

ACS6760/HIST6760
Fall 2015
Popular Memory in America

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Course Goals

Contemporary Americans encounter and recreate the past constantly: in movies and television, on the web, during political campaigns, on their vacations, in family gatherings, in their hobbies, and so on. This course will expose students to a range of prevailing theories and questions regarding popular memory, especially in their relevance to the understanding of the human past in the contemporary United States. Students will consider relevant secondary literature regarding a number of sites of popular memory, and will apply the insights from these readings to various instances of popular memory through discussion, through leading discussion, through written reviews of reading material, through the construction of wikis, and will write an evaluation of the field.

Class participation

Meetings: Unless you are instructed otherwise in class or by email, we will meet in Fine Arts 129, 2:30-5:20 PM on Tuesdays. Class participation is required.

Goal: The classroom learning experience involves not only the flow of information from teacher to student but also the exchange of ideas between teachers and students and among the students. Each of us brings a unique background and viewpoint to class, and only by engaging in conversation will you be able to benefit from others in the class the way they may benefit from your presence and participation. Discussion not only requires the articulation of ideas, but also taking into account others' viewpoints.

Requirements: You must come to class prepared to discuss intelligently the relevant sources assigned for the class, and you must take part in class discussion on a regular basis in a civil way. Woody Allen once wrote that "eighty percent of success is showing up." Although the percentage is different for success in this class, attendance is mandatory.

Evaluation: Class participation will count for 25% of your grade. You will be evaluated as much on the quality of your participation—the relevance of your comments, your ability to engage other students, your exhibiting a grasp of the material, and the cogency of your remarks—as the quantity of your participation.

Discussion Leading

Goal: Leading discussions serves several purposes. First, in order to be able to lead discussion effectively, one must digest the material covered. Second, one must consider not only what the authors argued, but also what they did not, as well as how the different works intersect. Third, one provides a service to one's peers by putting the works in a proper context and in considering what issues they bring up, on their own and together. Finally, this is good preparation for future teachers at all levels.

Requirements: Each student will lead discussion once, sometimes in pairs, as there are more students than there are course days available for leading discussion. Students will be responsible for leading discussion for approximately the first two thirds of the class session. For the first

hour, discussion leaders will ensure that all readings are discussed individually and in relation to each other, that all students participate, and that the classroom atmosphere is conducive to an open exchange of ideas. For the second hour, discussion leaders will lead the class in an exploration of material of their own choosing related to the reading(s) assigned for the day. The material can be of any type or media, as long as it is accessible, relevant, and evokes a fruitful discussion.

Evaluation: Your discussion will be evaluated on its coverage, its depth, its intellectual rigor, and the degree of substantive participation by all of your peers. Discussion leading will count for 5% of your grade.

Writing

All written work must be submitted electronically, by the assigned date, through the appropriate link in the “Assignments” area of Canvas.

Book Reviews

Goal: In order to be able to discuss a book intelligently, you must first be able to grasp, evaluate, and articulate the book’s scope (that is, what the book is about), its thesis (its essential argument), its methodology (how the author constructed the thesis, including choice and analysis of evidence and application of relevant theoretical constructs), and the book’s place in a broader intellectual context. In this case, the context will be our reading and discussions concerning the study of popular memory in the contemporary United States. Furthermore, learning to write book reviews is an essential part of your professional training.

Requirement: Each student will write three 500-750-word book reviews, based on professional models, of different course texts. The book reviews are due no later than the beginning of class on the day the book is due to be read, and must be done on a separate book from the one on which you will be leading class discussion.

Below are typical guidelines for reviews in scholarly historical journals:

- Provide a brief summary of the scope, purpose, thesis, and content of the book. Explain its significance and scholarly context. *For this class: your review must refer to some issue or debate (theoretical or methodological) from our readings on in Memory in Culture in weeks two and three of the semester.*
- Include an evaluation of the author’s use of sources, organization and presentation of material, and achievement of overall purpose.
- Do not list typographical or other minor errors unless they significantly impair the value of the book.

Failure to meet the above requirements will result in my returning your review for revision.

Evaluation: Your book review will be evaluated in terms of the degree to which it captures and evaluates the book’s scope, thesis, and methodology; how successful it is in placing the book in the broader intellectual themes of the class; and its organization and felicity of expression. The book reviews, taken together, will count for 15% of your grade.

Digital memory evaluation

Goal: To identify an online repository of cultural memory, to evaluate it, and to present that evaluation to the class. Think broadly about the possibilities: it could be an online database, a

group blog, a museum exhibit, an archive, a set of pedagogical materials – there are many ways that we preserve and perpetuate memory online.

