Spring 2020 Course Description

Instructor: Marian Eide  
Course: ENGL 352  
Title: Literature World War II to the Present: Historical Narrative, Cultural Memory

Description: As a society, we develop collective versions of the past to cement our sense of culture and community. This course focuses on contemporary literature, works written in the last twenty-five years. However, the focus of each book is a historical event or process that had lasting national or international effects. Our primary concern in the course will be to understand how history becomes cultural memory, how events of the past shape present communal identity. We will also consider the possibility that literature can unsettle the communal assumptions formed by cultural memory and give us new ideas about our own heritage. Assignments include a brief essay, a visual plan for a memorial, and a podcast providing historical background for an assigned reading.

Proposed Readings:  
Toni Morrison: A Mercy  
Colson Whitehead: The Underground Railroad  
Pat Barker: Toby's Room  
TaraShea Nesbit: The Wives of Los Alamos  
Julia Alvarez: In the Time of the Butterflies  
Mohsin Hamid: The Reluctant Fundamentalist  
Natasha Trethewey: Beyond Katrina