

Dr. Rachel Hall
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Office: 223 Coates Hall
Hours: M/W 2:00-3:00 pm

CMST 4107: TECHNOLOGIES OF MEMORY

Spring 2014
M/ W 3:30-4:50 pm
116 Prescott Hall

Course objectives:

This course explores the material culture and mediation of memory in North America. Human bodies have long been understood as receptacles of memory. In addition to the notion that memory resides within the mind, there is the fact that once the body learns how to move in a particular way or perform a certain task, it remembers what to do. The human body is merely one of the technologies of memory under consideration in this course. Some people organize their memories for future contemplation and narration in family albums and scrapbooks or their digital successors. For others collective memories coalesce around particular memorial sites or are organized and put on display for them in museums. On visits to such places, individuals often purchase souvenirs to help them remember their visit or the event being commemorated. In addition to the material culture of memory, individuals and cultures rely upon various media to help them visualize and reflect upon the past including photography, film, comix, video, television, digital imagining, publishing, and archiving. Whether considering the memory work performed by bodies, objects, and sites or the use of visual media as memory prompts and prostheses, this course starts from the premise that our take on the past profoundly affects how we act in the present, as well as how we envision the future. In memory work, the stakes are high. For this reason, memory is more often than not an arena of conflict and, as such, may serve as the grounds for long awaited reconciliation or revolutionary change.

Required Texts:

Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*
Deborah Willis, *Picturing Us: African America Identity in Photography*
Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The Aids Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*
Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*
Art Spiegelman, *The Complete MAUS*
All other assigned readings are available on Moodle.

Course Evaluation:

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| Participation | 10% |
| Portfolio | 50% |
| Midterm | 20% |
| Final | 20% |

Participation: Your grade will be based on your oral report as well as your preparation for and contribution to the class on lecture, workshop, and presentation days.

Portfolio: Your course portfolio will be comprised of five short written assignments with images (2-3 pages each, for a total of 10-15 pages). Each of you will share your work on a portfolio assignment with the class once during the semester.

Assignment 1: Reworking a Family Snapshot. This paper is an exercise in memory work and critical analysis. You will choose a family snapshot and work with the memories the picture arouses, analyze the operative photographic conventions at work in the image, and elaborate upon what the image shows by telling your reader about the familial, social, economic and historical contexts in which it was taken/made.

Assignment 2: Analysis of an online memorial. Briefly describe and analyze an online memorial. How does the virtual form of this memorial shape your experience of visiting it? What are the unique possibilities and limitations of memory and mourning in this case?

Assignment 3: Rhetorical Analysis of a Physical Memorial. This paper requires you to visit and analyze a local memorial site. This assignment is designed to get you thinking and writing about collective memory (In other words, your memorial cannot be a family gravestone. It should be a public site or enactment of collective memories shared by people who do not necessarily know one another). Your analysis should include a brief description of the memorial, discussion of its placement, and consideration of the politics of its present-day use.

Assignment 4: Remembering another's experience through film or a museum visit. This assignment asks you to narrate your experience as a spectator of a film about slavery or a museum of African American history. Please choose from the following film titles: *Daughters of the Dust* (dir. Julie Dash, 1991); *Rosewood* (dir. John Singleton, 1996); and *Beloved* (dir. Jonathan Demme, 1998) OR visit one of the following museum's: Odell S Williams Now & Then African American Museum in Baton Rouge or The Backstreet Cultural Museum in New Orleans. Drawing on Landsberg's book, briefly explain how the film or museum functions as a prosthetic memory for you. Next, consider the ethical possibilities and limitations of prosthetic memory in this case.

Assignment 5: Thinking Across Technologies of Memory. In this short paper, you should think across the units on photography, digital imagining, objects and architectures, cinema and museums. Without succumbing to technological determinism, your paper should offer a careful comparative analysis of how two or more of these technologies facilitate memory and forgetting in different, yet related ways. What are the constraints operative across these technologies? What possibilities can be generated?

Midterm and Final Exams: The format of the exams for this course is multiple-choice. You will be expected to reflect familiarity with and understanding of the course reading materials and discussions. You will also be expected to define and/or apply course terminology. You will be tested on your ability to apply your knowledge by choosing

examples illustrative of relevant course concepts. The final exam will be heavily weighted toward material covered after the midterm.

