

Spring 2021

HSS 403-H02: Media, Trauma, and Cure

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MEDIA - TRAUMA - CURE



clockwise from top left:
Trouble the Water (Lessin, Deal), *Ylissa, the Bears & etc.* (Varda), *Bontoc Eulogy* (Fuentes), *Let There Be Light* (Houston)

Course Description

This course investigates contemporary discourses of trauma through a particular lens: how do media makers not only represent trauma but construct interventions into its complex psychic and cultural ecologies? We will begin by refining our understanding of “trauma” — an oft-used term — in order to grasp its many meanings in psychological, medical, historical and social registers, considering it as an individual and a collective dilemma, and one that arises in ordinary life and under extraordinary circumstances. Since trauma is an inherently time-based concern (its operations include delay, reversal, repetition, and persistence), moving images can serve as powerful and apt means to confront it. As we examine works of time-based media in a variety of genres, we will also query how they participate in, catalyze, and model processes of recovery — and challenge us to distinguish between the finality of cure and the ongoing work of healing.

Learning Objectives

- Acquire fluency in a range of contemporary theories of trauma and traumatic recovery
- 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
- Apply theoretical models to the interpretation and production of experimental work

Materials

You are not required to purchase a course textbook. Digitized materials will be delivered via Canvas.

Pre-requisites/Co-requisites

HUM 102 with a grade of C or higher, and 6 credits at the History and Humanities GER 300-level with a grade of C or higher; 3 credits at the 300-level may be taken concurrently as a co-requisite.

Format

Each week you will find a posted “guide” that introduces the assigned materials. It is crucial that you read this short introductory text first, as it will offer a framework to guide your reading/screening and prepare you for our class meeting. Unless otherwise noted, assigned materials are to be completed by our Monday sessions.

Requirements

1. Informed and consistent participation

Participation is the cornerstone of this class and your success depends on your capacity to come to class ready to engage with the assigned material. You will achieve this by:

- + carefully reading/watching all assigned material by the given due date
- + taking notes in response to queries raised in the framing weekly guide, making notes on the texts themselves (as digital file or hard copy), and having texts/notes accessible during class time
- + being prepared to speak, write, and engage in collaborative work in response to assigned works during our class meetings

2. Presentation

Students will produce collaborative multi-media presentations on topics in the history of trauma theory and treatment.

3. Final projects

Each student will submit a 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 and a work-in-progress presentation.

The above are weighted as follows:

Participation - 35%

Presentation - 25%

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

Please treat our synchronous meetings as you would in-class meetings. If you miss a class, you are responsible for catching up (contact me to inquire about missed material). These are uniquely challenging times; please communicate with me if you encounter an issue that obstructs or limits your capacity to participate fully in our course with respect to technology, presence, or any other matter.

Please turn on your camera if you are able to do so, especially when speaking. You will not be penalized for having it off. For times when your webcam is off, I ask that you upload a profile picture.

Every unexcused absence after the second one will reduce your participation grade. More than four unexcused absences 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.

Plagiarism and Cheating

As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>. Academic integrity is central to the ideals of this course and the university.

Please note that it is my professional obligation to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

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 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.

PSYCHIC + NARRATIVE NORMS

WEEK 1 / COURSE INTRODUCTION

January 20

WEEK 2 / LOST OBJECTS

January 25, 27

Vertigo, Alfred Hitchcock (129 min, 1958)

Mourning and Melancholia, Sigmund Freud

“Melancholy Gender — Refused Identifications,” Judith Butler

WEEK 3 / TELEOLOGY + TIME

February 1, 3

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 / SILENT TREATMENTS

February 8, 10

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

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

“The Hunger for Home,” Zenju Earthlyn Manuel

Meditation workshop

WEEK 5 / DYING ARTS

February 15, 17

“The Disappearance of a Distinctively Black Way to Mourn,” Tiffany Stanley
“A Greek Photographer’s Ode to the Dying Art of Mourning,” Eren Orbey
“What Palliative Care Looks Like in a Pandemic,” Jamieson Webster

WEEK 6 / NARRATIVE SURGERY

February 22, 24

The Odds of Recovery, Su Friedrich (86 min, 2002)
script, *The Odds of Recovery*, Su Friedrich
“Telling Stories: The Health Benefits of Narrative,” James W. Pennebaker
“Performing My First Cesarean: A Reflection on the Intersection of Dance and Surgery,” Shilpa Darivemula,
Roshni Prakash

LIFE + DEATH CONTRADICTIONS

WEEK 7 / PARADISE LOST

March 1, 3

GUEST VISIT: Rebecca Brown, Director of Policy, The Innocence Project
Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills, Joe Berlinger (150 min, 1996)
“American History, Race, and Prison,” Vera Institute of Justice

WEEK 8 / RE-WRITING

March 8, 10

Strong Island, Yance Ford (107 min, 2017)
Selections, *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander

SPRING BREAK —————>>>>>> March 15, 17

WEEK 9 / STUDENT-CURATED WEEK

March 22, 24

texts/films TBA

CREATION STORIES

WEEK 10 / MAJOR + MINOR

March 29, 31

selections, *Minor Feelings*, Cathy Hong Park
selections, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*, Andrew Sullivan
“When Suicide Speaks Arabic,” Ibrahim Sablaban

WEEK 11 / FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL WORKSHOP

April 5, 7

+ project proposals due April 8

WEEK 12 / THE WITNESS

April 12, 14

Yllessa, the Bears and etc., Agnes Varda (44 min, 2004)

History and Memory, Rea Tajiri (32 min, 1991)

"The Witness," Jorge Luis Borges

"Requiem," Kwame Dawes

NATURE/CULTURE

WEEK 13 / EULOGY

April 19, 21

Bontoc Eulogy, Marlon Fuentes (60 min, 1995)

"The Camera as Microscope: Cinema and Ethnographic Discourse," Peter Feng

"Extracts from an Imaginary Interview: Questions and Answers about Bontoc Eulogy," Marlon Fuentes

WEEK 14 / HIGHER GROUND

April 26, 28

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

"Unequal Impact: The Deep Links Between Racism and Climate Change," Beth Gardiner, Elizabeth Yeampierre

"Survival and Death in New Orleans: An Empirical Look at the Human Impact of Katrina," Patrick Sharkey

WEEK 15 / FP PRESENTATIONS

May 3

++ Final Projects due May 8 by 11.59pm++