

University of Connecticut Early College Experience Workshop  
Human Rights in the Southern Cone: The Dirty War and Marshall Meyer



Curriculum Sponsored by UConn Thomas J. Dodd Research Center  
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## Introduction

The workshop *Human Rights in the Southern Cone: The Dirty War and Marshall Meyer* was sponsored by The University of Connecticut Early College Experience, The Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, and El Instituto: Latino, Caribbean and Latin American Studies Institute. It explores the reign of terror that enveloped the Southern Cone of South America in the 1970's and 80's. Within the context of this Dirty War (El Proceso), it considers human rights abuses, Jewish identity, social activism, and the work of Marshall Meyer, a rabbi from Norwich, CT who dared to make a difference. *Human Rights in the Southern Cone: Spotlight on Argentina* was prepared for teachers attending the Early College Experience Workshop on December 12, 2014, and was updated in July 2015 to reflect new information and events.

*Human Rights in the Southern Cone: Spotlight on Argentina* introduces students to the dark period of Argentine history from 1976-1983. The military junta called this period the National Reorganization Process (*El Proceso*) and it was obsessed with eliminating "subversives." Also known as the Dirty War (*La Guerra Sucia*), this was an era of state terrorism, gross crimes against humanity, and it was infamous for *desaparecidos* (disappeared persons). People were tortured, some thrown from planes into the ocean, and babies were taken from imprisoned mothers and then given away. Justice and healing has been a long process and, in 2014, the Dirty War is still making headlines.

*Human Rights in the Southern Cone: Spotlight on Argentina* includes activities for students to learn about and reflect on the events leading to the 1976 military takeover, the Dirty War, and its legacy. Underlying themes threaded throughout the units include human rights abuse, freedom of speech and the press, how artists express their most important sociopolitical concerns, and how nations mourn and recover from national traumas such as the Dirty War. Student activities include: completing object-based observations of art, analyzing primary source documents, listening to protest music, reading literature, poetry and scholarly projects, participating in role play activities, researching information using online databases and writing creative and reflective essays. This curricular unit is in English, although many of the resources are also available in Spanish. For questions about *Human Rights in the Southern Cone: Spotlight on Argentina*, or access to a forthcoming website with updated activities and articles, multimedia and student work, please contact Elise Weisenbach at [eweisenbach@branfordschools.org](mailto:eweisenbach@branfordschools.org).

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## Unit 1 Human Rights in Latin America: Spotlight on Argentina

### Introduction

In 1976, the International Bill of Human Rights was ratified by the United Nations. Article 3-The Right to Live Free, Article 18-Freedom of Thought, and Article 19, Freedom of Expression are included in the bill. Yet, at that very moment in time, the Argentine Junta under General Jorge Rafael Videla was committing unfathomable atrocities against the Argentine people in gross violation of Article 5, “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.”

In Unit 1 Human Rights in Latin America: Spotlight on Argentina, students will explore the concept of human rights from a global perspective, then narrow their focus to the Dirty War of Argentina (1976-1983). They will learn about the Dirty War through the photographer’s lens and consider how a nation heals from such trauma.

### Essential Questions for Lessons I-IV

- How can we use primary source objects and documents to learn about the past?
- How do artists express their most important social and political views?
- How can art help us connect to the past?
- How does photography both challenge and reflect cultural and historical perspectives?
- How can our history shape us in the present?
- Is history objective?
- What divides a nation?
- How does government repression affect those who experience it? How does it affect their families? Society?
- How does repression change our values?
- How do traumatized societies heal?
- What causes human beings to terrorize other human beings?
- Is it patriotic to protest one’s government?
- Do ideals survive catastrophe?

### Objectives

Students will:

- analyze photographs and complete organizer
- discuss global examples of human rights abuse
- listen to a former detainee discuss life in prison during the Dirty War
- read an overview of Argentine history and respond to questions

## Lesson I Photograph Study: Gustavo Germano, *Ausenc'as*

### A. Materials

- a. BBC In Pictures: *Absent Faces* <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-21295117>
- b. Gustavo Germano. *Ausencias*. <http://www.gustavogermano.com>

### B. Activity Sheets

- a. Unit 1 Lesson I Photograph Study Organizer: *Ausenc'as* by Gustavo Germano

### C. Suggested Readings

- a. "Ausencias": una muestra sobre el vacío humano que dejó la dictadura. NRevista de Cultura. (Spanish) <http://edant.revistaenlinea.clarin.com/notas/2008/02/27/01616513.html>
- b. Van Dembroucke. The Absence Made Visible: The Case of *Ausenc'as*, Gustavo Germano's Photographic Exhibition University of Texas at Austin (Institute of Latin American Studies). <http://www.yorku.ca/intent/issue4/articles/celinavandembroucke.php>  
[http://academicpublishingplatforms.com/downloads/pdfs/int/volume2/201203011527\\_INT\\_V4\\_2010\\_3.pdf](http://academicpublishingplatforms.com/downloads/pdfs/int/volume2/201203011527_INT_V4_2010_3.pdf)

