

# American Cultural Memory

English 80513: Seminar in American Literature since 1900 | Spring 2018

Wednesday 5:30–8:10 p.m. | Reed 135

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Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday 2:00–3:30 p.m.

## Course Overview

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This seminar will examine the meaning and making of American cultural memory. The last thirty years have witnessed what critical theorist Andreas Huyssen identifies as a blurring of history and memory. That blurring, he writes, marks a “fundamental disturbance not just of the relationship between history as objective and scientific, and memory as subjective and personal, but of history itself and its promises.” Cultural memory names the location of that “disturbance.” It is the bridge between historical discourse and individual memory, where officials, writers, artists, and activists struggle to define a national history and, with it, a shared future. How does a culture remember? How does that memory constitute a nation, subnational and transnational communities, an individual? Through the writings of cultural historians, literary and media studies scholars, critical theorists, and social scientists, we will consider the theories, methods, and debates that have animated memory studies across the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries.

As we trace the origins of the field through the work of Walter Benjamin, Maurice Halbwachs, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Nora, we will read book-length studies from some of the leading American memory studies scholars, including Alison Landsberg, Marita Sturken, Barbie Zelizer, and Viet Nguyen. Their writing will offer different models for how to use memory studies as a method for reading American literature and culture and how to execute a book-length work of criticism. Throughout the fall, we will focus our attention on the form and structure of successful articles and books and discuss the critical strategies most worth stealing. This seminar is about theories of history, cultural memory, and nationalism and includes units on memorials, literature, visual culture, archives, and media. While you must ground your writing this semester in the field and methods of cultural memory studies, you will be free to choose your own literary or cultural texts.

## Required Texts

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Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. Columbia UP, 2004.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke UP, 2015.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*. Harvard UP, 2016.

Sturken, Marita. *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Duke UP, 2007.

Zelizer, Barbie. *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public*. Oxford UP, 2010.

## Readings on Course Website

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Anderson, Benedict. “Cultural Roots.” *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, 1983, pp. 9–38.

- . Introduction. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, 1983, pp. 1–8.
- Balibar, Étienne. “The Nation Form: History and Ideology.” *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, edited by Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, Verso, 1991, pp. 86–106.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, 1980.
- Benjamin, Walter. “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, Schocken, 1968, pp. 253–64.
- . “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, Schocken, 1968, pp. 217–52.
- Bhabha, Homi K. “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation.” *Nation and Narration*, edited by Bhabha, Routledge, 1990, pp. 291–322.
- Boym, Svetlana. “Reflective Nostalgia: Virtual Reality and Collective Memory.” *The Future of Nostalgia*, Basic, 2001, pp. 49–56.
- . “Restorative Nostalgia: Conspiracies and Return to Origins.” *The Future of Nostalgia*, Basic, 2001, pp. 41–48.
- Connerton, Paul. “Social Memory.” *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge UP, 1989, pp. 6–40.
- De Kosnik, Abigail. “Memory Machine Myth: The Memex, Media Archaeology, and Repertoires of Archiving.” *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*, MIT P, 2016, pp. 41–62.
- Doss, Erika. “Statue Mania to Memorial Mania: Scope of the Subject.” *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, U of Chicago P, 2010, pp. 17–60.
- Espiritu, Yen Le. “The ‘We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose’ Syndrome: U.S. Press Coverage of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the ‘Fall of Saigon.’” *American Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2006, pp. 329–52.
- Ferguson, Margaret. “Negotiating Sites of Memory.” *PMLA*, vol. 130, no. 3, 2015, pp. 546–65.
- Fleetwood, Nicole R. “‘One Shot’: Charles ‘Teenie’ Harris and the Photographic Practice of Non-Iconicity.” *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*, U of Chicago P, 2011, pp. 33–70.
- Foucault, Michel. “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Cornell UP, 1977, pp. 139–64.
- Gordon, Avery F. “Her Shape and His Hand.” *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, U of Minnesota P, 1997, pp. 3–30.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. “Historical Memory and Collective Memory.” *The Collective Memory*, Harper and Row, 1990, pp. 50–87.
- . “Individual Memory and Collective Memory.” Harper and Row, 1990, pp. 22–49.
- Hamilton, Jack. “Darkness at the Break of Noon: Sam Cooke, Bob Dylan, and the Birth of Sixties Music.” *Just around Midnight: Rock and Roll and the Racial Imagination*, Harvard UP, 2016, pp. 26–87.
- Hirsch, Marianne. “Mourning and Postmemory.” *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*, Harvard UP, 1997, pp. 17–40.
- . “Postmemory’s Archival Turn.” *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, Columbia UP, 2012, pp. 227–50.
- Hong, Grace Kyungwon. “Fun with Death and Dismemberment: Irony, Farce, and Nationalist Memorialization.” *Death beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference*, U of Minnesota P, 2015, pp. 35–61.
- Huyssen, Andreas. “Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia.” *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Stanford UP, 2003, pp. 11–29.

