

Spring 2019

HSS 403-022: Media - Trauma - Cure

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MEDIA - TRAUMA - CURE



Clockwise from top: *Trouble the Water*, Ydessa, *the Bears & etc.*, *Let There Be Light*



Course Description

This course will investigate contemporary discourses of trauma through a particular lens: how do artists and media makers not simply represent trauma but construct responses intended to intervene in its complex psychological and cultural ecologies? We will begin by acclimating ourselves to current conversations about trauma — refining our understanding of this oft-used term in order to grasp its many meanings in psychological, medical, political, and historical contexts, considering it as both an individual and collective dilemma, and one that arises in ordinary life and under extraordinary circumstances. Trauma is an inherently time-based concern — its powerful effects and reverberations can appear years, even generations, after an instigating event or ongoing experience — and for this reason, time-based art can serve as a powerful and apt means to confront it. As we examine media work in a variety of genres, we will simultaneously query how moving images participate in, catalyze, model and imagine processes of recovery, and challenge us to distinguish between the finality of cure and the ongoing work of healing.

Learning Objectives

- Engage in critical thinking pertaining to contemporary theories of trauma and traumatic recovery in psychological, medical and cultural contexts
- Acquire or improve the fundamentals of film/media literacy and the ability to analyze and evaluate a range of fiction and non-fiction moving image forms
- Produce nuanced intertextual analyses of texts and media works
- Apply critical and theoretical models to the interpretation and production of new forms of creative, conceptual and experimental work

Format

This hybrid course combines online discussion and analysis of assigned readings and moving image works with weekly in-class meetings that will extend and deepen these online conversations and integrate new material.

Your success in the class depends on your capacity to work independently with consistency, engagement and discipline.

The online portion of the class consists of weekly responses to assigned texts and films/videos. **Each week you will find a “guide” posted on the Moodle that introduces the assigned materials.** It is crucial that you read this short introductory text first, as it will both offer a framework to guide your reading/screening and provide details about your required weekly posts.

Requirements

1. Online writing

Each week, students compose and post two short texts online:

- a response to a query I will pose about the assigned material (minimum 250 words; you may post these at any time but **no later than noon on the Monday before we meet in person**)
- a response to one of your classmate’s responses to that same query (minimum 125 words; you may post these at any time but **no later than noon on the Tuesday before we meet in person**)

>> ***Please note: Late Moodle posts are not accepted; you must post by the above times to receive credit. If you miss a week, please turn your attentions toward the next week’s posts!***

These online responses will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- originality
- depth and rigor of thought
- intertextual integration (thinking through multiple texts at once)
- quality of writing

The posts are **interpretive rather than summative**: they will showcase your active thinking-through of the assigned texts and films, and they should cite specific details rather than fall back on generalizations. For this reason, you will need to take notes as you watch/read films/videos and texts as a means of keeping track of your thinking and curiosities. Please compose online posts in complete and, to the very best of your abilities, grammatically correct and proofread sentences.

2. Participation and Timeliness

Thorough reading/screening of the selected texts/films is essential for engaged discussion (both on and offline). Bring your screening/reading notes and your marked-up texts to class so that you can refer to them during discussion.

3. Presentations

Students will participate in group presentations on specific ideas in the history of trauma theory and treatment. Students will sign-up for topics in week two.

4. Final projects

Each student will submit a 4-6 page research-based final project in one of three genres: 1) narrative medicine/creative non-fiction; 2) media criticism/academic scholarship; 3) hybrid writing + digital media. Each project will be preceded by a formal proposal (including bibliography) and an individual presentation.

HONORS ENHANCEMENT: Students seeking Honors credit will submit a 10-12 page research paper as final project; those wishing to pursue creative non-fiction or hybrid writing + media final projects will submit an associated 5-7 page research paper.

The above are weighted as follows:

Online participation (initial posts) - 25%

Online participation (responses) - 10%

In-class participation - 15%

Group Presentation - 10%

Final Project Proposal - 10%

Final Project Presentation - 5%

Final Project - 25%

Grading

Evaluation will follow the university's grading scale:

A = 100-90 (superior)	B = 86-80 (very good)	C = 76-70 (acceptable)	F = 59-0 (inadequate)
B+ = 89-87 (excellent)	C+ = 79-77 (good)	D = 69-60 (minimum)	

Attendance Policy

I expect every student to attend every class and to be on time.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for catching up (please contact me to inquire about missed material) as well as for submitting assignments due on the missed day (before our class meeting time); missed in-class group exercises and workshops cannot be made up.

