

FYSP 128: Media and Memory

Jeff Pence
Fall 2002
TTh 11:00-12:15
Mudd 303

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Texts

Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*
Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*
Momaday, *The Way to Rainy River*
O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

Films on reserve; other readings to be distributed in class.

Course Aims

The most basic aim of this colloquium is to introduce students to a broad area of inquiry: the relationship of form and content in organizing our perceptions of the past. In terms of content, the class is less an introduction to a new academic field than a new perspective on types of cultural products with which you may already be familiar. We will work to understand different cultural forms—including poetry, fiction, cinema, monuments, visual art, oral narrative and electronic textual forms—as models and modelers of memory. We will also move between a number of registers of memory, from the subjective to the collective, the mythic to the historical. In the process, students will be encouraged to define and pursue interests of their own that relate to these questions.

The goals of the course in relation to student skills are manifold. First, this class is a colloquium, a word connoting a gathering for conversation. Thus, the development of considerate, effective and risk-taking discussion and presentation skills will be a focus. (As you'll learn, memory has always been associated with strong oral skills) Second, we will undertake a variety of writing assignments, ranging from more or less traditional essay work to some other, rather unusual pieces. Third, we will seek to develop self-awareness and facility with responding to works in a variety of media.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance: required in order to pass the course; more than two absences will diminish your credit for attendance; four absences will result in a loss of credit for the class entirely.

Lateness: unacceptable; attendance will be taken only at the start of class; see above.

Readings/Viewings: must be completed and considered before the class for which they are assigned; bring annotated texts and notes from viewings to class and be prepared to refer to them.

Written and other work: due at the beginning of the class for which they are assigned; work submitted after that time will be considered late and be penalized one-half letter grade per day; no final projects will be accepted late without an incomplete approved by the Dean of Students.

Assignments

Blackboard Discussion: This course has a page on Blackboard, a web-based teaching accessory. This is the procedure for locating our Blackboard discussion site, logging on and reading and submitting written posts.

1. Direct your web browser to this url: <http://Bb.oberlin.edu/>
2. Click on “Login”
3. Click on “Forgot your password?”
4. Fill out one of the two text fields and click on “submit”
5. You will receive an email instructions for setting your password
6. Now login for real
7. Under “My Courses” find “Media and Memory” and click on it
8. Find “Discussion Board” on the list at screen left and click on it
9. “Forum” means a discussion thread; start one or respond to one

You are required to post to this discussion site at least once per week. Don’t think of these postings as mini-essays; rather, use them to speculate on some aspect of the coursework you’d like to discuss, to highlight some connections or contradictions in the course material, or to engage with the ideas of another class member. Likewise, telegraphic or unreflective postings are not what I’m after. I especially encourage postings that reply to other postings. I especially appreciate those that pursue discussions and interactions beyond the minimal requirement. Sometimes, as at the beginning of the semester, I may initiate discussion with a question; normally, I shouldn’t have to. As with discussion in class, while there is some correlation between frequency of participation and quality, they are not identical.

Essay 1: a 1000-1500 word essay on memory and form in *As I Lay Dying* and/or *Citizen Kane*. Due 10/1.

Essay 2: a 1000-1500 word essay on memory and history in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, *The Things They Carried* and/or the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Due 10/18.

Monument Project: this will be discussed in more detail late in the first module and early in the second. We will look at the traces of memorial culture available in Oberlin and then break into groups to prepare presentations on selected topics.

Final Essay: a reflective piece whose scope and design is up to you, in consultation with me. Due during our scheduled exam period, this piece should allow you to either organize and respond to the themes of the course in your own way or to pursue some aspect of the same in greater depth.

Grades

Participation: 20%
Prep Papers: 15%
Essay 1: 15%
Essay 2: 15%
Monument Project: 10%
Final Essay: 25%

Schedule

Week 1

9/3 Introduction & procedures;
9/5 Memory and Media intro

Week 2

9/10 American memory: selected poetry
9/12 poetry cont.
Poetry preps due

Week 3

9/17 Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 3-136
9/19 Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 137-261
Faulkner preps due

Week 4

9/24 Welles, *Citizen Kane*

9/26 Welles, cont.
Welles preps due

Week 5

10/1 Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*
Essay 1 due

10/3 Momaday, cont.
Momaday preps due

Week 6

10/8 O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

10/10 O'Brien cont.
O'Brien preps due

Week 7

10/15 Maya Lin, Viet Nam Veterans Memorial; *A Strong Clear Vision*
Burke, "History as Social Memory"

10/17 Lin, cont.
Lin preps due

10/18 **Essay 2 due**

BREAK

Week 8

10/29 Monument Project intro

10/31 Monument Project work

Week 9

11/5 Calvino, *If On a Winter's Night a Traveler*

11/7 Calvino, cont.
Calvino preps due

Week 10

11/12 **Monument Project presentations**

11/14 **Monument Project presentations**
Monument preps due

Week 11

11/19 Egoyan, *Calendar*

11/21 Egoyan, cont.
Egoyan preps due

Week 12

11/26 Girard, *32 Short Films about Glenn Gould*

11/28 Thanksgiving, no class

Week 13

12/3 Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*
Girard preps due

12/5 Jackson, cont.
Jackson preps due

Week 14

12/10 Nolan, *Memento*

12/12 Final discussion