



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Fulbright-Hays Balkan Borderlands program 2017

Curriculum Project/Title:

Looking Beyond the Surface: History, Forgetting, and the Politics of National Reconciliation

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Course/Audience

Intro to US Ethnic Literature

Relevant to other literature courses dealing with ethnic literatures

Relevant to humanities courses dealing with public memorials and national architectures

Relevant to history courses dealing with public memorials and national architectures

Overview

The formative moment of my project owes a specific debt of gratitude to Lejla Mulalic, a faculty member at the University of Sarajevo. My initial intent was to show U.S. students local, U.S.-based examples of monuments, landmarks, and other public symbols that were fraught with historical erasures, as well as endowed with historical “weight.” The local would be the jumping off point to discussions about how other countries struggled with the same issues of historical accuracy and navigating the often complex, and violent, histories of the past — especially in the story telling of monuments, landmarks, etc. Thankfully, in a roundtable with Prof. Mulalic, as we discussed the ethnic cleansing and genocide in the Balkans, I asked how faculty engaged students in discussions about their most recent war and its legacies. Prof. Mulalic stated plainly that the history, at least initially, was literally too close to home. Her strategy was to teach the students about the politics of memory using monuments from other countries as the point of entry to the recent-past of the Bosnian genocide. Once her students developed a level of recognition of the problem of memorialization in other countries and histories, the door to grappling with their own national history was jarred open.

I additionally owe a substantial debt of gratitude to the Fulbright-Hays program; without their support, this curriculum project would never have occurred. I am also indebted to Lisa Adeli, Kathryn Howard, Amir Telibechirowich, and all the participants of the 2017 Balkans Borderlands program. Finally, my home college of Mesa Community College and the colleagues in the Department of English also helped support this project.

Student Learning Outcomes

Articulate and understand the role of memorialization in the creation and maintenance of national memory

Articulate and understand the role of historical amnesia and contested histories as a component of memorialization, and its role in the creation and maintenance of national memory

Gain an expanded appreciation of what constitutes memorialization (e.g. everything from state sponsored statues to street names to the names of streets/geographic locations)

Articulate and understand the consequences of historical amnesia on the rights, social, and cultural lives of those communities being “forgotten.”

Develop the necessary critical thinking, discussion, and writing skills to effectively engage these issues.

Develop the necessary presentation skills to engage participate in a collaborative project, lead classroom discussions, and present complex materials.

Develop the necessary research skills to develop a comprehensive understanding of the monuments in question.

Procedures/Lesson Sequence

Individual faculty have tremendous latitude when selecting relevant local sites for analysis. The details of the lesson plan are embedded in the attached PowerPoint.

The PowerPoint is intended to be a prompt, rather than a completed lesson (hence the barebones presentation). The locations selected can be readily substituted with any number of locations across Bosnia and the United States. Fomenting critical discussions with our students about how “monuments” (both formal and informal) are endowed with historical meaning and stripped of memory is an essential skill as we work to educate both critical thinkers and civically engaged citizens.

The essentials of this presentation model are:

- 1) locations of significant historical and cultural import (in this presentation the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge) or so utterly “every day” that they are essentially invisible (Phoenix’s Indian School Road)
- 2) meaningful engagement with the consequences for both the historical victors and vanquished (slides 4, 7, and 12)
- 3) an effort to engage students in the multiple meanings (both widely known and forgotten) and contested feelings about the local “monuments” under discussion (slides 8, 9, 10, 11).

The order of Bosnian to local is purposeful. As noted in the overview, helping students first see the conflicts around memory and “monuments” in other parts of the world better prepares them to engage these complex issues in their home communities.

Listed below are suggestions for other locations within Bosnia, as well as recommendations for alternate sites in the United States. Finding a location within your student’s home community is highly recommended. While this lesson plan has yet to be deployed in totality, based on initial discussions about Indian School Road, most local students are generally stunned to learn it is named after an *actual* Indian School with a troubling history. The fact that the history behind the name is largely unknown, and so troubling, promotes incredibly generative (and not always comfortable) discussions.

