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**, or bring your course reader.
- **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 short papers, your responses to other students’ papers, and the accurate and polished presentation of your research. Percentage breakdown of assignments: Participation 10%; Four short papers (1,000 words each): 10% each; Research essay 40%; Research essay supporting work (proposal, annotated bibliography etc) 10%.

Readings

**Required Text:**

*(Available at Shakespeare & Co)*


**Readings**

On course site or in Lopate (*)

- *Louis Auchincloss, ‘The Landmarker.’*
- *F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘My Lost City.’*
- *Joan Didion, ‘Goodbye to All That’*
- George Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life.’
- *Vivian Gornick, from Approaching Eye Level*
- *Ralph Ellison, ‘New York, 1936’*
- *Andre Aciman, ‘Arbitrage.’*
- 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.’
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 for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

Paper due dates

February 11th: Short paper #1
February 20th: Short paper #2
March 4th: Short paper #3
April 1st: Short paper #4
May 13th: Research paper portfolio

Course Calendar
Week One: Myths of the City

Mon 1/28   Introduction to the course: Colson Whitehead.

Weds 1/30 In class: Watch Manhatta. Read Walt Whitman, “Manahatta” (handout).
Discussion of visual representations of the city.
Writing assignment: Write up in-class commentary on film/poem (500 words, to turn in: ungraded.)
Watch: Woody Allen, Manhattan.
Read: Joan Didion on Manhattan (NYRB, on NYU Classes site.)

Week Two

Mon 2/4   In class: Discussion of Allen and romantic myth-making.
Discussion of research as a creative endeavor.
Read: Fitzgerald, “My Lost City,” and Didion, “Goodbye to All That.”

Weds 2/6 In class: Discussion of Fitzgerald and Didion, nostalgia and self-mythologizing. In groups, compare and contrast how Fitzgerald and Didion describe their pasts in the city.
Writing assignment: Find a visual or literary representation of a “mythical” or personally meaningful New York City location. Using a concept from one of the readings, analyze it in detail (1,000 words).
Read: Baudelaire

Week Three: The Individual and the Crowd

Mon 2/11 In class: Turn in short paper #1
Discussion of Baudelaire: the artist, the crowd, the city.
Read: Simmel, “Metropolis and Mental Life.”

Weds 2/13 In class: Discussion of Simmel
Writing assignment: Writing like a flâneur. Spend some time in a part of the city you don’t know well. What do you see, hear, experience? Write 1,000 words on your experiences, either based on reporting, photographs, etc. Be as creative as you like with this assignment.
Week Four

Mon 2/18  PRESIDENTS’ DAY: NO CLASS

Wed 2/20  In class: Turn in short paper #2
          New York City poetry of nostalgia, memory, and displacement (packet in class.)
          Read: Ellison and Gornick.

Week Five: The politics of preservation

Mon 2/25  In class: Discussion of Ellison and Gornick, the politics of representation and “visibility” in the city.

Wed 2/27  In class: Preservation and gentrification debates: NYU in Greenwich Village.
          Writing assignment: 500 words on opposing sides of a debate (real or imagined) about the
          preservation of a particular NYC landmark, building, neighborhood, etc. (1,000 words total)
          Read: Jacobs and Auchincloss.

Week Six

Mon 3/4   In class: Turn in short paper #3.
          LIBRARY VISIT (TBD)

Wed 3/6   In class: Discussion of research methods, walking tour planning.
          Research assignment: Research a location in Greenwich Village (from list) and write a
          one-page handout about its history. Prepare a short (3-min) presentation on your location.

Week Seven

Mon 3/11  In class: GREENWICH VILLAGE WALKING TOUR and presentations (bring handouts).

Wed 3/13  In class: Discussion of research paper: overview of New York City’s memorials: resources, definitions,
          ideas for further research.
          Read: Nora, Assman, Huyssen. Initial brainstorming of ideas.

SPRING BREAK MARCH 18-24

Week Eight

Mon 3/25  In class: Discussion of Nora, Assman, Huyssen.
          Read: Winter and Young.

Wed 3/27  In class: Discussion of Winter and Young.
          Writing assignment: Briefly (1,000 words) summarize and analyze one of the readings (Nora,
          Assman, Huyssen, Winter, Young.)

Week Nine

Mon 4/1   In class: Turn in short paper #4. Recap of cultural memory terms, definitions and approaches.
          Writing assignment: Brainstorm research topics. Bring in 2-3 possible topics/sites for research.

Wed 4/3   In class: Moving from topics to questions. Workshop your initial ideas.
          Writing assignment: Refine your topic into a research question. Make notes on potential sources to
          consult, further questions, etc (1-2 pages).
Week Ten

**Mon 4/8**  **In class:** Research skills: Annotated bibliographies.  
**Writing assignment:** Prepare an annotated bibliography of 8-10 sources for your project.

**Wed 4/10**  **In class:** Continue group discussion of projects. Research skills: presentations and Powerpoint.  
**Assignment:** Prepare a five-minute presentation of your research topic.

Week Eleven

**Mon 4/15**  **In class:** Research presentations (10 minutes each, presentation and discussion.)

**Wed 4/17**  **In class:** Research presentations (10 minutes each)

**Writing assignment:** Paper outline (1-2 pages) to be turned in, and workshopped in class.

Week Twelve

**Mon 4/22**  **In class:** Workshop paper outlines. Research skills: moving from an outline to a draft.

**Writing assignment:** First paper draft (rough)

**Wed 4/24**  **In class:** Workshop rough drafts. Research skills: revision.

**Writing assignment:** Second paper draft (full length: 3,500 words).

Week Thirteen

**Mon 4/29**  **In class:** Turn in & workshop polished draft. Research skills: citation rules.

**Wed 5/1**  **No class:** Instructor conferences.

**Writing assignment:** Final paper draft

Week Fourteen

**Mon 5/6**  Workshop final draft.

**Wed 5/8**  Workshop final draft

Last day of class: Monday 5/13. Hand in final paper with portfolio of supporting materials (annotated bibliography, outline, draft.)