Requirement: You will choose a website primarily related to memory. You will evaluate it according to the Evaluating Digital Humanities Projects common class rubric linked on Canvas. You will also present the site to the class and walk through the evaluation with the class on the date assigned. The presentation will be no longer than eight minutes, with additional time for questions.

Evaluation: Your written and oral evaluation will be evaluated according to both insight and brevity. It will count for 5% of your grade.

Formal Paper

Goal: Professional-level academic work takes place in the context of long scholarly conversations. The goal of this assignment will be for you to assess a scholarly conversation on an issue of relevance to the study of contemporary popular memory, and to join it for yourself, in conjunction with your personal contribution to our Scalar project (see below).

Requirement: A 2,000-2,500 words long paper to be completed along with your Scalar project. It will include an explanation of the site of memory you have explored, consider its use of memory theory, place the site you have constructed in its greater intellectual context (that is, alongside the scholarly conversation on similar topics), and assess the relevant scholarly conversation or conversations on that topic. Failure to meet basic requirements will result in my returning your paper for revision.

Evaluation: Your paper will be evaluated according to how well and how clearly it achieves the above objectives, according to the rubric on Canvas. It will count for 10% of your grade.

Final Paper

Goal: Part of the academic conversation on a given topic necessarily involves considering its broader disciplinary and intellectual concerns. The purpose of this paper is to reflect upon what we have learned and to consider what the major trends are in the consideration of memory in contemporary America.

Requirement: You will write a 2,500-3,000 word paper to consider the question of what are the major trends in the study of memory in the United States. It can and should address several of the books that we read as well as some of your findings from the Scalar project in light of the theoretical and methodological issues that we have read about and discussed over the course of the semester. It is due no later than Wednesday, December 16, at 5:00PM, that is, the end of the final exam period designated for this class.

Evaluation: Your paper will be evaluated according to how well and how clearly it achieves the above objectives. It will count for 15% of your grade.

Scalar project

Goal: To create a multimedia resource to introduce visitors to multiple facets of a particular phenomenon in contemporary American memory. Our class project will be a site on Scalar. You will have one area that you design on your own, that will intersect with other students' areas chronologically and thematically. The choice is yours: your subject matter could be a particular event, or person, or place, or historical process, or a particular group or site (literal or figurative) of remembering. In addition to your engagement with the subject matter, this activity will foster a number of skills, including web design and working in a team.

By creating your Scalar pages, you will be both teacher and student: “teaching” those who will visit your area (especially fellow members of the class) and learning through your investigation, display, and interpretation of what you find. You will also be learning how to construct and evaluate Scalar, an important web 2.0 technology that will be increasingly useful in a variety of academic and public history publishing contexts.

Requirement: Your Scalar area will have a central theme of your choice, use multiple media (that is, not just have text, but will include embedded sources that may include text but must also include images, video, or audio), and interpret that media in light of major themes in the investigation of popular memory, and have a central interpretive thrust (that is, support an overarching thesis). It will consist of no fewer than eight separate pages, and a combined 2,000 words of text. It will properly cite sources, put the subject matter in broader and in scholarly context, and conform to the aesthetic, stylistic, and other standards set by the class for all Scalar pages. In addition, you will contribute to the common effort. This will include helping to design a metadata scheme, establishing appropriate paths between projects, reading and offering feedback on others pages, and other activities, according to your chosen assignment.

Evaluation: Your Scalar will be evaluated according to the Scalar evaluation rubric, which we will construct in class and will be on our Canvas site. It will count for 15% of your grade. An additional 5% of your grade will be for your work for the overall project.

Class Presentation

Goal

The purpose of presenting work is to engage into a conversation with colleagues (and sometimes the general public) so as to provoke discussion and to solicit the suggestions and critiques necessary for sharpening arguments. This assignment will help you do both through your presenting a paper orally for comment and discussion by your peers. Remember that presentations are *not* the same as papers. A good presentation is not merely reading out loud. Rather, it is presenting the essential points in an engaging way that can be followed by listeners, as opposed to writing in a detailed way that can be slowly digested by readers. Preparing for a presentation is very different from simply reading a paper.

Requirements

You will make 10-minute oral presentation of your Scalar page and findings. You are to present for no less than 9 minutes and no more than 11 minutes at the date and time assigned to you. You will be under a strict time limit (I will cut you off at 11 minutes, in mid-sentence if necessary). Presentations will be in class on the last weeks of class meetings.