### D. Assessments

- a. Activity sheet responses
- b. Discussion

### E. Extension Activities

- a. Play slideshow- *Argentina Overview*: A brief exploration of upbeat Argentina followed by scenes of the darker side of Argentine history. Video (3:27) <https://youtu.be/S2jr7A6L2EU>. Created by Kathryn Cooke and Shilpa Rajbahak, Branford High School, Branford, CT
- b. Prepare your own *Before and After Photo Gallery*
- c. Watch video- "*Ausencias* de Gustavo Germano Homenaje a 33 años de golpe military" Images accompanied by "La Memoria", music by León Gieco. Video (3:59) <https://youtu.be/Cr-6byhIVZw>
- d. Watch video- *Ausencias* Fotos Gustavo Germano. Images accompanied by "Los Dinosaurios", music by Charly García. Video (3:28) <https://youtu.be/FTb0SVGf4tI>

## Instructions for Lesson I: Photograph Study- *Ausenc'as* by Gustavo Germano

Photographer Gustavo Germano's collection of family photographs leaves the viewer with a haunting sense of absence. *Ausenc'as* is a series of photographs taken in the 1970's coupled with the same scene recreated decades later. A study of these photographs will reveal that the original pictures include a person who is absent in the later version, a *desaparecido*. This activity, presented without context, will inspire student discussion and serve as an introduction to a study of human rights in the Southern Cone from the 1970's to 1980's.

### Step 1

Distribute one photograph and a *Unit 1 Lesson I Photograph Study Organizer: Ausenc'as* by Gustavo Germano to each student in the class. Students will:

- look at the picture for one minute and note what they see on the organizer.
- look for the details of the picture for 2-3 minutes and complete the boxes in section #1 of the organizer.
- move around the room to look at classmates' photographs.

*At this time, students will begin to notice that their pictures belong to a set of two images, one older picture from the 1970's and another taken decades later. Students will notice that one or more people are missing in the newer image.*

- connect with the person who has the companion photograph then complete section #2 of the Photograph Study organizer together.

## Step 2

Facilitate a whole class discussion about the activity.

- What did students learn from the content of the photographs?  
Consider these contrasting elements:  
young/old, empty space/active space, change/no change, remembering/ forgetting
- How did their impression of the photograph change after seeing the companion photograph?
- What questions do they have about the collection?
- Why is *Ausenc'as* missing a letter?
- What did they learn about how to study a photograph as a primary source document?

## Step 3

Explain that during the Dirty War/*La Guerra Sucia*, from 1976-1983, thousands of people disappeared, were tortured, and killed in Argentina. Gustavo Germano, whose own brother Eduardo was one of the many who disappeared, uses re-photographed families to make sure the disappeared are not forgotten, but that they remain with us even today. The *Ausenc'as* photography collection sets the tone for learning about human rights abused in the Southern Cone, specifically Argentina.

- Show *BBC In Pictures: Absent Faces* – with or without captions [www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-21295117](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-21295117)  
or
- *Ausenc'as* de Gustavo Germano. Homenaje a 33 anos de golpe military. Video (3:59)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cr-6byhIVZw> a tribute to Germano set to the music of León Gieco, *La Memoria*.

## Note to the teacher

The *Ausenc'as* collection is a very powerful and emotional expression of a history that is not really in the past, it remains present. A meaningful activity, to promote understanding via emotion and empathy, is to revisit the *Ausenc'as* collection after completing *Lesson III Meet Víctor Bastera, Photographer...Survivor*, or after completing Units I and II of this curriculum.

An alternative to the *Ausenc'as* activity is to use the photograph of Claudia Fontes' sculpture, *Pablo Míguez* from *Unit 6 Memory is a Verb: Lesson IIIC Pablo Míguez* as a KWL activity.

