trauma of mass disappearance in Argentina and the Southern

Cone. We will consider consequences in the realm of law and literature: the significance of the *desaparecidos* in creating and exporting a new legal category into a global human rights discourse; and the emergent literary genre of the Argentine *testimonio*, a semi-fictional category of first-person account that aims to speak for or capture the experience of a collective.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain the chronology, political and ideological origins, and international dynamics of the Dirty War
- Find, analyze, and contextualize a range of on-line primary sources related to the Dirty War and disappearances
- Discuss the social and political ramifications of forced disappearance as a new category of human rights violation
- Define the genre of *testimonio*, and meaningfully relate it to Argentina's experience of transitional justice

Final grades will be determined as follows:

Participation

30%

Active participation in seminar-style discussion and in-class exercises (25%) and one required office hours visit (5%).

Reading for the week should be completed before class on Tuesdays (excepting week 1).

4 Discussion board posts (10% each)

40%

500 words each.

I list the date on the syllabus when these open, i.e. when you may begin posting. I will close them before the next one opens, so you have a window during which you can post, respond to your own post based on class discussion, review your classmates' posts, and I encourage you to respond to each other to create community on the board. If you are an active listener in class but do not speak often, then greater participation on the discussion board is a good alternative way for you to demonstrate your engagement for participation credit.

Final Essay or Final Creative Project

(/100) 30%

Final Papers: an expanded version of any one prior assignment that incorporates a total of 5 source from our syllabus (one may be a primary source), 5-7 pages, double spaced. Please cite your sources following your preferred style guide (eg. MLA, Chicago Manual, etc.) using footnotes or endnotes.

Creative projects (eg. podcast, short story / creative nonfiction, graphic novel/film/other artwork, performance, monument design, etc.) should include an accompanying analytical explanation & be discussed and approved with me before Thanksgiving break.

Absence policy:

I assume you will attend all class sessions, unless you email me at least 24 hours in advance. I do not need reasons for your absence, excepting COVID or other illness-related reasons which may require multiple absences.

More than two absences in the semester requires make-up work, and it is your responsibility to communicate with me about arrangements. If absences impact your ability to complete assignments, this may also negatively impact your grade.

Late work policy:

I do not accept late work. If you need an extension, you must notify me in advance of the deadline and we will agree on a revised deadline that meets your needs and my grading availability.

Email policy:

Please include our course code (HIST3305) in email subject lines. I aim to respond within 24-48 hours. If this window passes and you have not heard back, please send a follow-up/reminder.

Office hours:

One office hours visit will be required this semester, so I can get to know you and learn about your academic experiences and goals. You may schedule additional office hours visits via email at any time in the semester (I generally schedule at least one week out). These are ~15 minute appointments for: clarifying information from the readings or class discussions; discussing material we did not have time to cover in class; getting extra guidance or feedback on your written assignments or participation in class.

Required texts

Patricia Marchak, *God's Assassins: state terrorism in Argentina in the 1970s*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999.

Gabriel Gatti, *Surviving Forced Disappearance in Argentina and Uruguay: Identity and Meaning*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Sergio Chejfec, *The Planets*. Open Letter, 2012.

Reading Schedule

***Reading is due before class on Tuesdays.**

WEEK 1 – Introduction

- Francisco Goldman, “Children of the Dirty War: Argentina’s Stolen Orphans.” *The New Yorker*, March 12, 2012 issue.
- Marchak, Introduction and “Coping with State Terrorism,” pp1-21.
- Gatti, “Sociology from the Gut,” pp 1-13.

Tuesday August 23 – Course introduction

Thursday August 25 – On historical origins

WEEK 2 – Historical Origins – Peronism, Militarism, Unionism

- Marchak, pp43-108 (A Violent History, Peronism and Militarism, Unionism, A Very Brief Revolution)

Tuesday August 30

Thursday September 1 – Discussion board #1 opens: What are the historical origins of the Dirty War?

WEEK 3 – Escalation of Violence

- Marchak, 109-168 (The Dirty War, Imprisoned under PEN, *El Proceso*)
- *CONADEP report, *Nunca Más* – excerpts [online]

Tuesday September 6

Thursday September 8 – Primary Source discussion: *Nunca Más*

WEEK 4 – Revolutionaries and Sceptics

- Marchak, pp169-211 (Revolutionaries and Sceptics, Tucuman)
- *The Argentina Reader*, The Latin American Revolution according to "Che" / Ernesto "Che" Guevara

Tuesday September 13

Thursday September 15 – Continuing discussion: What are the historical origins of the Dirty War?

WEEK 5 – The Church & the Military

- Marchak, pp235-318 (A Deeply Divided Church, Third World Priests’ Movement, The Military Defence, Other Military Perspectives)

Tuesday September 20 -- *sign up for office hours visit Tuesday next week

Thursday September 22 – Primary Sources discussion: Voices (Marchak)

WEEK 6 – A Silent Majority?

