Technologies of Memory: Heritage, Monuments, Ruins

Slavic 470/Slavic 871/Arch 603
Tuesdays, 4-7pm

This seminar is an introduction to the study of cultural memory conducted via an exploration of three “technologies of memory”—heritage, monuments, and ruins. While debates have raged in memory studies about whether or not collective memory, in its “original” or “pure” form, requires material prostheses, we will pose objects of remembrance and remembering subjects as mutually-constituting and historically enmeshed phenomena, neither understandable in isolation from the other. From this perspective, heritage, monuments, and ruins emerge as sites where subjects and objects meet, sometimes in an embrace and other times in a collision. The seminar will thus explore heritage, monuments, and ruins as both shaping and shaped by collective projects of historical recall. The seminar will also attempt to critique the moralizing preservationist gaze that remains a dominant perspective on heritage, monuments, and ruins, in public culture and scholarship alike, as well as offer alternative gazes on these objects. Case studies in the seminar will be drawn largely from Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav contexts, but seminar participants will be encouraged to work on research projects according to their own interests and backgrounds.