Other options in Bosnia: Cross on Hum Mountain (Mostar); defaced Cyrillic traffic signs (Neum – this instance provides an opportunity to engage the Bosnian language and alphabets); defaced Latin alphabet traffic signs (Banja Luka – this instance provides an opportunity to engage the Bosnian language and alphabets); Cathedral of

the Holy Trinity (Mostar); Mrkonjic Grad and Sijekovac (notable for the absence of commemorative symbols); Medjugorje shrine (notable for the absence of history from the 1940s).

Other options in the United States: Oñate Monument (Alcalde, New Mexico), Confederate Monuments (multiple locations); Junipero Serra Monument (Monterrey, California); Mount Rushmore (Black Hills, South Dakota); Columbus monuments (multiple locations); Confederate statues (U.S. Capital Building); Andrew Jackson's likeness on the \$20 bill (ubiquitous); Native Americans used as mascots (multiple professional, collegiate, and high school sports teams).

Assessment

The specific assessments will change as the locations studied change.

Formative: Written and verbal assessment of students' understanding of the role of the memorial/memorialization in the formation/maintenance of the nation-state.

Formative: Written and verbal assessment of students' understanding of the role of historical amnesia and contested histories, specifically in the aftermath of the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia the 1990s.

Formative: Written and verbal assessment of the students' understanding of the historical and cultural impact of the Phoenix Indian School on indigenous communities.

Summative: Applied demonstration of understanding of memorialization, historical amnesia, and contested history through analysis of "local" national symbol that accounts for the "forgotten"/"erased" histories (written or multimedia assignment) within a foreign context.

Summative: Collaborative project articulating how to commemorate the atrocities of the Bosnian civil wars of the 1990s within the highly fraught political realities of modern day Bosnia (to reinforce the concepts and develop deeper comfort with the ideas situated in a foreign context).

Summative: Collaborative project articulating how to commemorate a historical monument with a contested political or cultural history within the highly fraught political realities of modern day United States.

Materials

These will vary with the assignments, as well as the instructional preferences of the initiating instructor.

Technology

Fortunately, this is a relatively low-tech exercise. The technological demands are relatively modest (though depending on the instructor and classroom, the technology used to deliver the content can easily be supplemented or enhanced – much of this is at the discretion of the initiating faculty member).

An overhead projector attached to a computer with an updated presentation software program (PowerPoint, for example) and high-speed internet should meet instructor's needs, as well as the student needs for their presentations.

It would be highly beneficial, though not essential, to be teaching within a fully-mediated classroom. For both the formative and summative assessments, student access to personal computers with web access would allow for guided research on the historical context of the conflict in Bosnia, as well as the contextual research for the local monument. Additionally, access to online archives, databases, and news sources would greatly enhance the students' ability to conduct the necessary research for their summative projects. However, if such a classroom is not available, class can be used to review and discuss materials collected outside of class.

For the collaborative projects, access to a shared drive (Google Drive or Dropbox, for example) would be an asset, yet again not essential.

Adaptations

As noted in the Procedures/Lesson Sequence section, this is a highly adaptable curriculum model. There are a multitude of sites (a brief selection is noted above) across Bosnia-Herzegovina where histories are completely erased and/or highly contested. This provides a significant bank of symbols to draw from to tailor the symbol to the course's focus (Cathedral of the Holy Trinity for a Religious Studies course, or the defaced Cyrillic traffic signs for a lesson on public policy).

Additionally, the US-based examples are potentially limitless, and highly relevant. From indigenous imagery used as sports mascots to Andrew Jackson's image on the \$20 bill, an instructor can tailor the sites to be as local or as remote as needed to promote student engagement with the complexity of the history of the United States and its legacy of forgetting and cultural amnesia.

Reflections

As of submission, the lesson has not been used in class. However, it is the basis for a presentation at the 2017 Community College Humanities Association conference.