Description

How does a city ‘remember’ the past lives of its inhabitants? How do the peculiar characteristics of a city like New York—its density, cultural diversity, and constant evolution—affect the memories of the individuals and groups who live there? How does a city memorialize collective trauma and loss? This seminar will explore the interplay between memory and the city through the analysis of photography, literature, film, and memorials. A wide range of theoretical readings will provide us with a critical vocabulary for investigating questions of cultural memory and memorialization. The research paper will focus on a commemorative site in New York City, broadly interpreted: this might be a major memorial or museum; a small commemorative site or monument; or an unofficial, virtual, or erased memorial.

Requirements

- This course requires both collaborative effort and individual commitment. You must come to class having completed all reading and writing assignments for that day.
- **Print out and bring the relevant readings to class.**
- **Attendance** is required. An excused absence is an illness with a doctor’s note, a family emergency, or a religious holiday.
- Please let me know in advance if you are going to be absent for any of those reasons. More than two unexcused absences, and/or habitual lateness to class, will reduce your final grade.

Evaluation

Grades are based on class participation, the quality of your essay drafts and revisions, your responses to other students’ papers, and the accurate and polished presentation of your research. **Each draft of your essay is important** and should conform to MLA style as well as to grammar, punctuation and spelling rules. Percentage breakdown of assignments: Participation 20%; First essay 15%; Second essay 20%; Research essay 30%; Research essay supporting work (proposal, annotated bibliography etc) 5%; Final essay 10%.

Readings

Available as PDFs on Blackboard.

- Jane Jacobs, ‘Uses of Sidewalks: Safety.’
- Louis Auchincloss, ‘The Landmarker.’
- Colson Whitehead, from *The Colossus of New York*
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘My Lost City.’
- Joan Didion, ‘Goodbye to All That’
- George Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life.’
- Vivian Gornick, ‘Approaching Eye Level’
- Ralph Ellison, ‘New York, 1936’
- Sigmund Freud, ‘Screen Memories.’
- Andre Aciman, ‘Arbitrage.’
- Walt Whitman, ‘Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.’
- Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire.’
- Jan Assman, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity.’
- Jay Winter, ‘Sites of Memory.’
- James Young, ‘The Texture of Memory.’
**Course Calendar**

**Paper One: What makes a city?** (1500-1750 words, 15%)

**Week One**

1/24  
*Introduction to the course.*  
**In class:** Watch *Manhatta.* Discussion of visual representations of the city.  
**Write a description of one of the images from the film that strikes you most strongly.**  
**Homework:** Read Benjamin and Jacobs.

1/26  
**In class:** Working in two groups, outline the main arguments of Benjamin and Jacobs.  
**Homework:** Read Auchincloss, Whitehead. Watch Woody Allen, *Manhattan.* Revise your *Manhatta* observation to turn in (500 words).

**Note:** Woody Allen’s *Manhattan* will be shown on the big screen at the Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria on Friday, January 27th and Saturday January 28th at 7pm. Student tickets are $9. Visit [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us)

**Week Two**

1/31  
**In class:** Discussion of Auchincloss, Whitehead and Allen. Discussion of essay prompt/requirements.  
**Homework:** Find a visual or literary representation of a New York City location that has since changed or been erased. Using a concept from one of the readings, analyze your ‘representation’ in detail (500-700 words). Include 2-3 questions about how you could develop this writing as a full essay.

2/2  
**In class:** In small groups, share your writing and questions. Discussion of drafting and workshopping.  
**Homework:** Essay draft. (1500-1750 words)

**Week Three**

2/7  
**In class:** Workshop essay drafts. Discussion of revision methods.

2/9  
**In class:** Workshop essay drafts. Discussion of MLA citation.  
**Homework:** Revise essay draft to turn in.

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**Plagiarism**

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html](http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html) for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

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**Paper due dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>February 7th, 14th</td>
<td>Paper One draft and revision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 6th, 20th</td>
<td>Paper Two draft and revision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 5th, April 17th, April 26th</td>
<td>Research presentation, draft and final.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 3rd</td>
<td>Paper Four.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Paper Two: How does the city shape us? (2000-2250 words, 20%)

Week Four

2/14 Turn in Paper One.

In class: Read Walt Whitman’s poem ‘Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.’ Choose and analyze an image from the poem that particularly expresses the relationship between the city and the individual (500).

Homework: Read Simmel and Baudelaire.

2/16 In class: Discussion of Simmel & Baudelaire, and concepts from their essays.

Homework: Read Ellison, Freud, Aciman

Revisit (either literally or in memory) a place in the city that holds a particularly powerful memory for you. Describe the place and the memory in as much detail as possible. (700 words.)

Week Five

2/21 In class: Discussion of concepts from the readings: ‘screen memories’, ‘arbitrage.’ How could these concepts help illuminate your own narrative? Discussion of essay prompt and requirements.

Homework: Read Fitzgerald and Didion

2/23 In class: In groups, compare and contrast how Fitzgerald and Didion describe their pasts in the city.

Homework: Choose a concept from one of the essays to illuminate your own experience, and revise your writing from last week in light of this idea. (1000 words)

Read Gornick.

Week Six

2/28 In class: Discussion of Gornick. Overview of the range of techniques and approaches that a narrative of personal memory can encompass.

Homework: Essay plan (as detailed as possible)

3/1 In class: Workshop essay plans.

Homework: Full essay draft (2000-2250 words)

Week Seven

3/6 In class: Draft workshops.

3/8 In class: Draft workshops. Discussion of research paper and work for spring break.

Homework: Revise paper 2 to turn in. Read: Nora, Assman.

SPRING BREAK
Paper Three: How does the city memorialize? (Research paper, 3000-3500 words)

Week Eight

3/20  
*Turn in Paper Two.*

In class: What is a memorial? Discussion of Nora and Assman. Overview of New York City’s memorials: resources, definitions, ideas for further research.

Homework: Brainstorm research topics. Bring in 2-3 possible topics/sites of interest for research.

3/22  
In class: Bobst Library visit. Overview of library resources.

Homework: Write a paragraph outlining your idea so far, and three possible avenues for research. Read Winter and Young.

Week Nine

3/27  
In class: Discussion of Winter and Young. Research skills: Moving from topics to questions.

Homework: Read Huyssen. Refine your topic into a research question.

3/29  
In class: Discussion of Huyssen. Recap of cultural memory terms, definitions and approaches. Research skills: How to prepare and use an annotated bibliography.

Homework: Prepare an annotated bibliography of 8-10 sources for your project.

Week Ten

4/3  
In class: Group discussions of research projects. Research skills: Preparing a research presentation.

Homework: Prepare a 5-minute presentation on your research project so far.

4/5  
In class: Research presentations. Research skills: preparing an outline.

Homework: Begin work on a paper outline. Continue to refine and revise your research topic.

Week Eleven

4/10  
In class: Research presentations

Homework: Write a paper outline to be workshoped in class.

4/12  
In class: Workshop outlines. Research skills: Moving from an outline to a draft.

Homework: Write a paper draft.

Week Twelve

4/17  
In class: Workshop paper drafts

4/19  
In class: Workshop paper drafts. Research skills: revision.

Week Thirteen

4/24  
No class: Individual conferences with me (in regular class time + office hours)

4/26  
In class: *Turn in research paper.* Selection of short readings – writers reflecting on their writing.

Week Fourteen

5/1  
Discussion of paper four, in-class writing.

5/3  
*Turn in Paper Four* (1500 words, 10%).