

Fall 2023

COM-325 (003): ST: Media and Trauma

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MEDIA + TRAUMA



Trouble the Water (Lessin, Deal), *Bontoc Eulogy* (Fuentes)

Course Description

This course investigates 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 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 registers. We will consider trauma as both an individual and collective dilemma, one that arises in ordinary life and under extraordinary circumstances. Trauma is an inherently time-based concern — its reverberations can occur years, even generations, after an instigating event or ongoing experience — and for this reason, moving images can serve as a powerful and apt means to confront it. As we examine media work in a variety of genres, we will query how moving images catalyze and imagine processes of recovery, challenging 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 experimental work

Materials

Most course materials are available on Canvas. You'll need to rent/purchase several films, but please don't do so in bulk at the start of the semester—the later weeks of the syllabus may change as I learn more about class interests.

Prerequisites/Co-requisites

HUM102 (grade of C or higher) + one HIST and HUM GER 200-level course (grade of C or higher).

Requirements

1. Informed and consistent participation

Your success depends on your capacity to come to class ready to discuss and engage with the course material. Each week you will find a posted guide that introduces the assigned reading(s) and/or film(s). This short introductory text will offer a framework/context for the material. As the syllabus includes materials that I will introduce into our in-class meetings (such as film clips), please consult the weekly guide for the most precise information on what you're expected to have read/watched before we meet. Unless otherwise noted, assigned materials are to be completed by our Monday sessions. Participation also includes various forms of low-stakes writing (in-class writing, group work, forum posts and pop quizzes).

If you encounter issues that limit your capacity to participate fully in our course, please communicate with me in a timely manner so that we can design solutions together. I am available to meet face-to-face as well as via Webex and phone.

2. Mid-term Presentations

Student groups will produce multi-media presentations on topics in the history of trauma theory and treatment; short individual essays will precede the presentations.

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.

The above are weighted as follows:

Participation - 35%
Presentation/Paper - 25%
Final Project Proposal - 10%
Final Project - 30%

Final Exam

There is no final exam in this course.

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

Every unexcused absence after the second one will reduce your participation grade. More than six unexcused absences can result in the automatic failure of the course. 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, please ask the Dean of Students to review the request.

NJIT Support Services

You will find links to NJIT services for students, including technical support, [here](#).

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. 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>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility 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.

If your work uses the idea or language of any other person—in a paper, forum post, video essay or any other work—make that use immediately clear to your reader/viewer. Unacknowledged use of ChatGPT or similar generative artificial software to produce writing is a violation of academic integrity.

Late Work

If you know in advance that you are having trouble completing a formal assignment, contact me as soon as possible. Extensions require 24 hr. notice; without an extension, the grade of late work will go down by five points per day.

COVID

If you have recently been in class and test positive for COVID, tell Student Health Services and get in touch with the DOS in case accommodations are needed.

Accommodations

If you need an accommodation due to a disability, please contact the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#) to discuss your specific needs or to request a Letter of Accommodation Eligibility.

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

Sept. 6

WEEK 2 / LOST OBJECTS

Sept. 11/13

Vertigo, Alfred Hitchcock

"Mourning and Melancholia," Sigmund Freud

"Melancholy Gender — Refused Identifications," Judith Butler

WEEK 3 / MIRROR STAGES

Sept. 18/20

I Am Not Your Negro, Raoul Peck

"All Your Buried Corpses are Now Beginning to Speak: Raoul Peck on 'I Am Not Your Negro,'" Matt Fagerholm

"The Mirror Stage as Formative of the / Function," Jacques Lacan

BODY + SOUL

WEEK 4 / REPETITION AND RECOVERY

Sept. 25/27

The Odds of Recovery, Su Friedrich

"Never Again: Trauma Disrupts the Experience of Time," Robert Stolorow
selections, *The Trauma of Everyday Life*, Mark Epstein

++ Sept. 25: *No in-class meeting / Yom Kippur*

WEEK 5 / SILENT TREATMENTS

Oct. 2/4

The Dhamma Brothers, Jenny Phillips, Anne Marie Stein

selections, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, Resmaa Menakem

selections, *The Body Keeps the Score*, Bessel van der Kolk

WEEK 6 / NARRATIVE MEDICINE

Oct. 9/11

"Narrative Medicine: A Model for Empathy, Reflection, Profession, and Trust," Rita Charon

"The Art of Healing through Narrative Medicine in Clinical Practice: A Reflection," Aeman Muneeb, Hena Jawaid, Natasha Khalid, and Asad Mian

"When Suicide Speaks Arabic," Ibrahim Sablaban

CREATION STORIES

WEEK 7 / LIVING MUSEUM

Oct. 16/18

That Which is Possible, Michael Gitlin

"The Lost Virtues of the Asylum," Oliver Sacks
selections, *Playing and Reality*, Donald Winnicott

++ Oct. 16: *Pre-presentation papers due*

WEEK 8 / MID-TERM PRESENTATIONS

Oct. 23/25

WEEK 9 / DYING ARTS

Oct. 30/Nov. 1

Icaros: A Vision, Leonor Caraballo. Matteo Norzi

"Abou Farman on Leonor Caraballo's 'Vision,'" Studio360 WNYC

"Towards a Post-Secular Aesthetics: Provocations for Possible Media in Afterlife Art," Abou Farman

WEEK 10 / HOME-SICK

Nov. 6/8

Bontoc Eulogy, Marlon Fuentes

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

"Lying in the First-Person(al): The Case of *Bontoc Eulogy*," Irina Leimbacher

CONNECTEDNESS FRAMEWORKS

WEEK 11 / NEWARK MUSEUM OF ART

Nov. 13/15

Readings TBA

++ Nov. 13: *field trip*

WEEK 12 / MEASURES OF SAFETY

Nov. 20

The Giverny Document, Ja'Tovia Gary

"What Happened When a Filmmaker Asked Black Women Whether They Feel Safe," Rooney Elmi

++ Nov. 20: *Final Project proposals due*

++ Nov. 22: *NJIT Fri. classes meet*

WEEK 13 / TROUBLE THE WATER

Nov. 27/29

Trouble the Water, Tia Lessin and Carl Deal

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

South of Ten, Liza Johnson

WEEK 14 / FP WORKSHOP

Dec. 4/6

WEEK 15 / FP WORKS-IN-PROGRESS CRITIQUES

Dec. 11/13

++ *Final Projects due by Dec. 15 11.59pm*