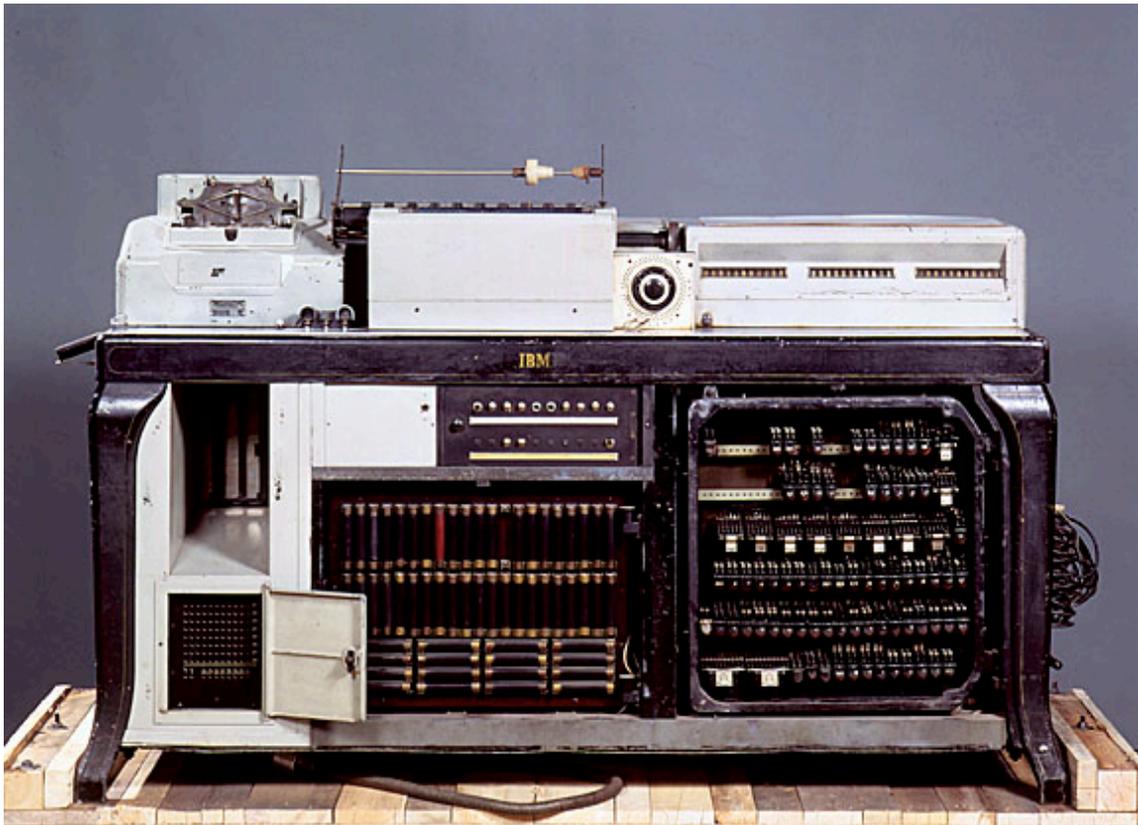


***DOCUMENTING MASS VIOLENCE:
RECORDING, DESCRIPTION, DISSEMINATION***

History 481B/650B/850B/2 Section A
Fall 2007
Thursdays, 3:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
History department seminar room (LB-1014)
Concordia University
Instructor: Erica Lehrer

Any attempt to explain, to account for another person's suffering is...the source of all immorality.

- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, paraphrasing Immanuel Levinas



Hollerith Machine.

Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Photographed by Arnold Kramer.

For more information, see <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/locater.htm>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Writers, filmmakers, and other intellectuals have been trying, for more than a half-century since the end of World War II, to find ways to describe the destruction of the European Jews. Why is this project so vexed? Do similar difficulties arise in documenting other cases of mass violence in history? How, where, and when is violence documented – both publicly and privately? What motivates such documentation, and what are its goals? How do we get at the “experience” or the “truth” of violence or the suffering it produces? Whose versions of events are amassed and disseminated, and in what ways? How close can representations of violent events bring those who did not experience them? What are the structural (social, cultural, psychological, material) conditions of remembering and forgetting?

Students enrolled in this seminar will examine a broad range of cultural practices and products that attempt to apprehend, represent, or come to terms with mass violence and its aftermath, including theoretical and creative texts, films, photography, monuments, and exhibitions. Through both analysis and critique of what we read and view, as well as experiments in documentation and representation of violent events, the course will enable us to explore key issues of ethics, aesthetics, politics, and culture in relation to mass violence and social suffering.

Required Books: (available at the University bookstore and on reserve at Webster library. Cheaper used copies are often available on Amazon.com or abebooks.com)

- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Penguin Books, 2004.
- Rothberg, Michael. *Traumatic Realism*. University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Zelizer, Barbie. *Remembering to Forget*. University Of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian woman in Guatemala*. London: Verso, 1987.
- Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.
- Krog, Antjie. *Country of my Skull*. Three Rivers Press, 2000.
- Wardle, Huon. *How to Read Ethnography*. TF-ROUTL, 2006.
- Hinton, Alexander. *Why did they Kill?* University of California Press, 2004.
- Malkii, Liisa. *Purity and Exile*. University Of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Linenthal, Edward. *Preserving Memory*. Columbia University Press, 2001.

