

MEARC Seminar:

# PAST OBSESSIONS: WAR AND MEMORY IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY

Prof. Carol Gluck (Columbia University, NY)

Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2006 - 15.00-17.00 (Lipsius, 148)

## Abstract

### PAST OBSESSIONS: WAR AND MEMORY IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY

More than sixty years after it ended, the Second World War remains a contested issue in history and memory in many countries. Whether it is public controversy over the firebombing of German cities, the long shadow of the Vichy regime in France, the memory shock of Jews killed by their neighbors in a Polish village, the claims of former "comfort women" in Asia, or the World War II memorial finally opened in Washington, the war continues to hold a significant place in the political and cultural agendas of the present. International lawsuits seek compensation for Holocaust survivors and Chinese victims of the Rape of Nanking. Right-wing nationalists in a number of countries use war memory to stir up patriotic sentiment for political purposes. New monuments, memorials, and museums spring up everywhere. World War II stands as the referent for contemporary issues that range from crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia to the efforts of postcommunist nations in Eastern

Europe to recast their national histories.

Why war? Why now? And why the obsession with memory itself?

This lecture takes a broad comparative approach to these questions, drawing on examples from Europe, North America, and Asia in order to understand, first, how public memory works, and second, the challenge that the current surplus of memory poses to what we used to call history.

**Carol Gluck**, George Sansom Professor of History, Columbia University, specializes in modern Japan, from the late nineteenth century to the present. She received her B.A. from Wellesley in 1962 and her Ph.D. from Columbia in 1977. Her publications include *Japan's Modern Myths* (1985), *Showa: the Japan of Hirohito* (1992), *Asia in Western and World History* (1997), *Versions of the Past: the Japanese and Their Modern History* (forthcoming), and *Past Obsessions: War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*



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This Modern East Asia Research Centre Seminar will be held in Lipsius, 148.

Registration is ESSENTIAL: [info@mearc.eu](mailto:info@mearc.eu)

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