Histories of the Public Sphere in Latin America: History, Justice, and Memory
Graduate colloquium

HIST G8911                         Pablo Piccato
Fall 2011                          Department of History
Monday, 6:10pm-8:00pm              Columbia University
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The historical literature on the public sphere has been expanding rapidly in recent years, spanning diverse regions and periods, and dealing with intellectual debates, cultural transformations, elite and popular politics, and the shifting boundaries between public and private life. Although historians of Latin America are part of this new interest, they do not always engage the theoretical and methodological implications of the category, often on the assumption that the inequalities and exclusions of Latin American politics are not properly accounted for in a study of the public sphere following European models.

Simultaneously, the past couple of decades have seen the increasing importance of public debates about the recent past in Latin American countries, as most of them were coming out of authoritarian regimes and civil wars involving massive violations of human rights by states and armed organizations. The history of this recent past cannot be studied without understanding the debates about collective memory and the role of justice in the transition to fully democratic regimes.

This course will seek to pair those two areas of current historiography and social sciences. It will start with a review of the historical literature on the public sphere in modern Latin America that will involve a critical engagement with the theoretical and comparative literature on the topic. We will examine empirical contributions but also at the way in which the category impacts the debates and research agendas of political and cultural history. The course will include a reading of Habermas’s work but will also seek to expand the usual limits of the study of the public sphere, going beyond the study of political ideas and elite sociabilities and focusing also on the history of media and popular cultural practices that, although outside the usual purview of intellectual or political history, are still relevant to understand dialogical interactions between state and civil society. We will discuss historical works on republicanism, political mobilization and citizenship in the nineteenth and twentieth century in Latin America. The course will gradually introduce readings about the problems of memory and justice in the recent history of the region, with particular emphasis on Argentina. Besides a few comparative or theoretical readings, we will examine works from testimony, law and history that address these problems and also exemplify the problems raised by public debates about violence, human rights and commemoration.

Some of the question to be raised during the semester include: Can we write the history of that common space of rational and egalitarian debate called the public sphere? Do reason and public opinion have a history? Can they be relevant historical objects for the study of dictatorial regimes? Are social inequalities and exclusions and the mass media strong enough in modern societies to eliminate the possibility of a dialogue about the common good? How has the memory of the recent past, and the processes of bringing to justice the perpetrators of human rights violations, changed the themes and rules of the public sphere? How have collective memory and history been shaped, in turn, by public debates beyond the traditional realms of official commemoration and professional history? This colloquium will reclaim these questions as objects of historical research in Latin America without losing sight of their contemporary relevance.

Requirements:
In-class presentations: each student will lead discussion at least one week during the semester. This will involve sending out discussion questions to the rest of the group ahead of the meeting, introducing the text and providing information on its historiographical context.

Weekly reactions to the reading, of 500-300 words, will be submitted to the courses blog (http://edblogs.columbia.edu/histg8911-001-2011-3/) no later than Monday at noon.

Final paper, approximately 15 pages. Each paper should be discussed individually with the instructor. An abstract and outline should be submitted by October 18.

Reading in Spanish is required. French could be useful too.

**Readings and syllabus:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 12</td>
<td>Introduction: Basic definitions and critical approaches</td>
<td>Habermas, &quot;The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article.&quot; Eley; Mah.</td>
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<td>Sep. 19</td>
<td>Approaches to the public sphere as public space</td>
<td>Guerra et al., <em>Los espacios públicos</em>; read introduction, chapter by Verdo; Myers, &quot;Las paradojas&quot;; Chambers, &quot;Choosing.&quot;</td>
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<td>Sep. 26</td>
<td>Historians in front of memory and justice</td>
<td>Traverso; Ginzburg.</td>
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<td>Class will meet at the New School</td>
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<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td>The Latin American laboratory Media, culture and politics in the twentieth century</td>
<td>&quot;Piccato, “Public sphere in Latin America”; Palti, “Recent studies”. Roldán, ms on radio; chapters from Joseph, Fragments or Hayes, Radio Nation.</td>
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<td>Oct. 10</td>
<td>Nationalism as memory and commemoration</td>
<td>Finchelstein, Fascismo</td>
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<td>Oct. 24</td>
<td>Masses and politics</td>
<td>Plotkin.</td>
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<td>Oct. 31</td>
<td>Working class public narratives</td>
<td>James.</td>
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<td>Nov. 14</td>
<td>Legacy of dictatorship</td>
<td>Timerman; Nino, chaps. 1-3.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Author/Reference</td>
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<td>Nov. 21 *</td>
<td>Justice and the legacy of repression</td>
<td>Crenzel; Nunca más.</td>
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<td>Nov. 28</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Stern.</td>
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<td>Dec. 5</td>
<td>Historians in front of memory and justice</td>
<td>Traverso; Ginzburg.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>Critical memory of revolutionary movements</td>
<td>Vezzetti, Pasado y presente; Chapter by Chase in Joseph and Grandin.</td>
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<td>Dec. 23, noon</td>
<td>Final paper due in my Fayerweather mailbox</td>
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**Bibliography:**


Crenzel, Emilio A., *Historia política del Nunca más: la memoria de las desapariciones en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, c2008. [There is a translation recently published by Routledge that can be used.]


Eley, Geoff. "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century." *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*. Eds. Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff
Gayol, Sandra. "'Honor Moderno': The Significance of Honor in Fin-De-Siècle Argentina." Hispanic American Historical Review 84.3 (2004): 475-98.
Maza, Sarah. "Women, the Bourgeoisie, and the Public Sphere: Response to Daniel Gordon and David
Tate, Winifred. Counting the dead: the culture and politics of human rights activism in Colombia.