

Cornell University
Fall 2005

Martyrdom in Contemporary Societies

SOC 332 / NES 332

Professor Tamir Sorek

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:40 – 12:55 pm

Place: Uris Hall G24

Office hours: Monday, 11:00 – 1:00 or by appointment, 406 White Hall

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Description

Nothing demonstrates better the power of society than the readiness of some individuals to sacrifice their lives for their community, their nation, or their religious group. There is no better way to unify a group than to celebrate the image of individuals who sacrificed themselves, ostensibly, for their community. This course sheds a sociological light on these intimate relations between violent death and solidarities of modern societies. The course offers comparative discussions of the social significance of heroic death and victimhood in various contexts around the globe. We will examine various 'cultures of death', analyzing what sociological theories have to say about these phenomena and discussing the required adaptations in existing theories in light of case studies presented in class.

Grading

1. Class participation + web participation	25 %
2. Class presentations	15 %
3. Mid-term paper	15 %
4. Final paper	45 %

Course requirements

Participation

Attendance and active participation in all course meetings is an integral part of the course and is mandatory. Students are expected to have read the reading assignments closely and critically before each meeting. Your participation grade is worth 25% of the final grade. For those who do not feel comfortable speaking in class, the website forum can make up for poor class participation. The web forum cannot substitute for attendance. Please register onto the course website in the Blackboard system <http://blackboard.cornell.edu> .

Class presentations

During the course every student will give one in-class presentation on an item from the reading list, as well as presenting the progress on her/his individual work. These presentations are worth 15% of the grade.

Papers

Every student is required to choose a subject for her/his papers – any subject related to the course themes is possible. By 3/28 you will be required to submit a first draft of the paper (about 1,500 words), which will be graded (15% of the final grade). The second version will be submitted as a final paper by 5/10 (up to 3,000 words – 50% of the final grade).

Class schedule and reading assignments

Section 1: Why do people sacrifice their lives for their communities?

Date	
8/25	Introduction
8/30	Weiner, Eugene and Anita Weiner. 1990. <i>The Martyr's Conviction: A Sociological Analysis</i> . Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press (Chs. 3, pp. 51-62)
9/1	Lifton, Robert. 1979. <i>The Broken Connection</i> . New-York: Simon & Shuster. Pp 13-23
9/6	Movie: <i>The Last hunger strike?</i> ----- O'Malley, Pdraig. 1990. <i>Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair</i> . Boston: Beacon Press. Ch. 4, pp. 34-65
9/8	Durkheim, Emile. 1966. <i>Suicide, a Study in Sociology</i> . New York: Free Press. Pp. 217-240.
9/13	Stern, Paul C. 1995. "Why do people sacrifice for their nations?" <i>Political Psychology</i> 16: 217-235.
9/15	Guest lecture on self sacrifice in Japan: J. Victor Koschmann, History Department, Cornell University ----- Inoguchi, Rikihei and Tadashi Nakajima. 1958. <i>The Divine Wind: Japan's Kamikaze Force in World War II</i> . Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute (Ch. 21, "Last Letters Home". pp 196-208)
9/22	Movie: <i>Kamikaze - Mission of Death</i> ----- Freamon, Bernard K. 2003. "Martyrdom, Suicide, and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History." 27:299-369.

9/27	<p>Discussion on martyrdom in Islam with Shawkat M. Toorawa, Near Eastern Studies, Cornell University</p> <hr/> <p>Alagha, J. 2004. 'Hizbullah and Martyrdom', <i>Orient</i> 45 (1): 47-74.</p>
9/29	<p>Movie: Suicide Bombers – Secrets of the Shaheed</p> <p>Pedahzur, Ami, Arie Perliger, and Leonard Weinberg. 2003. "Altruism and Fatalism: The Characteristics of Palestinian Suicide Terrorists." <i>Deviant Behavior</i> 24:405-423.</p>

Section 2: The Cult of the Fallen Soldier

10/4	<p>Anderson, Benedict. 1991. <i>Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism</i>. New York: Verso, pp. 9-12</p> <p>Schopflin, George. 1997. "The function of myth and a taxonomy of myth." In <i>Myths and Nationhood</i>, vol. 19-35, edited by G. Hosking and G. Schopflin. New York: Routledge.</p>
10/6	<p>Mosse, George L. 1990. <i>Fallen Soldiers - Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press Ch. 4, 5.</p>
10/13	<p>Movie: The War Memorials</p> <hr/> <p>Marvin, Carolyn, and David W. Ingle. 1999. <i>Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge U Press. Ch. 1,2,4 (1-40, 63-97)</p>

Section 3 - Between Past and Present

10/18	<p>Wagner-Pacifici, R. and Schwartz, B. 1991. 'The Vietnam Veteran Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past', <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 97(2): 376-420.</p>
10/20	<p>Brubaker, R. and Feischmidt, M. 2002. '1848 in 1998: The Politics of Commemoration in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia', <i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i> 44(4): 700-744.</p>
10/25	<p>Ben-Yehuda, N. 1995. <i>The Massada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel</i>, Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press. Pp. 147-162; 271-306.</p>

Section 4: Between Victimhood and Heroism

10/27:	Segments from movies: <i>Heroes of the Alamo</i> , <i>The Martyrs of the Alamo</i> ----- Flores, Richard R. 2002. <i>Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol</i> . Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. Pp. 130-152
11/1	Zerubavel, Yael. 1995. <i>Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press (pp. 13-36).
11/3	Handelman, Don, and Lea Shamgar Handelman. 1997. "The Presence of Absence: The Memorialism of National Death in Israel." Pp. 85-128 in <i>Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience</i> , edited by Eyal Ben Ari and Yoram Bilu. Albany: SUNY
11/8	Movie: <i>Izkor - Slaves of Memory</i> (Eyal Sivan, 1991).
11/10	Aran, Lydia. 2002. "The Forgotten Dead: Representations of the Past in Tibet." <i>International Journal of Contemporary Sociology</i> 39:249-268.

Section 5: Between the Religious and the Secular

11/15	Harootunian, Harry. 1999. "Memory, Mourning, and National Morality: Yasukuni Shrine and the Reunion of State and Religion in Postwar Japan." in <i>Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia</i> , edited by P. Van der Veer and H. Lehmann. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
11/17	Dosal, Paul J. 2004. "San Ernesto de la Higuera: The Resurrection of Che Guevara." Pp. 317-341 in <i>Body Politics, Death, Dismemberment, and Memory in Latin America</i> , edited by L. L. Johnson. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Section 6: (11/22, 11/29, 12/1) Students' Presentations