- Read: Sebastian Carassai, chapter 4, “State Violence,” pp 151-189, in *The Argentine Silent Majority*, Duke Press 2014.

Tuesday September 27 -- Individual meetings with professor

Thursday September 29 – Discussion board #2 opens: How did most Argentines understand, explain, or relate to state violence, before and after the 1976 coup?

WEEK 7 – Violence and Desire

- Read: Sebastian Carassai, chapter 5, “Desire and Violence,” 205-266 in *The Argentine Silent Majority*, Duke Press 2014.

Tuesday October 4 – individual meetings with professor

Thursday October 6 – In-class discussion: Why does Carassai use popular magazines and advertising as historical sources? What questions can these materials answer, or not answer?

WEEK 8 – Human Rights Activists

- Read: Gatti, CH 2, “Activists of Meaning: Bringing Order to Ruins, Remaking Archives, and Undoing Traumas,” pp33-55
- Gatti CH4, “The Meaning-Preserving Machinery of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo” pp77-95

Tuesday October 11

Thursday October 13 -- In-class exercise – use the UTD library online to find and read a newspaper article (in English or Spanish) about the Madres or Abuelas

WEEK 9 -- International Context

- Marchak, pp212-234 (The International Context)
- National Security Archive: What the United States Knew about the 1976 Coup: <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/southern-cone/2021-03-23/argentinas-military-coup-what-us-knew>

Tuesday October 18

Thursday October 20 – Primary Source discussion, NSA

TRUTH, MEMORY, TESTIMONY

WEEK 10 – The Dirty War on screen

- Watch film: *Los Rubios* via Kanopy
- Read Gatti, CH7: “Serious Parodies: ‘Children of’ Inhabiting (More or Less Joyfully) the Absence

Tuesday October 25 -- *no meeting, watch *Los Rubios*

Thursday October 27 – Discussion board #3 opens: 500 word response to *Los Rubios*.

WEEK 11 – Trials

- Susana Kaiser, “Argentina’s Trials: New Ways of Writing Memory,” *Perspectives* 42(3), pp193-206 [on-line, UTD Library]
- Kathryn Sikkink, “From Pariah State to Global Protagonist: Argentina and the Struggle for International Human Rights,” *Latin American Politics and Society*, 2008, Vol. 50 (1), p.1-29. [on-line, UTD Library]

Tuesday November 1

Thursday November 3 – Ask anything session / flex meeting.

WEEK 12 – Testimonio: History and Literature

- Gatti, CH 6, “Noisy Silences: The Testimonial Work of the Former Detained-Disappeared” pp 117-127.
- Alicia Partnoy, “Cuando Vienen Matando: On Prepositional Shifts and the Struggle of Testimonial Subjects for Agency,” *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America*, 2006, Vol. 121 (5), p.1665-1669. [on-line, UTD Library]
- Begin reading *Los Planetas*.

Tuesday November 8 no meeting – mid-term elections.

Thursday November 10 – In-class discussion question: What is testimonio? What can testimonio do that other genres can’t? Why has it been criticized?

WEEK 13 – *Los Planetas*

Tuesday November 15

Thursday November 17 -- **Los Planetas*. Discussion Board #4 opens: response to *Los Planetas*. At the top, type out a passage from *Los Planetas*, in quotes, with the page number. Your response should discuss this passage, relate it to the testimonio as a whole, and to our readings about the testimonial genre.

WEEK 14

No class, Thanksgiving holiday

WEEK 15 – Monuments and memorials

- Gabriel Gatti, “CH 12: An Orderly Landscape of Remnants: Notes for Reflecting on the Spatiality of the Disappeared,” pp176-187 in Schindel and Colombo Eds., *Space and the Memories of Violence*, Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2014.
- Estela Schindel, “CH 13: A Limitless Grave: Memory and Abjection of the Rio de la Plata,” pp188-201 in Schindel and Colombo [see above].

Tuesday November 29

Thursday December 1 – Discussion question: What are some of the primary features, spaces, and challenges of memorializing forced disappearance and the Dirty War in Argentina?

WEEK 16 – Final week / Concluding discussion

Tuesday December 6

Thursday December 8

Classes begin: Monday, August 22

Midterm grades due and viewable: Saturday, October 8

Last day of classes: Thursday, December 8

Final exams: Saturday, December 10 - Friday, December 16

Final grades must be received by Monday, December 19. Viewable Tuesday, December 20.

University Closings Labor Day Monday, September 5 Thanksgiving holidays Thursday, Nov. 24 – Sunday, Nov. 27 Winter break Monday, Dec 26 – Monday, Jan 2 No Classes: Fall break Monday, Nov. 21 – Wednesday, Nov. 23