The Texture of Memory

Course Description:

Memory is essential to our understanding of ourselves, of our collective past and present and our existence as humans. But how does memory work? Which parts of our brain are responsible for our memories? What happens when these parts do not function? Can memory be manipulated? What role does memory play for the formation of identity? Why are some memories excluded from dominant social narratives, and how can shared memories serve as a form of power? These are some of the questions we will address in this seminar. We will begin with learning about the general mechanisms of memory formation in the brain. We will take these findings to examine our own experiences and memories. From there we will proceed to study examples of individual, collective, and cultural memory from a variety of disciplines. We will learn how these memories are shaped and how they, in turn, shape us.

Our focus will be on the multiple coexisting and rivaling collective and cultural memories that reflect the diversity and multiculturalism in U.S. society. We will learn about ways in which different ethnic communities that are or have been excluded from the dominant discourse have remembered events affecting them, such as slavery, the internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII, and the destruction of Native American culture. We will examine why and how these memories have been excluded from the dominant discourses and how they challenge the notion of a master narrative of US national and cultural identity. We’ll read the autobiography of poet Maya Angelou and Leslie Harmon Silko’s *Ceremony*, the tale of a Navajo man damaged by World War II, navigating his return to a New Mexico reservation.

Objectives:

1. Learn general mechanisms of memory formation in the brain
2. Explore the relationship between collective and individual memory
3. Develop an awareness of the diverse collective memories of social/ethnic communities within the U.S.
4. Explore how collective memory contributes to the formation of cultural identity
5. Explore power and privilege underlying the formation of collective and cultural memory
6. Develop an interdisciplinary model of memory
7. To reinforce a habit of reading actively, critically, and with curiosity

**Required Texts**
Maya Angelou: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
Leslie Marmon Silko: *Ceremony*

**Readings (on Blackboard)**
Adler, Jerry. “Erasing Painful Memories”
Amazeen, Michelle A. “The politics of memory: contesting the “Convention Night” version of this historic day”
Anderson, Michael and Benjamin J. Levy. “Suppressing Unwanted Memories”
Assmann, Jan. “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity”
Barash, Jeffrey Andrew. “Analyzing Collective Memory”
Berkowitz, Dan. “Telling the Unkown through the Familiar: Collective Memory as Journalistic Device in a Changing Media Environment”
Bindas, Kenneth J. “Re-Remembering the Segregated Past: Race in American Memory”
Crane, Susan. “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum”
Davis, Patricia. “Cultural Memory and African American Southern Identity. An Introduction”
Draaisma, Douwe. “Reminiscences”
Halbwachs, Maurice. *Collective Memory* (excerpt)
Hayashi, Robert. “Transfigured Patterns: Contesting Memories at the Manzanar Historical Site”
Hirst, William et al. “Of sins and virtues: memory and collective identity”
Holyfield, Lori and Clifford Beacham. “Memory Brokers, Shameful Pasts, and Civil War Commemoration”
Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki and James D. Houston: *Farewell to Manzanar*
It is my pleasure to provide you with a summary of the student evaluations for your
Jäncke, Lutz. “Music, Memory and Emotion”
Johnson, M.K. “Psychology of False Memories”
Joyce, James. “The Dead”
Lampinen, James M. and Denise R. Beike. “Nuts and Bolts. The Basic of your Memory (excerpt)
Mace, John H. “Involuntary Memory: Concept and Theory”
Markowitsch, Hans. “Cultural Memory and the Neurosciences”
Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire” (excerpt)
Proust, Marcel. *Remembrance of Things Past* (excerpt)
Ross, Michael and Qui Wang. “Why We Remember and What We Remember: Culture and Autobiographical Memory”
Smith, Cynthia Duquette and Teresa Bergman. “You Were on Indian Land: Alcatraz Island as Recalcitrant Memory Space”
Methods of Evaluation:

Attendance and participation (15% of final grade)
Assignments (10% of final grade)
(Research) Project (25% of final grade)
4 short papers (20% of final grade)
Research Paper (15% of final grade)
Final Exam (15% of final grade)

Class Participation: Your attendance (on time) and intellectual engagement is mandatory and will make your experience – and that of your classmates – rewarding. Discussion of these texts is a central requirement of the class, and you can’t participate if you’re not here. Therefore, after three unexcused absences, I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade for each subsequent non-appearance.

Short papers: these short papers (900 words) will give you the opportunity to further engage with the course material. They are also designed to improve your writing and thinking. The topic for each paper will be distributed at least one week in advance of the due date.

Assignments: there will be regular assignments that should be posted on blackboard prior to class meeting. The assignments will be evaluated as √+ (equivalent to A or 95) or √ (equivalent to A-/B+ or 90). Assignments that demonstrate gross misunderstanding of the assigned reading or fail to engage substantially with the question will receive a √ - (equivalent to a B or 85%). Each missing assignment will receive a zero.

Group Poster and Poster Presentation Project This is a collaborative research project, the results of which will be presented as a research poster at the end of the semester. For this assignment, students will be divided into groups of 4 - 5 students and research some aspect of memory and ethnic communities in the US. The topics can be broad and wide-ranging, and need not stem directly from the course material. However, the project should reflect the relationship/interplay between the neurological basis of memory and its societal/collective component. We will spend a lot of time talking about how to generate a topic as well as about how to go about researching the presentation and preparing your poster. Each group will present their posters at a scheduled plenary meeting as well as at an end-of-semester research event hosted by the Honors College. Students will also be responsible for an individually written research report describing the process of developing and preparing the presentation, the contributions of the research team. More details on all of this will be forthcoming.