Policies and Procedures:

Classroom etiquette: Please respect yourself and other students by behaving in an appropriate manner. Turn off cell phones before coming to class, be on time and plan to stay for the entire class period. Students who regularly disrupt the flow and focus of classroom discussion or are disrespectful will be asked to leave.

Come to class prepared: This means that you need to complete your reading assignments on time. Be sure to bring your reading materials to class with you each time that we meet. We will regularly be using our books in class.

Accessibility: Please do not use email as a substitute for coming to see me during office hours. It is often more effective and less time consuming for us to meet briefly in person about your questions and concerns. If and when you contact me over email, please allow 24 hours for my response during the week and longer over the weekend.

The Americans With Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Services (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

Academic honesty: Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas, thoughts or words without proper citation. If you plagiarize, you will be reported and face charges of academic dishonesty.

Grade disputes: Please allow 24 hours after receiving a graded assignment before you contact me about it. In the case that you feel you have been unfairly graded, you must submit a written request for reconsideration within one week of receiving the grade in question. This document must make a clear and compelling case for why your grade should be changed. Your argument must be supported by evidence drawn from class readings or in-class experiences.

Late Work: If you turn in your portfolio assignments after the due date, you will be penalized one letter grade per day late. Coming to class late on the day the assignment is due counts as late.

Grading Scale:

"A" = 90-100; "B" = 80-89; "C" = 70-79; "D" = 60-69; and "F" = below 60

Course Schedule

Jan 15: Introduction and Overview

Jan 20: MLK Day

UNIT ONE: Photography

Jan 22: *Family Secrets*, Ch 1: “An Introduction”

Ch 2: “She’ll Always Be Your Little Girl”

Ch 4: “A Credit to Her Mother”

Jan 27: *Picturing Us*, “Introduction”

“A Sunday Portrait”

“Grandmother’s Face and the Legacy of Pomegranate Hall”

“Mug Shot: Suspicious Person”

Jan 29: *Picturing Us*, “In Our Glory”

“Gazing Colored: A Family Album”

Katriel and Farrell, “Scrapbooks as Cultural Texts: An American Art of Memory” (M)

Feb 3: Workshop: Reworking a Family Photograph

UNIT TWO: Digital Memory

Feb 5 Michalik, “Haunting Fragments: Digital Mourning and Intermedia Performance” (M)

Feb 10: Reports: Reworking a Family Snapshot

Feb 12: Van Dijck, “Digital Photography: Communication, Identity, Memory” (M)

Feb 17: Workshop: Analysis of an Online Memorial

UNIT THREE: Objects and Architecture

Feb 19: *Tangled Memories*, “Introduction”

Feb 24: Reports: Analysis of an Online Memorial

Feb 26: *Tangled Memories*, Ch 1, “Camera Images and National Meanings”

Hirsch, “The Day Time Stopped” (M)

Streit, “The Photograph Not Taken” (M)

March 3: Mardi Gras

March 5: Midterm

March 10: *Tangled Memories*, Ch 2: “The Wall and the Screen Memory”

March 12: Workshop: Rhetorical Analysis of a Memorial

March 17: Sturken, “The Image as Memorial” and “Architectures of Grief (M)

March 19: Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, Ch 4: “Memory and Amnesia”

“Virtual Iraq: Soldiers treated with video games,” (M)

“Video games used to treat posttraumatic stress,” (M)

Taylor, “War Games” (M)

March 24: Reports: Rhetorical Analysis of a Memorial

UNIT THREE: Cinema and Museums Comix

March 26: *Prosthetic Memory*, “Introduction” pp 1-11

March 31: *Prosthetic Memory*, “Introduction” pp 11-24

April 2: *Prosthetic Memory*, “Prosthetic Memory” pp 25-35

April 7: *Prosthetic Memory*, “Prosthetic Memory” pp 35-48

April 9: *Prosthetic Memory*, “The Prosthetic Imagination” pp 49-80

SPRING BREAK

April 14: *Prosthetic Memory*, “Remembering Slavery” pp 81-109

April 16: Workshop: Remembering Another’s Experience Through Cinema/ Museums

April 21: TBA

April 23: Reports: Remembering Another’s Experience Through Cinema/ Museums

April 28: *Prosthetic Memory*, “America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory” 111-139

Maus

April 30: Wrap up: Thinking Across Technologies of Memory

May 10: Final Exam 3-5 pm