

FYSP 128: Media and Memory

Jeff Pence
Fall 2004
TTh 9:35-10:50
Mudd 202

Office: Rice 109
Of. Hrs.: T 3-4; Th 11-12:30, or by appt.
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Texts

Collins & Rayner, *The Road to Perdition*
Momaday, *The Way to Rainy River*
O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*
Proulx, *The Shipping News*

Films on reserve

Cronenberg, *eXistenZ*
Egoyan, *The Sweet Hereafter*
Girard, *32 Short Films about Glenn Gould*
Mendes, *The Road to Perdition*
Ward, *Map of the Human Heart*
Welles, *Citizen Kane*

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 grade one-half letter; each additional absence will decrease it a further half letter; five absences will result in a loss of credit for the class.

Lateness: unacceptable; attendance will be taken only at the start of class; see above; chronic lateness will erode your grade.

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.

Plagiarism: all work must conform to the Oberlin College Honor Code and be submitted with the standard signed pledge.

Assignments

Responses: these are brief assignments spread across the term in which you are asked to reflect upon the issues raised in that week's materials. Often, I will give a prompt for how to approach this task based upon our discussion at the beginning of the week. For instance, I may ask for a close analysis of a passage, an imaginary revision of part of a work, or for an exploration of a larger question provoked by our interaction. These will not be graded individually but assessed as a whole at term's end along with your participation.

Essay 1: a 1000-1500 word essay on memory and history in *Citizen Kane*, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and/or *The Things They Carried*. Due 10/12.

Essay 2: a 1250-1750 word essay on memory and form in *The Road to Perdition* (book and/or film), a work from AMAM, a monument other than those studied in class and/or *Map of the Human Heart*. Due 11/12.

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

after working in the Oberlin College Archives and doing fieldwork. Presentations should be informational and provoke discussion.

AMAM Presentation: following a class session in a seminar room at the Allen Memorial Art Museum, I'll ask each of you to research a work on display in the museum and to prepare a brief, interactive presentation in which you respond to the work on its own terms and in relation to the concerns of the course.

Final Project: 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 and responses: 25%
Essay 1: 10%
Essay 2: 15%
Monument Project/AMAM Presentation: 25%
Final Essay: 25%

Schedule

Week 1

9/2 Introduction/procedures

Week 2

9/7 American memory: selected poetry, distributed in class

9/9 Poetry cont.
Poetry responses due

Week 3

9/14 Welles, *Citizen Kane*

9/16 Welles cont.
Welles responses due

Week 4

9/21 Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

9/23 Momaday cont.
Momaday responses due

Week 5

9/28 O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

9/30 O'Brien cont.
O'Brien responses due

Week 6

10/5 Collins, *The Road to Perdition*

10/7 Mendes, *The Road to Perdition*
Collins & Rayner/Mendes responses due

Week 7

10/12 Media and Memory in the visual arts: Allen Memorial Art Museum
Essay #1 due

10/14 AMAM presentations

BREAK

Week 8

10/26 Monument Project Introduction, Oberlin College Archives

10/28 Monument Project cont., Oberlin College Archives

Week 9

11/2 Proulx, *The Shipping News*

11/4 Proulx cont.
Proulx responses due

Week 10

11/9 Monument Project Presentations

11/11 Monument Project Presentations

11/12 **Essay #2 due**

Week 11

11/16 Ward, *Map of the Human Heart*

11/18 Ward, cont.
Ward responses due

Week 12

11/23 Girard, *32 Short Films about Glenn Gould*

11/25 Thanksgiving, no class

Week 13

11/30 Girard, cont.; Cronenberg, *eXistenZ*

12/2 Cronenberg, cont.
Girard or Cronenberg response due

Week 14

12/7 Egoyan, *The Sweet Hereafter*

12/9 Egoyan, cont.

Week 15

12/14 Kunuk, *Atanarjurat* ; Last class

Final projects due during scheduled exam period