10% for Group Poster
15% for individual contribution and oral presentation

**Research Paper:** presents your individual research for the poster projects in 8-10 pages.

**Final:** Administered during designated exam time for this section of the course.

**Schedule**

Jan 15  Introduction

**I. Encoding and Storing**

17  James M. Lampinen, and Denise R. Beike: “Nuts and Bolts. The Basic of your Memory (excerpt) (BB)
Richard F. Thompson and Stephen A. Madigan: “What is Memory?” (BB)

22  Discussion: false memories
M. K. Johnson: “Psychology of False Memories” (BB)
Elizabeth F. Loftus: “Our Changeable Memories: Legal and Practical implications”
1st short paper due

24  Discussion: suppressed memory
Michael Anderson and Benjamin J. Levy: “Suppressing Unwanted Memories” (BB)
Discussion: erased memory
Jerry Adler: “Erasing Painful Memories” (BB)

**II. Recalling Memories**

29  Discussion: “flash bulb” memories
Discussion: Involuntary Memories
John H. Mace: “Involuntary Memory: Concept and Theory” (BB)

31  Discussion: smell and memory
Marcel Proust, excerpt of *In Search of Lost Time* (BB)
“The Nose, an Emotional Time Machine” (NY Times)
[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/05/science/05angier.html?_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/05/science/05angier.html?_r=0)
Discussion: music and memory
James Joyce, excerpt of “The Dead” (pp. 183/1138-194; BB)
Lutz Jäncke: “Music, Memory and Emotion” (BB)
2nd short paper due
III. Memory and Self

Feb 5 Discussion: Distorted Memory—Alzheimer’s Disease, Amnesia
“Amnesia and the Self that Remains When Memory is Lost”

7 Discussion: Memento

12 Discussion: autobiographic memory
Douwe Draaisma: “Reminiscences” (BB)
Autobiographic memory and Maya Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, chapters 1-12
3rd short paper due

14 Michael Ross, Qui Wang: “Why We Remember and What We Remember: Culture and Autobiographical Memory” (BB)
Maya Angelou: I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, chpts. 13-22

19 Maya Angelou: I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, chpts. 23-36

IV. Collective Memory/Cultural Memory: Theory

21 Hans Markowitsch: “Cultural Memory and the Neurosciences” (BB)
William Hirst, Aleandru Cuc, Dana Wohl: “Of sins and virtues: memory and collective identity” (BB)
4th short paper due

26 Maurice Halbwachs: Collective Memory (excerpt, BB)

28 Pierre Nora: “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoir”
(excerpt, BB)
Jan Assmann: “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” (BB)

March 5 no class, Town Meeting Day

7 Jeffrey Andrew Barash: “Analyzing Collective Memory” (BB)
Barry Schwartz: “Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington” (BB)
Research paper proposal due

11-15 Spring Break

V. Collective Memory: The Power and Privilege of Remembering
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Patricia G. Davis: “Cultural Memory and African American Southern Identity. An Introduction” (BB) (class time for work on poster)</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td><strong>Poster Plenary, Billings Lecture Hall</strong></td>
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| 21   | Contesting Memories
|      | Kenneth J. Bindas: “Re-Remembering the Segregated Past: Race in American Memory” (BB) (class time for work on poster) |
| 26   | Contesting Memories
|      | Robert Hayashi: “Transfigured Patterns: Contesting Memories at the Manzanar Historical Site” (BB)
|      | Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston: *Farewell to Manzanar* (excerpts, BB) (class time for work on poster) |
| 27   | **Actors of the London Stage, Music Recital Hall** |
| 28   | Memory and Media
|      | Dan Berkowitz: “Telling the Unknown through the Familiar: Collective Memory as Journalistic Device in a Changing Media Environment” (BB)
|      | Michelle A Amazeen: The politics of memory: contesting the “Convention Night” version of this historic day” (BB) (class time for work on poster) |
| 4    | Ilyse Morgenstein, Plenary lecture, Billings Lecture Hall |
| 4    | **Excursion: Fleming Museum (Native American Exhibit)** |
| April 7 | **FINAL DRAFT OF POSTER DUE BY MIDNIGHT** |
| 9    | Discussion of Museum Visit
|      | Susan A. Crane: Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum” (BB) (trial run of research presentations, group 1 and 2) |
| 10   | **Research Presentations I (Aiken Center 102)** |
11  Writing Workshop

16  Memory and Space
Cynthia Duquette Smith and Teresa Bergman: “You Were on Indian Land: Alcatraz Island as Recalcitrant Memory Space” (BB)
(trial run of research presentations, group 3 and 4)
First Draft of Research Paper Due

17  Research Presentations II ((Aiken Center 102)

18  Leslie Marmon Silko: Ceremony

23  Leslie Marmon Silko: Ceremony

24  First-Year Research Symposium UVM Alumni House, 61 Summit St.

25  Leslie Marmon Silko: Ceremony

30  Leslie Marmon Silko: Ceremony

2  Conclusion
Final Version of Research Paper Due

May 10  Final Examination 1:30-16:15