First-Year Interdisciplinary Seminar: Collective Memory of Atrocity and Crisis

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Primo Levi wrote, “Never forget that this has happened.” Levi’s imperative raises important questions about the role of memory in the aftermath of atrocity and crisis. What is the difference between individual and collective memory? What is the purpose of remembering atrocity? What is the relationship between memory and justice? What gets forgotten in the collective memory and why? How might the memory of everyday crisis and long-term conflict figure into this framework? We will pursue such questions by examining specific genres and forms of collective memory that have contributed to understandings of atrocity and crisis in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in particular. We will consider how memorials, confessions, reparations movements, and environmentalism have shaped, challenged, and revised the politics of remembering and forgetting contemporary atrocity and crisis.

Assignments: (specific guidelines for essays will be distributed in class)

- Essay 1: 4-6 pages: 25%
- Essay 2: 5-7 pages: 25%
- Essay 3: 8-10 pages: 30%
- Participation: 20%: See below for details

Participation Requirements:

Participation is key for your success in this course. In addition to coming to class regularly and on time, you must:

1) Complete all reading assignments
2) Post 2 discussion questions before each class. Please post your questions to the Forum section of NYU Classes at least 1 hour before class on the day we are scheduled to discuss the reading.
3) Contribute Regularly and Thoughtfully to Class Discussion
4) Engage Others With Respect

Books: Please purchase the following books at the NYU bookstore or a bookseller of your choice. I have also placed copies on reserve at NYU Bobst Library.

-optional: Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*

**Readings and Assignments:** Readings and assignments are due on the date they are listed. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) can be found in the Resources Folder of the course website in NYU Classes. You must print and bring a hard copy of the reading to class.

**Phone/Computer Policy:** Please turn your cell phones off during class. You are permitted to use your laptops for writing and other specific exercises. Please do not use laptops during class discussion.

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**Schedule of Readings and Assignments:**

**What is Collective Memory?**


Sept. 8: Maurice Halbwachs, “The Social Frameworks of Memory” in *On Collective Memory* (read pages 37-83; skim pages 84-119)

Sept. 10: Halbwachs, “The Social Frameworks of Memory” (skim pages 120-138; read pages 138-166)

Sept. 15: **NO CLASS**

-Find and bring to class a recent newspaper or magazine article that exemplifies Halbwachs’ argument about collective memory

**War Memorials: Remembering The Dead**

Sept. 22: -Assign Essay 1
-“A Brief History of War Memorial Design: War Memorials in Manitoba”*

Sept. 24: -Maya Lin, “Making the Vietnam Memorial”*
-Yusef Komunyakaa, “Facing It”*
Sept. 29: Class Visit: 9/11 Museum and Memorial
[Meet at 9/11 Memorial Plaza at 11 A.M. outside ticketing queue; tour begins at 11:30]

Oct. 1: 9/11 Museum and Memorial (Discussion)
- Simpson, 9/11 (pages 54-85)

Oct. 6: Steven Conn, “The Bigger Problem With That Flag”*; “Jefferson Davis Statue at University of Texas Campus Sparks Protest”*

Essay 1 Due

Confessions and Apologia: A Comparison of Two Films

Oct. 8: NO CLASS

Oct. 13: NO CLASS—Fall Break
Watch Winter Soldier: The film is on reserve at Bobst Library and available through Netflix. We will discuss the film in class on Oct. 15 and Oct. 20

Oct. 15: Winter Soldier (discussion)
- Assign Essay 2

Oct. 20: Winter Soldier (discussion cont’d)
- Steve Vogel, “War Stories Echo an Earlier Winter”*
- FAIR, “Why Are Winter Soldiers Not News?”*


Oct. 27: The Act of Killing (discussion)

Oct. 29: The Act of Killing (discussion cont’d)
- Nick Fraser, “We Love Impunity: The Case of The Act of Killing”*

Reparations: Paying For Past Injustices

Nov. 3: Essay 2 Due
John Torpey, Making Whole What Has Been Smashed: On Reparations Politics* (pages 1-77)

Nov. 5: John Torpey, Making Whole What Has Been Smashed: On Reparations Politics* (pages 78-132)
Nov. 10:  
-Assign Essay 3  

Nov. 12:  
Reparations Politics In the News: Bring in a recent newspaper or magazine article or video clip that addresses U.S. or global reparations issues

**Ecocide: Toxic Legacies of War**

Nov. 17:  
Fred Wilcox, *Scorched Earth* (pages 1-71)

Nov. 19:  
Fred Wilcox, *Scorched Earth* (pages 73-132)

Nov. 24:  
Fred Wilcox, *Scorched Earth* (pages 133-185)

Nov. 26:  
**NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break**

Dec 1:  
**Essay 3 Drafts Due**  
Workshop Drafts

Dec. 3:  
Hannah Gurman, “The Under-Examined Story of Fallujah”*

Dec. 8:  
**Individual Student Meetings to Discuss Drafts**

Dec. 10:  
**Essay 3 Due**  
Final Essay Presentations

Dec 15:  
Course Evaluations and Reflections