Evaluation

Your presentation will be evaluated on the quality of your presentation’s analysis and coverage of the topic, its historiography, and the state of the field; clarity of expression, oral articulation, and fulfillment of requirements. It will count for 5% of your final grade.

Grades

Evaluations weighting

Participation
Book reviews

25%
15%

Grading scale

A 90-100
B 80-89

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|--------------------|------|---|-------|
| Formal Paper | 15% | C | 70-79 |
| Scalar project | 20% | D | 60-69 |
| Leading Discussion | 5% | F | <60 |
| Presentation | 5% | | |
| Final paper | 15% | | |
| TOTAL | 100% | | |

Passing

You must earn a passing grade in every portion of this course—participation, oral presentation and discussion leading, and all written assignments—to earn a passing grade for the course. Fail any of those categories, and you will not receive a passing grade for the course.

Miscellany

Late papers policy: You will be penalized one letter grade for each day an assignment is due.

The clock starts at the beginning of class on the day the paper is due, meaning that if the paper is not handed in at the beginning of that class, it will be considered late.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is bad on many levels. First of all, you're stealing from someone else by taking her or his hard work and passing it off as your own. You're cheapening your degree, and worse yet, those of your peers by getting something (a passing grade) for nothing. You're cheating yourself the opportunity to learn and to develop your thinking and writing skills, presumably the reason you came to BGSU. You are also stealing from your classmates—and, indeed, yourself—by taking up a good deal of your instructor's time on detecting and dealing with plagiarism rather than evaluating other assignments and preparing for class. Last of all, you're insulting your instructors by assuming that we can't tell. You may get away with it this time, but sooner or later, you'll get caught (and you won't be the first or even the second graduate student who has been so insolent in one of my classes). Cheating or plagiarism of any form is a serious offense, will not be tolerated, may result in a failing grade for the entire course and/or disciplinary action. Only peer pressure and my lawyer's vehement objections prevent me from inflicting 18th-century-style corporal punishment (think pressing or keelhauling, look 'em up if you don't know what they are) or going New Jersey gangster-style on you (I can say that, I'm from New Jersey, and you shouldn't mess with me) on academic honesty offenders. See your BGSU graduate guidelines for further information.

Emergencies: John Milton praised the ability “to temper Justice with Mercy.” Should there be some dire and urgent reason that you are unable to attend class or turn in an assignment on time (family or medical emergency, for example, not “But there's a Blue's Clues marathon on cable!”), contact me as soon as possible so that we may make alternate arrangements for the satisfactory and timely completion of the requirements of the assignment(s). Note that you will still be held responsible for any material read, due, or discussed in class.

Special Needs: If you need special course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or have emergency medical information to share with me, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. I will make strong efforts to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to learn, to participate, and to be evaluated fairly.

Office Hours: Should you have any questions, comments, difficulties, or desire to discuss matters historical or otherwise, please do not hesitate to come to my office hours, make an appointment to see me, or email me.

Course Schedule

The readings listed are to be read for the session indicated on the same row. Please note that, because of the number of students in the course, if you plan to get a book from Jerome Library or through Ohiolink, make sure to order it well in advance. You have the schedule now; plan accordingly.

| Date | Session/Theme | Reading |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 25-Aug | Intro/Scalar | |
| 1-Sep | Thinking about Memory | Erl, <i>Memory in Culture</i> ; Trouillot, "Three Faces of San Souci" (on Canvas) |
| 8-Sep | What Americans try to remember | Rosenszweig and Thelen, <i>The Presence of the Past</i> |
| 15-Sep | Scalar, Digital memories I | |
| 22-Sep | Local memories | Stanton, <i>The Lowell Experiment</i> |
| 29-Sep | Raw memories | <i>In the Shadow of No Towers</i> ; 9/11 Report Executive Summary (on Canvas), "Poetry as Memorial" (on Canvas) |
| 6-Oct | Scalar, Digital memories II | |
| 13-Oct | <i>Fall break</i> | |
| 20-Oct | Memory on film | R.B. Toplin's <i>Reel History</i> |
| 27-Oct | Scalar, Digital memories III | |
| 3-Nov | Place and Monuments | Savage, <i>Monument Wars</i> |
| 10-Nov | Imagined community? | Schocket, <i>Fighting over the Founders</i> |
| 17-Nov | Schoolhouse Rock | Nash, et. Al. <i>History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past</i> |
| 24-Nov | Race, Place, and Memory | Kelman, <i>A Misplaced Massacre</i> |
| 1-Dec | Scalar/presentations | |
| 8-Dec | Scalar/presentations | |
| 16-Dec | Final exam | |