

The Algerian Revolution in Fact, Film and Fiction

Instructor: David Stenner

It is nearly fifty years since the end of the Algerian War of Independence, yet the memory of that conflict continues to stir controversy. In France, in North Africa, and now in the United States, a re-examination of the themes evoked by the events in Algeria between 1945 and 1962 still resonates with emotion. French educators are currently wrestling with a re-evaluation of how to teach the Algerian War in the secondary school curriculum; American military leaders were reported to have viewed the movie "The Battle of Algiers" prior to the invasion of Iraq. Questions concerning the role of terrorism and its efficacy in achieving political ends, the use of torture, the participation of women in armed struggle, the making and remaking of memory, are topics of ongoing debate in France and Algeria. The lack of resolution about the meaning of the War, not unlike the American dilemmas over Vietnam and now Iraq and Afghanistan, suggests that a fractured memory is one that reflects deep societal differences over issues about forgiveness and reconciliation, acceptance of loss, and recognition of those who suffered. We shall investigate these themes and others through the rich sources now available in English. Written texts include histories, memoirs, letters, stories, and fiction by writers as diverse as Mouloud Feraouan, Albert Camus, Henri Alleg, and Assia Djebbar. We shall also view films that bring alive our image of the times. Throughout, seminar participants will be asked to consider how historical constructs are appropriated -- both wisely and inappropriately -- to make sense of present dilemmas.

Required Books

Henri Alleg, *The Question*

Albert Camus, *The First Man*

Assia Djebbar, *Children of the New World*

Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*

Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*

David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French, Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920*

Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish faith: the civilizing mission in colonial Algeria*

Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War*

James McDougall, *A History of Algeria*

Course Reader [CR]

Course Requirements:

Participation: weekly responses and presentation: 50%

1. Weekly critical response pieces are due at the beginning of class. Each week's response should address the questions: What are the author's main arguments? What sources does the author use to support it? All papers should be approximately 500 words, typed, double-spaced. Students will rotate presenting questions and ideas to guide us in the discussion of each week's readings. Presentations should not be more than 15-20 minutes.

Final Paper: 50%

2. An overview response essay covering at least three significant books in the field on a theme of your choosing will be due at the end of the quarter. Students may also choose to write a research paper or an annotated bibliography in consultation with the instructor.

Week 1: The Enlightenment, Republicanism, Race, and Empire

How did the ideology of French Republicanism shape the rationale for colonization? Why was France interested in Algeria in the first place? Why was France so committed to remaining in Algeria?

Reading:

Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 1-9, 72-121. [CR]

David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* [CR]

Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (2006), "Introduction" [CR]

Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 11-107, 174-211. [CR]

Week 2: Algiers: From Ottoman Beylik to French Colony

The colonization of Algeria occurred in several stages. What were the reasons behind it? Who benefited from it? What happened to the native population?

Reading:

McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, Chs. 1-2

D Prochaska, *Making Algeria French, Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920*

Week 3: Theorizing Revolution: France's Passion for Algeria, Algeria's Passion for Independence

Why was France interested in Algeria in the first place? Why was France so committed to remaining in Algeria?

Reading:

Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question : Theory, Knowledge, History* [CR]

J-P. Sartre, "Colonialism is a System" [CR]

Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, Selections [CR]

Week 4: Colonial Society

Who were the *pieds-noirs*? Who were the native Algerians? Where did their values meet? Where did they clash?

Reading:

Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, Prefaces and Chs 1-3

Camus, *The First Man* (all)

Feraoun, *The Poor Man's Son* [CR]

Week 5: Complementary Enemies

In the early days of the war, liberals on both sides thought there was a path to solution. It was not yet clear that the War of Liberation would mean civil war-- for both sides. How did factionalism contribute to making the War a long and bitter conflict?

Reading:

Horne, Chs 4-8

Feraoun, *Journal*, Selections, Part 1 [CR]

Week 6: The Jews of Algeria

What was the situation of Algeria's Jews throughout the French Occupation? What was their relationship with the European Settlers? And the native Muslim population? How did the Muslim nationalist movement affect their status?

Reading:

Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish faith: the civilizing mission in colonial Algeria*

Sung Choi, "Complex compatriots: Jews in post-Vichy French Algeria," *The Journal of North African Studies*, 17:5, 863-880 (2012)

Susan Slyomovics, "Geographies of Jewish Tlemcen," *The Journal of North African studies*, 5 (4), 81-96 (2001)

Week 7: The Battle of Algiers and the French "War on Terror"

Why was the Battle of Algiers such a turning point? How did it shape French policy and politics in Algeria and in France?

Reading:

Horne, Chs 9-10

Film: *The Battle of Algiers* (1966)

Week 8: The Myth of the Paras

How was the cult of the soldier-hero created and maintained to gain support for the War in the popular imagination? How did accounts of the war from the soldier's point of view counteract that image?

Reading:

Choose one:

Lartéguy, *The Praetorians*

Servan-Shreiber, *Lieutenant in Algeria*

Leulliette, *St. Michael and the Dragon*

Week 9: Why Torture?

Published accounts of torture forced the French public to rethink their position on the war. How did intellectuals react? Compare the use of torture in the Algerian War with the practice of torture in the Iraq conflict.

Reading:

Horne, Ch.11

Henri Alleg, *The Question* (all)

Sartre, "A Victory" [CR]

Jane Mayer, "The Black Sites," *The New Yorker*, August 13, 2007 [CR]

Week 10: Women and War

What role did women play in the war? How did men construct women's role, how did women see themselves? What sexual stereotypes did Algerian and French leaders play on?

Reading:

Horne, Ch. 19

Assia Djebar, *Children of the New World* (all)

Week 11: Albert Camus: The War and the Intellectuals

Algerian-born Camus was the leading French public intellectual of his day. Why is his position on the War a controversial one? How much did the "war of words" shape public opinion?

Reading:

Horne, Chs 13-17

Camus, *Exile and the Kingdom*, "The Guest" [CR]

Week 12: Writing the Nation: Historiography and its victims

How did Algerians imagine their own past and the future of their country? What role did historiography play in uniting the population against the French? Who were the losers of the battle of the pens?

Reading:

James Mc Dougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*

Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, pp.1-38 [CR]

Week 13: The War, Global Politics and the Media

How did international politics during the early Cold War era influence the Algerian Revolution? How did the foreign powers view North Africa? affect the outcome? What role did the radio play in the war? How did propaganda directed at Western audiences affect the outcome?

Reading:

M Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution* (chapters TBD) [CR]

I Wall: *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* [CR]

Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* [CR]

The Algerian Office: *Algeria: Questions and Answers* [CR]

Week 14: A Terrible Denouement; The Revolution and Memory

The war in its final stages: who were its victims? What were its disappointments? How do we calculate the losses? How did this war set the stage for the next one? What happened to the Algerians who fought for France? How has the War been remembered in Algeria and France? What does it mean for a society when war and its victims are intentionally forgotten?

Reading:

Horne, Chs. 20-25

Feraoun, *Journal*, Selections, Part 2 [CR]

Benjamin Stora, "The Algerian War in French Memory" [CR]

Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* [CR]

Week 15: The Algerian Civil War

What were the long-term consequences of the bloody revolution? Did Algeria ever truly achieve independence? How was the civil war of the 1990s related to war of independence?

Reading:

Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War*

McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, Chs. 6-7