

Humanities Seminar August 2017
Histories of Memories
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00-12:00

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History and memory are not opposed terms: history and memory shape each other as well as the past that we choose to recall. Memories exist in individual brains, but they would not persist without social and collective memory frameworks. This course will examine modern, western histories of collective memories through the institutions and technologies that facilitate recall, such as museums, historical sites, photography and visual culture. We will consider moments of tension where history and memory appear to be at odds, where competing interests in the meanings of the past have created social conflict, or silences about the past are broken. While the course emphasizes how societies come to terms with painful or shameful memories, we will also focus on the ways in which visual sources, particularly photographs, have shaped discourses of memory. By learning from scratch how to “read” historical photographs, we will interrogate the ways in which iconic images, snapshots and “Kodak moments” have become integral to thinking about collective memory.

A short chapter or article is assigned for each class meeting. We will discuss the assigned reading during that class, as well as material presented by the instructor. All readings are electronically accessible on Box, unless otherwise noted.

Week 1: Introduction to Collective Memory Studies

August 1 Tuesday: Foundations of Collective Memories

Read: Maurice Halbwachs, “Collective Memory and Historical Memory” in his *The Collective Memory* (1980)

Optional reading for an overview of collective memory studies: “Introduction,” Alexandre Dessingué and Jay Winter, eds., *Beyond Memory: Silence and the Aesthetics of Remembrance* (2015)

August 3 Thursday: Collective Memory Case Study: The Enola Gay Controversy

Read: Richard Kohn, “History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution’s Enola Gay Exhibit” (*Journal of American History*, 1995)

Week 2: How Do We Remember the Past Visually?

August 8 Tuesday: How to Read a Photograph

Read Vicki Goldberg, “Icons” in her *The Power of Photography* (1993)

August 10 Thursday: Ruins or Rubble?

Read: Georg Simmel, "The Ruin" (1919)

Suggested: Browse Marchand and Meffre, [Ruins of Detroit](#) website

Week 3: Media and Postmemory

August 15 Tuesday: Generations of Holocaust Memory

Read: Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory" in Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (2012)

August 17 Thursday: Film as a Source of Collective Memories

Read: Alison Landsberg, "Prosthetic Memory" in Paul Grainge, *Memory and Popular Film* (2003)

Week 4: Re-Imagining "The Twentieth Century"

August 22-24: Read Peter Fritzsche and Charles Stewart, eds. *Imagining the Twentieth Century** for Tuesday's class; we will discuss it on Tuesday and Thursday

*This book is no longer in print. Some used copies are available for purchase online. The instructor has some used copies available to borrow for free and is negotiating with the press for electronic book access.

Week 5: Remembering Unbearable Pasts

August 29 Tuesday: Collective Memory Case Study: Remembering Lynching in America

Read: Ken Gonzales-Day, ch. 3, *Lynching in the West 1850-1935* (2006) and view his "[Erased Lynching](#)" and "[Hang Trees](#)" online exhibits, then take the "[Walking Tour](#)" of downtown Los Angeles

August 31 Thursday: Collective Memory Case Study: Remembering Enslaved People in America

Read: Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small, "Symbolic Annihilation" in their *Representations of Slavery* (2002)