Course 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.

Course Objectives

This course aims to help students develop their research and writing skills through a series of short and one longer assignment. Students will learn how to identify and pursue a productive line of academic enquiry, by paying attention to their own interests and reactions to the course readings and other objects of study. They will sample a wide range of literary and artistic responses to New York City and develop a critical vocabulary for analyzing these responses.

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 copy of Lopate.
- 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.

Readings

Required Text:

(Available at Shakespeare & Co)

Readings

On NYU Classes or in Lopate (*)
* Jane Jacobs, from The Death and Life of Great American Cities
* Louis Auchincloss, ‘The Landmarker.’
* F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘My Lost City.’
* Joan Didion, ‘Goodbye to All That’
* Vivian Gornick, from Approaching Eye Level
* Ralph Ellison, ‘New York, 1936’
Andre Aciman, ‘Arbitrage.’
Charles Baudelaire, ‘The Painter of Modern Life.’
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.’
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 assignments (approx. 1,000 words each): 10% each; Research essay 40%; Research essay supporting work (proposal, annotated bibliography etc) 10%.

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.

Course Calendar

Week One: Myths of the City

Mon 1/27  Introduction to the course: Colson Whitehead. What is research & how do we begin?

Weds 1/29  In class: Watch Manhatta. Read Walt Whitman, “Manahatta” (handout). Discussion of visual and verbal representations of the city; the presence of the past. Writing assignment: Write up in-class commentary on film/poem (500 words, to turn in: ungraded.) Watch: Woody Allen, Manhattan. (On reserve at Avery Fisher, Bobst 2nd Floor) Read: Joan Didion on Manhattan (NYRB, on NYU Classes site.)

Week Two: Nostalgia and Romance

Mon 2/3  In class: Discussion of Allen, nostalgia, and romantic myth-making. Read: Fitzgerald, “My Lost City,” and Didion, “Goodbye to All That.”

Weds 2/5  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. Short assignment #1: (To be further discussed in class). Find a detail or concept in one of the readings that inspires you to further questions. Outline a plan for a potential research project (theoretical only) that might branch out from this moment. Read: Baudelaire

Paper due dates

February 10: Short assignment #1
February 19: Short assignment #2
March 3: Short assignment #3
March 30: Short assignment #4
May 12: Research paper portfolio.
Week Three: The Individual and the Crowd

**Mon 2/10**  In class: Turn in short assignment #1  
Discussion of Baudelaire: the artist, the crowd, the city.  
**Read:** Readings from Lopate (TBD)

**Weds 2/12** In class: Discussion of readings: the varieties of observational writing.  
**Short assignment #2:** 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, using as much concrete detail as possible (include photographs if you like). Finish up with 3 research questions.

Week Four: Poetics of the City

**Mon 2/17**  PRESIDENTS’ DAY: NO CLASS

**Wed 2/19** In class: Turn in short assignment #2  
Discussion of the use of observation/description in research.  
New York City poetry of nostalgia, memory, and displacement (packet in class.)  
**Read:** Ellison, Gornick, Jacobs, Auchincloss

Week Five: The Politics of Preservation

**Mon 2/24** In class: Discussion of readings: the politics of representation and “visibility” in the city.

**Wed 2/26** In class: Preservation and gentrification debates: NYU in Greenwich Village.  
**Short assignment #3:** 500 words on each opposing sides of a debate (real or imagined) about the preservation of a particular NYC landmark, building, neighborhood, etc. (1,000 words total)

Week Six: Research Methods

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

**Wed 3/5** In class: Discussion of research methods, walking tour planning.  
**Assignment (in pairs):** Research a location in Greenwich Village (from list) and write a one-page handout about its history. Prepare a short (3-5 min) presentation on your location.

Week Seven: Sites of Memory

**Mon 3/10** In class: GREENWICH VILLAGE WALKING TOUR and presentations (bring handouts).

**Wed 3/12** In class: Discussion of research paper: overview of New York City’s memorials: resources, definitions, ideas for further research.  
**Read:** Nora, Assman, Huysssen. Initial brainstorming of research paper ideas.

**SPRING BREAK MARCH 17-23**
Week Eight: Theories of Cultural Memory

**Mon 3/24**  **In class:** Discussion of Nora, Assman, Huyssen. **Read:** Winter and Young.

**Wed 3/26**  **In class:** Discussion of Winter and Young. **Short assignment #4:** Briefly (500 words each) summarize and analyze TWO of the readings (Nora, Assman, Huyssen, Winter, Young.)

Week Nine: Gathering Ideas

**Mon 3/31**  **In class:** Turn in short assignment #4. Recap of cultural memory terms, definitions and approaches. **Writing assignment:** Brainstorm research topics. Bring in 2-3 possible topics/sites for research.

**Wed 4/2**  **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: Research Skills

**Mon 4/7**  **In class:** Research skills: Annotated bibliographies. **Writing assignment:** Prepare an annotated bibliography of 8-10 sources for your project.

**Wed 4/9**  **In class:** Continue group discussion of projects. Research skills: presentations and Powerpoint. **Assignment:** Prepare a five-minute presentation of your research topic.

Week Eleven: Presentations

**Mon 4/14**  **In class:** Research presentations (10 minutes each, presentation and discussion.)

**Wed 4/16**  **In class:** Research presentations (10 minutes each) **Writing assignment:** Paper outline (1-2 pages)

Week Twelve: Workshops

**Mon 4/21**  **In class:** Research presentations (10 minutes each)

**Wed 4/23**  Workshop paper outlines. Research skills: moving from an outline to a draft. **Writing assignment:** First paper draft (at least 2,000 words)

Week Thirteen

**Mon 4/28**  **In class:** Workshop drafts. Research skills: revision. **Assignment:** Full paper draft (3,500 words).

**Wed 4/30**  **In class:** Turn in & workshop second draft. (Concurrent Instructor Conferences).

Week Fourteen

**Mon 5/5**  **In class:** Workshop final draft (Concurrent Instructor Conferences). Research skills: citation rules.

**Wed 5/7**  **In class:** Workshop final draft (Concurrent Instructor Conferences). Final questions.

Last day of class: Monday 5/12. Hand in final paper with portfolio of supporting materials (annotated bibliography, outline, draft.) Fill out self-addressed envelope for paper return.