

Media, Memory, and History



Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
MCC-GE 2135
Spring 2024

Prof. Marita Sturken
Wed: 2-4:30
East Building Room 207
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Course Description:

Visual culture and memory studies have emerged over the last few decades as interdisciplinary, global fields of study. These fields intersect in important ways, drawing on cultural studies, media studies, trauma studies, and architecture/design with visuality and images playing a key role in memory culture. As we have seen in particular over the last year, sites of memory can be deeply political, with debates and battles in the US over the removal and destruction of monuments. Memory is thus a key site where concepts of national identity, human rights, and heritage are mediated and disputed.

This course examines theories of memory in relation to global visual culture, looking in particular at the intersections of memory with media forms such as film and television, photography, art, architecture, and design. We will look at the foundational concepts of cultural memory and at technologies of memory, critical visuality, artistic engagements with memory, and memory's remediation in digital media.

How cultural memory is experienced through aesthetics, how artists are engaging with memory, and the interrelationship of media forms with the politics of memory will be our primary focuses. The course will address questions such as: What role has the

photograph played in concepts of modern history? How are historical narratives told through the media of film and television? What issues are raised by the form of the historical docudrama? How is cultural memory produced and circulated through television and film and photography? What is the difference between history and cultural memory?

Course Requirements:

Students are required to attend all seminars, to undertake the reading assignments seriously, to participate in class discussion, to do one class presentation, and to write two papers. Students will be expected to bring questions to class each week. Readings will be prioritized each week, so that some readings will be assigned to all, and some will be reported on in student presentations. Students will write one short paper mid-semester of 5-7 pages, and one more in-depth research paper, 8-10 pages, by the end of the semester. Grades will consider class participation 10%, presentations 20%, paper 1 30%, and paper 2 40%.

Required Texts:

Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus* (Pantheon, 1996)
All other readings are posted in pdf or e-book on Brightspace.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1—January 24 2-4:30

Introduction

Screening: *History and Memory*

Week 2—January 31

Theorizing Memory

Reading:

Sigmund Freud, “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad” (excerpt)

Maurice Halbwachs, “The Collective Memory”(excerpt)

Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, Introduction

Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (excerpt)

Andreas Huyssen, “Present Pasts”

Bill Schwarz, “Memory, Temporality, Modernity” (excerpt)

Week 3—February 7**National and Colonial/Postcolonial Memory**

Reading:

Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History” (excerpt)

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*: Chapter 3: In Slavery’s WakeAvery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, Introduction

Carol Becker, “Kara Walker: The Memory of Sugar”

Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* (Introduction and Chapter 2)Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration*, Introduction and Chapter 4

Vanessa Schwartz, “Public Visits to the Morgue”

Viet Nguyen, *A Man of Two Faces: A Memoir, A History, A Memorial* Excerpt: A Departure from Reality (published in *New Yorker*)<https://vietnguyen.info/2023/a-departure-from-reality-the-new-yorker>**Week 4—February 14****Photography and Memory**

Reading:

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (sections 1-5, 10-13, 19-21, 25-28, 36, 39-40)Marianne Hirsch, “Introduction” and “Mourning and Postmemory” from *Family Frames*

Leo Spitzer, “The Album and the Crossing”

Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, “School Photos and Their Afterlives”

Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not* (pp. 8-25, 61-64, 94-98)**Week 5—February 21****Cinema, Television, and the Docudrama**

Reading:

Hayden White, “The Modernist Event”

Marita Sturken, “Reenactment, Fantasy and the Paranoia of History”

Alison Landsberg, *Engaging the Past*: Introduction and “Chapter 3: Encountering Contradiction: Reality History TV”Lynn Spigel, *TV Snapshots: An Archive of Everyday Life*, Introduction and Chap 5

Susannah Radstone, “Cinema and Memory”

Alison Landsberg, Introduction to *Prosthetic Memory*

Week 6—February 28**The Image Icon**

Reading:

Ulric Neisser and Nicole Harsch, “Phantom Flashbulbs”
 Naomi Angel, *Fragments of Truth*, Chapter 2: Images of Contact
 Robert Harriman and John Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, Chapter 7
 Marianne Hirsch, “Surviving Images”
 Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die*, Chapter 1

Week 7—March 6**Memory Art and the Historical Graphic Novel**

Reading:

Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus*
 Andreas Huyssen, *Memory Art in the Contemporary World: Confronting Violence in the Global South*: Introduction and Chapter 6
 Claudette Lauzon, “A Home for Loss: Doris Salcedo’s Melancholic Archives”

 Hillary Chute and Art Spiegelman, “Why Comics?” from *MetaMaus*
 Marianne Hirsch, “Past Lives”
 Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza*

Week 8—March 13**Digital Remediation**

Reading:

Andrew Hoskins, “Memory of the Multitude: The End of Collective Memory”
 Diana Taylor, “Traumatic Memes”
 Tamara Kneese, “Dead Links” <https://www.publicbooks.org/dead-links/>
<https://hyperallergic.com/836529/can-ai-help-find-the-children-of-argentinias-desaparecidos/>
 Julia Creet and Silke Arnold-De Simine, “Digital Afterlives”

Tamara Kneese, *Death Glitch*, Introduction
 Annelot Prins, “Live Archiving the Crisis: Instagram, Cultural Studies, and Times of Collapse”
 Ana Migowski and Willian Araujo, “Looking Back at Personal Memories on Facebook”
 Gayle Wald, “A Queer Black Woman Invented Rock and Roll”: Rosetta Tharpe, Memes, and Memory practices in the Digital Age”