## Lesson II Brainstorm Session: Human Rights

### A. Materials

- a. Student generated discussion
- b. Vocabulary - useful for Lessons II and III

|                                                                                                                                    |                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| clandestine<br>collective memory<br><i>coup d'état</i><br>disappeared/desaparecido<br><i>guerra sucia</i> /dirty war<br>guerrillas | human rights<br>leftists<br>performance activism<br>subversive<br>Marxists |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### B. Activity Sheets

- a. Unit 1 Lesson II Brainstorming Human Rights

### C. Suggested Readings

- a. Cardenas, Sonia. *Human Rights in Latin America: A Politics of Terror and Hope*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.
- b. "Mexico gang members 'admit killing missing students.'" *BBCNews*. 8 Nov 2014  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-29963387>

### D. Assessments

- a. Activity sheet responses
- b. Discussion
- c. Memory or homage artwork

### E. Extension Activities

- a. Debate the issue: Is it better to repress or remember national trauma?
- b. Examine Fernando Botero's paintings of *Abu Ghraib* or Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*
- c. View video- "La Memoria", human rights slide show set to music of León Gieco  
[https://youtu.be/\\_bC9mq5GeJQ](https://youtu.be/_bC9mq5GeJQ)

## Instructions for Lesson II: Introduction to Human Rights

### Step 1

Initiate a discussion about past and present global human rights issues.

- Survey students for previous background information on human rights issues in Latin America.
- Discuss stories of human rights issues that appear in the news this week/month.  
Example: 43 disappeared students in Mexico ("Mexico gang members 'admit killing missing students'." *BBC*. 8 Nov. 2014 [www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-29963387](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-29963387))
- Arrange students in small groups to brainstorm the following information:
  - people/countries responsible for human rights abuses
  - human rights activists/ human rights agencies
  - ways people commemorate national tragedies and traumas.
  - commemorative or protest artworks, music, literature, photography, political speeches, sculpture, and theater. (Students should update this list throughout this study of human rights)
  - photography as activism

Students will organize their ideas on *Unit 1 Activity Sheet Lesson II Human Rights*



### Step 2

Conclude *Lesson II Human Rights* with a whole class discussion about human rights. Pose the following questions for students to reflect upon in blogs or their journals:

1. Do you feel connected or disconnected to these issues of human rights?
2. Do you believe that crimes against humanity only happen in other countries or in certain types of cultures or ethnicities?
3. What are the underlying conditions for human rights abuses?
4. How have we, residents of Connecticut, healed from traumatic events that occurred to us directly or indirectly? Consider 911, the Newtown shootings, the Boston Marathon Bombing.
5. What do you think about every time you pass by one of the playgrounds dedicated to the children of Newtown?
6. Can we be guilty of such atrocities?

### Step 3

#### **Homework Assignment**

Students will create their own memory or homage artwork to recognize a national /local trauma or human rights issue. See *Unit 1 Activity Sheet Lesson II Human Rights*.



### Lesson III Meet survivor/photographer activist Víctor Bastera

#### A. Materials

- a. Rogers, Marc. "ESMA- Argentina's Human Rights Museum." *The Argentina Independent*. Video (4:49) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQVUJs1A3qY>

#### B. Activity Sheets

- a. *Unit 1 Lesson III Meet survivor/photographer activist Victor Bastera*

#### C. Suggested Readings

- a. Luttringer, Paula. "Recovering, Remembering, Returning: The Wailing of the Walls." *Prison Photography*. 11 Jun 2010. <http://prisonphotography.org/2010/06/11/recovering-remembering-returning-the-wailing-of-the-walls-by-paula-luttringer/>
- b. Reel, Monte. "Torture Center to Bear Witness." *Washington Post Foreign Service* 15 Oct 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/10/14/AR2007101401248.html>

#### D. Assessment

- a. Activity sheet responses
- b. Discussion

### Instructions for Lesson III: Meet Víctor Bastera, Photographer...Survivor

#### Step 1

Listen to photographer Víctor Bastera describe his experiences of torture and slave labor at the infamous Navy Mechanical School (ESMA) from 1979-1983. Learn about his efforts to keep the abusers from getting away with their crimes. Video (4:49) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQVUJs1A3qY>

Guiding questions (See *Unit 1 Activity Sheet Lesson III Víctor Bastera, Photographer...Survivor*):

1. What is the Navy Mechanical School (ESMA)? Why was it important in the 1970's? Today?  
(From 1976-1983 ESMA was the clandestine detention center in Buenos Aires. Today it is the *Espacio memoria y derechos humanos Ex ESMA*.)
2. Who is Victor Bastera and what was his role during the Dirty War?  
(Bastera is a survivor of torture and slave labor. His job was to falsify documents from 7am -10pm. He made extra copies of photographs of victims and repressors and smuggled them out during visits to his family.)
3. How has he contributed to keeping the disappeared present in Argentine memory? What is his mission?  
(Bastera's mission is to not let the abusers get away with their crimes. He has had a key role in trials and also in the creation of a space for remembrance, the Memorial at ESMA.)
4. After watching the video- what questions do students have about human rights in Argentina?
5. Assign homework for Lesson IV. The reading, *Imagining Argentina*, will give students a brief overview of Argentine history from 1930 to 1983.