- Klein, Kerwin Lee. "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse." *From History to Theory*, U of California P, 2011, pp. 112–37.
- Kozol, Wendy. "Battlefield Trophies: Soldiers' Archives and the Affective Politics of Recoil." *Distant Wars Visible: The Ambivalence of Witnessing*, U of Minnesota P, 2014, pp. 127–64.
- Lipsitz, George. "Popular Culture: This Ain't No Sideshow." *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, U of Minnesota P, 1990, pp. 3–20.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*." Translated by Marc Roudebush, *Representations*, no. 26, 1989, pp. 7–24.
- Renan, Ernest. "What Is a Nation?" *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi K. Bhabha, Routledge, 1990, pp. 8–22.
- Rieff, David. "Footprints in the Sands of Time, and All That." *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and Its Ironies*, Yale UP, 2016, pp. 1–21.
- Savage, Kirk. "Freedom's Memorial." *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America*, Princeton UP, 1997, pp. 89–128.
- Schlund-Vials, Cathy J. "Lost Chapters and Invisible Wars: Hip-Hop and Cambodian American Critique." *War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work*, U of Minnesota P, 2012, pp. 149–80.
- Sturken, Marita. "The Wall and the Screen Memory: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, U of California P, 1997, pp. 44–84.
- Taylor, Diana. "Acts of Transfer." *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Duke UP, 2006, pp. 1–52.
- White, Hayden. "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1980, pp. 5–27.
- Winter, Jay. "The Setting: The Great War in the Memory Boom of the Twentieth Century." *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, Yale UP, 2006, pp. 17–51.
- Young, James E. Introduction. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Yale UP, 1993, pp. 1–16.

## Assignments and Grading

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### Assignments:

Participation and Preparedness	20%
Discussion Lead	10%
Conference Paper	30%
Article Manuscript	40%

### Grading Scale:

A	93–100%	C	73–76%
A-	90–92%	C-	70–72%
B+	87–89%	D+	67–69%
B	83–86%	D	63–66%
B-	80–82%	D-	60–62%
C+	77–79%	F	0–59%

## Policies

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Participation and Preparedness: The success of this class depends on your engaged and lively participation in it. Please come to class having read the assigned readings and taken careful notes that you can then draw on in formulating and sharing ideas with your peers. You will choose one assigned reading this semester on which to present and facilitate a discussion. If you will be absent from class for a medical or family emergency, please contact me ahead of time so that I can send you any materials from that day's meeting.

Submitting Your Work: Please submit your midterm and final papers as .doc or .docx files through the course website. Papers should be double-spaced in twelve-point font with one-inch margins. Format your references using either MLA or Chicago style.

Plagiarism: As defined by the university, plagiarism is “the appropriation, theft, purchase or obtaining by any means another’s work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one’s own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another’s work without giving credit therefore.” To avoid committing plagiarism, acknowledge and document all of your sources in your written work. If you are ever unsure whether something constitutes plagiarism, please check with me first.

University Disabilities Statement: Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 1010. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-6567.

## Reading Schedule and Deadlines

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Date	Readings	Deadlines
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>What Is Cultural Memory?</b>	
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Syllabus Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (website)	
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Foundations</b>	
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Halbwachs, “Individual Memory and Collective Memory” and “Historical Memory and Collective Memory” (website; optional) Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” (website) Nora, “Between Memory and History” (website) Connerton, “Social Memory” (website)	
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>National Memory</b>	

Wednesday, Jan. 31	Renan, "What Is a Nation?" (website) Anderson, Introduction to <i>Imagined Communities</i> and "Cultural Roots" (website) Bhabha, "DissemiNation" (website) Balibar, "The Nation Form" (website; optional)	
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>The Memory Boom</b>	
Wednesday, Feb. 7	Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse" (website) Winter, "The Setting" (website; optional) Huysen, "Present Pasts" (website) Boym, "Restorative Nostalgia" and "Reflective Nostalgia" (website)	
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Memorials</b>	
Wednesday, Feb. 14	Savage, "Freedom's Memorial" (website) Young, Introduction to <i>The Texture of Memory</i> (website; optional) Sturken, "The Wall and the Screen Memory" (website) Doss, "Statue Mania to Memorial Mania" (website)	
<b>Week 6</b>		
Wednesday, Feb. 21	Sturken, <i>Tourists of History</i>	
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Literature</b>	
Wednesday, Feb. 28	White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" (website; optional) Gordon, "Her Shape and His Hand" (website) Hong, "Fun with Death and Dismemberment" (website) Ferguson, "Negotiating Sites of Memory" (website)	
<b>Week 8</b>		
Wednesday, Mar. 7	Nguyen, <i>Nothing Ever Dies</i>	Conference paper due Friday, Mar. 9 at 5 p.m.
<b>Week 9</b>		
Wednesday, Mar. 14	No class (spring break)	
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Visual Culture</b>	
Wednesday, Mar. 21	Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (website; optional) Barthes, Excerpt from <i>Camera Lucida</i> (website)	

	Hirsch, "Mourning and Postmemory" (website) Fleetwood, "One Shot" (website)	
<b>Week 11</b>		
Wednesday, Mar. 28	Landsberg, <i>Prosthetic Memory</i>	
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Archives</b>	
Wednesday, Apr. 4	Hirsch, "Postmemory's Archival Turn" (website) Taylor, "Acts of Transfer" (website; optional) Kozol, "Battlefield Trophies" (website) De Kosnik, "Memory Machine Myth" (website)	
<b>Week 13</b>		
Wednesday, Apr. 11	Lowe, <i>The Intimacies of Four Continents</i>	
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Media</b>	
Wednesday, Apr. 18	Lipsitz, "Popular Culture" (website) Hamilton, "Darkness at the Break of Noon" (website) Espiritu, "The 'We-Win-Even-When- We-Lose' Syndrome" (website; optional) Schlund-Vials, "Lost Chapters and Invisible Wars" (website)	
<b>Week 15</b>		
Wednesday, Apr. 25	Zelizer, <i>About to Die</i>	
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>Forgetting</b>	
Wednesday, May 2	Reiff, "Footprints in the Sands of Time, and All That" (website) Article manuscript mini-presentations SPOT's (please bring a laptop or tablet to class)	Article manuscript due Friday, May 11 at 5 p.m.