Every unexcused absence after the second one will reduce your participation grade. More than four unexcused absences (4 weeks of the curriculum) can result in automatic failure of the course; excessive unexcused lateness of 15 minutes or more throughout the course will be considered as one absence. According to university policy, students who expect to miss classes or exams because of religious observance must submit to their instructors, by the end of the second week of classes, a written list of dates that will be missed. Similarly, athletes

should submit a list of events. If you can't make a class—due to illness, an academic commitment, an interview, or a major extracurricular event—and you wish to have the absence excused, ask the Dean of Students to review the request.

Technology

Please silence your cell phone completely, and don't have it out in class. Open your laptop only when needed for class work.

Plagiarism and Cheating

The NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity defines plagiarism as *using or attempting to use written, oral, or graphic work which was authored or prepared by another and submitting it as one's own*. The full Code can be found at <https://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

If your work uses the idea or language of any other person, make that use clear to your reader by citing clearly and thoroughly. If I find plagiarized work, even if it seems to stem from carelessness, I'm required to report it to the Dean of Students.

Documented Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability, please see me at the beginning of the semester to discuss accommodations. You may also contact Student Disability Services at (973) 596-3420.

Writing Center

The NJIT Writing Center, located in Central King Building G17, offers one-on-one appointments to help with your written assignments. They are equipped to work with both creative and scholarly forms of writing. Please visit: <https://www.njit.edu/writingcenter>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note: the syllabus is subject to change. Any email or in-class announcements take precedence.

PSYCHE

WEEK 1

January 23

Course Introduction

WEEK 2

January 30: LOST OBJECTS

Vertigo, Alfred Hitchcock (129 min, 1958)

Mourning and Melancholia, Sigmund Freud

+group presentation sign-up

WEEK 3

February 6: FANTASIES OF CURE

Let There Be Light, John Huston (59 min, 1946)

"*Let There Be Light* (1946) and Its Restoration," Scott Simmon

"Never Again: Trauma Disrupts the Experience of Time," Robert Stolorow

BODY + SOUL

WEEK 4

February 13: SILENT TREATMENTS

The Dhamma Brothers, Jenny Phillips, Anne Marie Stein (76 min, 2007)

excerpt, *The Trauma of Everyday Life*, Mark Epstein

Ellen Nishi Omar Ajani BESSEL VAN DER KOLK

WEEK 5

February 20: DIRECTING DEATH

Icaros: A Vision, Leonor Caraballo and Matteo Norzi (91 min, 106)

"Object Breast Cancer," Leonor Caraballo and Abou Farman

"'She Knew Then That She was Going to Die of Her Femininity': The Making of the Ayahuasca Drama *Icaros: A Vision*," Paul Willis

WEEK 6

February 27: NARRATIVE STITCHING

The Odds of Recovery, Su Friedrich (86 min, 2002)

excerpt, *Being Mortal*, Atul Gawande

Christian Nick Quinn Shrey ON BEING ILL

Mohammed Michael Waqas THE POETRY OF RE-BIRTH

INSTITUTION

WEEK 7

March 6: LIFE AFTER DEATH

Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills, Joe Berlinger (150 min, 1996)
excerpt, *Life After Death*, Damien Echols

Raphael Jhoel Vidhi SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
Marie Arjav Jonathan C. Preston WINNICOTT

WEEK 8

March 13: RE-WRITING

Strong Island, Yance Ford (107 min, 2017)
excerpt, *They Can't Kill Us All: Ferguson, Baltimore, and a New Era in America's Racial Justice Movement*, Wesley Lowery
+ final project and project proposal review

Deets John Sheldon NFL
Cesar Victor Franny MBSR

March 20

— — — SPRING BREAK — — —

CREATION STORIES

WEEK 9

March 27: HORROR

Get Out, Jordan Peele (104 min, 2017)
“Jordan Peele on a Truly Terrifying Monster: Racism,” Jason Zinoman

WEEK 10

April 3: DISTINCT LENSES

excerpts, Andrew Sullivan, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*

WEEK 11

April 10

+ final project abstract/proposal due

WEEK 12

April 17: RE-STAGING

Ydessa, the Bears and etc., Agnes Varda (44 min, 2004)
“The Witness,” Jorge Luis Borges

NATURE

WEEK 13

April 24: HIGHER GROUND

Trouble the Water,” Tia Lessin and Carl Deal (96 min, 2008)

“Katrina. Sandy. Harvey.” Chris Mooney

“Survival and Death in New Orleans: An Empirical Look at the Human Impact of Katrina,”

Patrick Sharkey

+ final project presentations

WEEK 14

May 1: ELITES + SCUM

Snowpiercer, Bong Joon-ho (126 min, 2003)

“Call Climate Change What It Is: Violence,” Rebecca Solnit

+ final project presentations

+++final projects due May 7+++