#### Note to Teacher

A powerful experience for students is to revisit Gustavo Germano's *Ausenc'as* collection and include their personal reflection. The photographs are much more poignant when students understand what happened to the people who disappeared.

## Lesson IV The Road to Repression: Readings on the background to the Dirty War

### A. Materials

- a. Chasteen, John Charles. *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*. New York: WW. Norton & Company, 2011.
- b. Moss, Joyce and George Wilson "Imagining Argentina." *Literature and Its Times: Profiles of 300 Notable Literary Works and the Historical Events that Influenced Them...* Vol. 5: Civil Rights Movements to Future Times (1960-2000). Detroit: Gale, 1997. 208-213. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Web. Merge document with activity sheet 1A

### B. Activity Sheets

- a. Unit 1 Lesson IV The Road to Repression
  - i. (A-B) Homework: Overview of Argentine history 1930-1983
  - ii. (C) Putting it in Perspective: *Born in Blood and Fire*: Reaction (285-312)
  - iii. (D) Timeline/ cause and effect worksheet

### C. Suggested Readings

- a. Alternate Reading for Lesson IV homework assignment  
Romero, Luis Alberto. "Dirty War." *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*. Ed. Jay Kinsbruner and Erick D. Langer. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2008. 821-823. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*.

### D. Assessment

- a. Activity sheet responses
- b. Discussion
- c. Creation of timeline

### E. Extension Activities

- a. Blog entries – reaction to activities or Essential Questions for Unit 1
- b. Use the school library databases to identify key people, places and events of the Dirty War
- c. Create personal protest art
- d. Watch slideshow of Latin American dictators  
<https://www.icloud.com/sharedalbum/#AEGRMtznJ0OaZR;6A63F6E4-7BE5-4F57-85A3-10118D2F2A9E>. Prepared by Abigail Milroy, Shilpa Rajbahak and Kathryn Cooke, Branford High School, 2015.

## Instructions for Lesson IV: The Road to Repression

### Step 1

#### IV Homework

Assign the following homework assignment that will give students an overview of Argentine history from 1930 to 1983. Students can also watch the trailer to the movie with Antonio Banderas, Rubén Blades and Emma Thompson.

"Imagining Argentina." *Literature and Its Times: Profiles of 300 Notable Literary Works and the Historical Events that Influenced Them* (208-210). Activity sheet *Unit 1 The Road to Repression IV. (A/B) Homework: Overview of Argentine history 1930-1983*.

### Step 2

#### In Class

Discuss the overview of Argentine history homework assignment.

### Step 3

In small groups, students will read *Born in Blood and Fire, Chapter 9: Reaction* by John Chasteen in order to put the events of the Dirty War in broader perspective.

Students will complete activity sheet *Unit 1 The Road to Repression IV(C) Putting it in Perspective: Born in Blood and Fire: Reaction (285-312)*. After all groups have completed the assignment, debrief the activity. Generate a timeline of the most important events to place on classroom wall.

## Unit 1 Lesson IV Chronology

*Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America, Chapter 9 Reaction*

<http://wwwnorton.com/college/history/born-in-blood-and-fire3/timeline.aspx#09>

**Reaction** (1960-1990) 1961: United States announces the creation of the Alliance for Progress  
1964: Brazilian military, backed by the United States, stages coup  
1964: Tupamaro guerrilla movement forms in Uruguay  
1966: Argentine armed forces establish military government  
1967: Uruguayan president declares martial law  
1968-74: Hard-line military leaders rule Brazil  
1968: Tlatelolco massacre of university students in Mexico City  
1970: Popular Unity candidate Salvador Allende wins presidential election in Chile  
1973: Armed forces take over in Uruguay  
1973: Chilean military, led by Augusto Pinochet, stages bloodiest coup in Latin American history  
1975: "Dirty War" underway in Argentina and Uruguay  
1978: Lula leads metalworkers' strike in São Paulo  
Late 1970s: mothers and grandmothers begin protesting in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires  
1978: Rebellion against Somoza begins in Nicaragua, led by Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)  
1980s: United States backs the *contras* in a decade-long war against the FSLN in Nicaragua and supports Salvadoran army in fight against Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front FMLN  
1982: Argentina goes to war with Great Britain over the Falkland Islands  
1983: Argentine elections oust military  
1984: Civilian president elected in Uruguay  
1985: End of military rule in Brazil  
1990: Elections in Nicaragua end Sandinista revolution  
1992: FMLN signs peace treaty in El Salvador