The Ghosts of History

FIG 19

In this FIG, three outstanding professors will help lead you to an astute understanding of violence and its legacies. Together, we will examine not only the acts of violence that occur in war, but also the array of ways that the aftermath of violence affects individuals and societies. We will learn how events that seem to belong to another time linger in our politics, our narratives, our artworks, and our relationships.

The main seminar in this FIG (English 175, “Literature and Testimony”) will include an in-depth, semester-long investigation of the legacies of political violence through a study of literature that invites us to reflect on the French Revolution, slavery and the American Civil War, World War II and the Holocaust, anti-communist violence in Indonesia, the war in Vietnam, and the Rwandan genocide. We will discover that ghosts and haunting occur across these literatures and consider the ways that we live with a past that actively unsettles the present.

While these three courses will focus on the past – through history, literature, philosophy, and film – taking a lead from the ghosts, they should still help you learn who you would like to be in the present and how to live in a world that continues to shape and be shaped by a past that refuses to stay put.

The two linking courses:
History 120, Europe and the Modern World 1815 to the Present. This course will examine the political, economic, social, and cultural history of modern Western civilization and provide an excellent background for understanding many of the texts and events covered in the primary FIG course.

Political Science 209, Introduction to Political Theory. This course will complement our analysis by providing an examination of conceptions of politics and the purposes of government, the problems of political obligation deriving from these, with specific attention to the ideas of crime, punishment and responsibility, political crimes–treason, collaboration, war crimes–and the limits of obligation and forms of dissent.
This FIG is a total of 11 credits. Students will need to take a 12 credit minimum to be a full-time student.