Week of March 18-22 Spring Break

Week 9—March 27**Sites of Trauma and Detention**

Reading:

Diana Taylor, “Trauma as Durational Performance”

Viet Nguyen, “On Powerful Memory” from *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*

Harry Harootunian, “Reflections from Fukushima: History, Memory, and the Crisis of Contemporaneity”

Emilio Crenzel, “The Ghostly Presence of the Disappeared in Argentina”

Jens Andermann, “Returning to the Site of Horror: On the Reclaiming of Clandestine Concentration Camps in Argentina”

Brigitte Sion, Introduction to *Death Tourism* and “Conflicting Sites of Memory Post-Genocide Cambodia”

Gonzalo Conte, “A Topography of Memory: Reconstructing the Architectures of Terror in the Argentine Dictatorship”

Week 10—April 3**The Politics of Memorials**

Reading:

James Young, “The Memorial Arc: Between Berlin’s Denkmal and New York City’s 9/11 Memorial” and “Memory, Countermemory, and the End of Monument”

Masha Gessen, “In the Shadow of the Holocaust”

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-weekend-essay/in-the-shadow-of-the-holocaust>Marita Sturken, “The Wall, The Screen, and the Image” from *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*Viet Nguyen, “On Remembering One’s Own” from *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*

Vicki Kwon, “The Sonyōsang Phenomenon: Nationalism and Feminism Surrounding the Comfort Women Statue”

Katherine Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration*, excerpts

Jonathan Bach, “The Wall After the Wall”

Week 11—April 10**The Memory Museum**

Reading:

Andreas Huyssen, “The Metamorphosis of the Museal: From Exhibitionary to Experiential Complex and Beyond”

Marita Sturken, “The Objects that Lived, the Voices that Remain: The 9/11 Museum”

Amy Sodaro, “Memorial Museums: The Emergence of a New Form” and “Kigali Genocide Memorial Center” from *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*

Orphan Pamuk, “The Innocence of Objects”

Katherine Hite, “Revisiting the Cold War through 21st Century Museums of Memory of the Americas”

Yuki Miyamoto, “The Ethics of Commemoration: Nanjing, Hiroshima, Yakusuni”

Lana Lin, “Reparative Objects in the Freudian Archives”

Week 12—April 17**Monuments Must Fall: Debates over Memory, Race, and Slavery**

Reading:

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*: Chapter 6: Removal

Nicholas Mirzoeff, “The Strike Against Statues” from *White Sight*

Christina Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes*, pp. 40-73

Paul Farber and Ken Lum, *Monument Lab: Creative Speculations for Philadelphia*, excerpts

Clint Smith, *How the Word is Passed*: “New York City”

Mitch Landrieu, Speech on Removal of Confederate Monuments from New Orleans

Monuments Must Fall syllabus

http://www.allmonumentsmustfall.com/?fbclid=IwAR0aBklIzeaZ6SZvU-o40QRScJZmq_Kc_QBqhsFFaiKy6-6UMOPd2XCybEg

Eric Foner, “Confederate Statues and ‘Our’ History”

Week 13—April 24**Memory and Human Rights, Memory Activism**

Reading:

Andreas Huyssen, “International Human Rights and the Politics of Memory”

Adam Rosenblatt, “Aparición con vida: Disappearance and the Politics of the Counterfactual from Argentina to Ayotzinapa”

Mark Ungar and Katherine Hite, “The Arc of Human Rights”

Diana Taylor “Trapped in Bad Scripts: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo” from *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina’s ‘Dirty War.’*

Katherine Hite and Manuela Badilla, “Memorializing in Movement: Chilean Sites of Memory as Spaces of Activism and Imagination”

Meltem Ahiska, “Memory as Encounter: The Saturday Mothers in Turkey”

Diana Taylor, “You Are Here: HIJOS and the DNA of Performance” From *The Archive and the Repertoire***Week 14—May 1****Memory Tourism and Nostalgia**

Reading:

Jonathan Bach, “The Taste Remains”

Marita Sturken, “Pilgrimages, Reenactment, and Souvenirs”

Cheryl Finley “Authenticating Dungeons, Whitewashing Castles: The Former Sites of Slave Trade on the Ghanian Coast”

Viet Nguyen, “Just Forgetting”

Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (excerpt)

Laurie Beth Clark, “Ethical Spaces: Ethics and Propriety in Trauma Tourism”

Final Papers Due May 10

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams, making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others, and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours. You violate the principle of academic integrity when you cheat on an exam, submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors, receive help on a take-home examination that calls for independent work, or plagiarize.

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in has been your own and no one else's, and that you have not turned in any work for which you have received credit in another class, that you have properly cited other people's work and ideas, and that you have not used generative AI tools to create any part of an assignment in this course. Every submission should be entirely your work. Do not take this policy lightly! Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course. If you have questions about these policies, or proper citation of scholarship, please come speak with me in person. (see http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity)

Student Resources

- Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.
- Writing Center (Washington Square): 411 Lafayette, 4th Floor. Schedule an appointment online at <https://nyu.mywconline.com> or just walk-in.

MCC's Writing Program

MCC's Writing Coach, Dr. Kari Hensley, is here to support grad students in the writing and revising process. You are encouraged to make an appointment with her whether you are interested in refining your voice or are struggling to find it. Through individual sessions, she can work with you on papers, thesis/dissertations, conference papers, cover letters, and more. For more info and to make an appointment, visit: <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/mcc/masters/writing>