

American Cultural Memory

Trauma, Collective Imagery, and the Politics of Remembering

Syllabus

HS 32 112 Friday, 14-16, John F. Kennedy-Institute, Room 201, Summer term 2004

Dozent: PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt, sbrandt@zedat.fu-berlin.de

Course description: This course will focus on the aesthetic strategies of remembering that can be found in contemporary American literature and culture. The concept of “cultural memory,” coined by Jan Assmann in the 1980s, has attracted academic attention across the disciplines in recent years. Memory culture, in this view, is the way a society ensures cultural continuity by preserving its collective knowledge from one generation to the next. Especially after September 11, questions have come up about the dynamics of remembering and the functions of collective memory. In what ways is mourning a part of remembering? How does the representation of memory in cultural texts function as mourning? The course will analyze a wide range of ‘texts’ (films, novels, short stories, photographs, architectural sites) where cultural identity is formed through narratives of memory and trauma. The seminar will be held in English.

Occasional film screenings: Fri, 16-18, Room 201

Credit requirements: Regular attendance, active [!] participation in class, oral presentation, a mid-term paper and a final paper (à 6-8 pages). There will also be a few quizzes meant as an encouragement to keep track with the assigned reading.

Required reading: A course reader is available in the copy-shop at Königin-Luise-Str.

16. April 2004: **Introduction**

23. April 2004: **What Is Cultural Memory?**

Main Texts: Jan Assmann, “Erinnerungskultur” (from: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*) (1999)
 Pam Meecham and Julie Sheldon, “Monuments, Modernism and Public Space” (from: *Modern Art: A Critical Introduction*) (2000)

Extra Texts: Manfred Weinberg and Martin Windisch, “Einleitung” zu *Medien des Gedächtnisses* (1998)

Uwe Jochum, "Die Bibliothek als *locus communis*" (from: *Medien des Gedächtnisses*) (1998)
Andreas Huyssen, "The Museum as Mass Medium" (from: *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*) (1995)

Extra Screening: MEMENTO (Christopher Nolan 2001) (Fri, 16-18, Room 201)

30. April 2004: Individual Memory

Main text: Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma" (1995)

Extra Text: Anselm Haverkamp, "Das Bildgedächtnis der Photographie" (from: *Memoria: Vergessen und Erinnern*) (1993)

Extra Screening: FORREST GUMP (Robert Zemeckis 2001) (Fri, 16-18, Room 201)

7. May 2004: American Cultural Memory: An Overview

Main texts: Marita Sturken, "Introduction" and "Camera Images and National Meanings" (from: *Tangled Memories*) (1997)
Jan Assmann, "Optionen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses: 'Heiße' und 'kalte' Erinnerung" (from: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*) (1999)

Extra text: Paul Connerton, "Introduction" to *How Societies Remember* (1989)

14. May 2004: Commemoration and National Identity

Main texts: Michael Kammen, "Commemoration and Contestation in American Culture: Historical Perspectives" (2003)
Ward Churchill, "Deconstructing the Columbus Myth: Was the 'Great Discoverer' Italian or Spanish, Nazi or Jew?" (1997)

Extra text: Gesa Mackenthun, "Haunted Real Estate: The Occlusion of Colonial Dispossession and Signatures of Cultural Survival in U.S. Horror Fiction" (1998)

21. May 2004: The Body as Historical Text: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987)

Main texts: Toni Morrison, chapters from *Beloved* (1987)
Mae G. Henderson, "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Re-Membering the Body as Historical Text" (1999)

Extra texts: Sabine Bröck, "Postmodern Mediations and *Beloved*'s Testimony: Memory Is Not Innocent" (1998)
Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community" (1995)

Extra Screening: GONE WITH THE WIND (Victor Fleming 1939) (Fri, 16-18, Room 201)

28. May 2004: Memories of the 'Old South'

Main text: Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr., "The South as National Epic" (from: *The Celluloid South*) (1981)

Extra texts: Linda Williams, "Rewriting the Plantation Legend: Scarlett Totes a Weary Load" (from: *Playing the Race Card*) (2001)

— Mid-term paper —
Late papers *will* be graded down!

- 04. June 2004:** **Extra Screening: SCHINDLER'S LIST (Steven Spielberg 1993)**
- 11. June 2004:** **Holocaust**
 Main text: Kirby Farrell, "Traumatic Economies in *Schindler's List*" (1998)
 Extra text: Barbie Zelizer, "Remembering to Remember" (from: *Remembering to Forget*) (1998)
- Extra Screening: JFK (Oliver Stone 1991)** (Fri, 16-18, Room 201)
- 18. June 2004:** **JFK — The Film (1991)**
 Main text: Barbie Zelizer, "Covering the Body" (from: *The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory*) (1992)
 Extra text: Barbie Zelizer, "Negotiating Memory: From 1980 to the Nineties" (from: *The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory*) (1992)
- 25. June 2004:** **JFK — Literary Representations**
 Main texts: Don DeLillo, *Libra* (1988)
 Randi Gunzenhäuser, "'All Plots lead toward death': Memory, History, and the Assassination of John F. Kennedy" (1998)
- Extra Screening: FULL METAL JACKET (Stanley Kubrick 1986)** (Fri, 16-18, Room 201)
- 02. July 2004:** **Vietnam**
 Main texts: Marita Sturken, "Reenactment and the Making of History" (from: *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*) (1997)
 Adi Wimmer, "Recyclings of the Frontier Myth in Vietnam War Films of the 1980s" (1992)
 Extra text: Bernd Hüppauf, "Modernism and the Photographic Representation of War and Destruction" (1995)
 Harvey Roy Greenberg, "War Movies: Dangerous Recuperations" (1993)
- 09. July 2004:** **September 11**
 Main texts: Immanuel Wallerstein, "America and the World: The Twin Towers as Metaphor" (from: *Understanding September 11*) (2002)
 Marc Howard Ross, "The Political Psychology of Competing Narratives: September 11 and Beyond" (from: *Understanding September 11*) (2002)
 Extra text: Rajeev Bhargava, "Ordinary Feelings, Extraordinary Events: Moral Complexity in 9/11" (from: *Understanding September 11*) (2002)
- 16. July 2004:** **Final discussion: Contemporary Scrapbooks of Atrocity**
 Text: Barbie Zelizer, "Remembering to Forget: Contemporary Scrapbooks of Atrocity" (1998)

— Final Paper —
 Late Papers *will* be graded down!