



HSE St. Petersburg  
School of Social Sciences and Humanities

**Course Title: Historical Memory and Identity Narratives**

**Course Coordinator: Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov**

**Credit Value: 3 ECTS**

**Contact hours: 46**

**Runs in (2016/17): Semester 1, Quarter 1-2**

**Course Prerequisites:** introductory-level familiarity with modern history and critical and social theory

**Open to exchange students: yes**

### Course Outline

This course is to introduce students to methodologies that are required for understanding history as a multiple, layered, and contested set of representations. The course is built as an in-depth series of case studies, with the aim of bringing together three distinct areas of analytical questions that are implied by its title's key terms: "history", "memory" and "identity": What are main approaches to social and cultural memory? What, and whose history is being remembered and narrated? How identity is understood?

1. Memory. This course gives a thorough grounding in classic work on memory from Durkheimian, psychoanalytical and Marxist perspectives, including Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, and contrasting it with the studies that draw on post-structuralist and cognitive approaches, as well as theories of affect and subjectivity.
2. History. The course asks what can be learned about societies from ways in which they are concerned with history. What are some of the types of historical consciousness and cultural notions of history, of lack thereof? How one can productively compare imperial and universalist notions of history as progress with ideas about historical and cultural uniqueness and exceptionalism, including nationalism, as well as with conceptualizations of history as justice, as trauma, and as objects of consumption. What are practices of production, exchange and consumption of historical narratives in education, tourism and politics?
3. Identity. This term has become one of the key categories in historical and social analysis. One of the goals of the course is to ask what identity is, and what approaches to identity are useful for understanding historical memory.

The course' point of departure is Romantic and post-Romantic discourses on communities, uniqueness and exceptionality, including the myths of origin and discourse of cultural exclusivity, narratives of national history and pantheons of national heroes. It then moves on to empire and postcoloniality, (post)socialism and (neo)liberalism as equally distinct forms of historical memory organization, with their own repertoires of referential imagery and understandings of boundaries. It explores the issues of memory of war, including civil war and ethnic conflict. Archive, film, body and material objects, including buildings, are approached as culturally-specific memory devices and contested sites for historical memory. Genres of historical narratives, including historiography, ethnology and anthropology, and museum are discussed.

### Assessment Methods

#### **Grading System:**

- seminar participation (15%)
- class assignments (35%)
- take home final essay exam (50%)
- late assignments will be marked down by 10% of the mark per day
- if you plagiarize, you fail.