Other Required Readings:

A few additional required readings are listed on the syllabus. They are either freely available on the web, or through the library's electronic reserves system.

Related Resources:

These are listed only for your interest; they may be useful to augment presentations or for final papers.

CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR

I am happy to meet with students to discuss matters related to the theme, content, or structure of the course. If you have any concerns about the course or your participation in it, please let me know as soon as possible – I am here to help everyone make the most out of this experience. If you have basic logistical questions, please contact another student in the class.

Instructor: Erica Lehrer

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Email: elehrer@concordia.ca

Office Hours: Thursdays 2:00-3:00 p.m. and 5:30-6:30 p.m., or by appointment. You can also contact me Monday-Friday via email – I will do my best to respond within 24 hours.

COURSE STRUCTURE & GOALS

This course is an advanced seminar. At a minimum, all participants are expected to: attend all seminar meetings; have read the assignments for that meeting; be prepared to thoughtfully discuss those readings and their broader implications. The success of the seminar will hinge on participants' thorough preparation and willingness to engage in open and respectful discussion grounded in the texts. Through these discussions, each person refines her/his own understanding of the material, helps others think through issues, and practices valuable analytic and communication skills. As a seminar, we will work together as a community of scholars engaged in a common academic endeavor. Our goal in the classroom is collaboration and the exchange of ideas.

ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION

There are 5 components to the evaluation: participation, weekly response papers (1 pg.); leading class discussion (1x); project prospectus (2-3 pgs); final research paper (15 pages).

Participation. Conscientious participation is crucial to the success of any seminar. The participation grade will reflect the frequency and/or quality of your participation and contribution, as well as attendance.

“Response Papers”:

Each week, I will expect you to submit to me and other members of the seminar a set of “talking points” that will help direct our conversations about the readings. These talking points should be *no more than one page* (single spaced) in length; they should focus on what you found useful or problematic about the readings; what the readings suggest for your own work; what they might suggest for other members of the seminar; or how the readings correspond to issues and ideas you have encountered elsewhere. Think of the talking points as miniature essays and queries. Craft them well, with the aim of triggering a reaction from others. These should be **submitted via email to the whole group** and should arrive **no later than 5pm the evening before** the class meeting in which the readings will be discussed. I may occasionally request an alternate format for the weekly response paper.

Leading Discussion:

Each week, one pair or group of participants will be charged with leading the discussion of the readings. While this should not be too burdensome, it will entail a certain degree of forethought and preparation; discussion leaders should expect to meet with their co-leaders significantly ahead of the presentation to plan. A successful discussion-leading team will attempt to identify broad themes that link the readings and encourage others to discuss those themes in the context of specific issues. This will entail more than an initial presentation of the material. The discussion leaders will be asked to take partial responsibility for shaping the discussion as it develops. I encourage discussion leaders to use creative means to spark engagement and interaction among class participants (i.e. an brief exercise, a debate, a presentation of additional media, etc.). You may want to create handouts or bring in additional materials to present to the class that distill key points of the work or additional information that helps contextualize the work. But this needn't be a highly polished presentation – rather, the point is to set out a landscape that highlights particular issues you will then draw us into discussing. I may be in touch with discussion leaders if there are particular points or materials I think might be helpful to include.

Research Paper (with prospectus):

Your paper will engage with at least one of the central themes of the seminar. For the first component, you will write a (2-3 page) prospectus indicating what you want to research, suggesting why it is an important issue and relevant to seminar themes, and providing provisional lines of inquiry and an **annotated bibliography** of at least 2 class readings and 3 original sources you will draw on for your argument. The research paper itself should be of high quality, written in the style of an academic journal article, and approximately 3750 words in length (15 pages). In general, I accept the citation of web-only references only for primary sources (i.e. content that you analyze), not as scholarship. Certain peer-reviewed online journals are exceptions – please contact me if you are unsure.

The course grade will be distributed as follows:

Class Participation – 20%

Response Papers – 20 %

Leading Discussion – 20 %

Research Paper (including prospectus) – 40% (prospectus 10%)

Grading scheme:

Because this is an advanced seminar, note that this is slightly different from the History department norms.

A = Superior (It's clear you did the readings substantially, digested them, considered them in relation to each other, and formed some interesting questions arising from them and/or criticisms of them. Your work is well-organized and synthetic. At my discretion, doing something else particularly impressive may override other concerns!)

B = Competent (It appears that you did most of the reading and understood key points, and may have developed a question to consider. Your response is clearly written.)

C or below = Insufficient (It is unclear whether you did much of the reading, and you have not shown the ability to glean any insights or ask any thoughtful questions about it. Your work may seem disorganized, hasty, or incomplete.)

Late Work:

I do not accept late work, except in the case of illness or a death in the family. Please do not hesitate to contact me for special consideration if you find yourself in one of these exceptional circumstances.

Note about papers in French:

Students may write assignments in French. I do not read French at the level at which I expect your papers to be written, so one of my colleagues will read any such papers and consult with me. This may cause some delay in my ability to consider and return them.

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE

I hope students feel comfortable having wide ranging discussions on any topic related to the course theme and materials. You may find some of the subject matter in this course sensitive or disturbing. Some participants may have a closer personal connection to some of the topics or events than others. Please be respectful of differing perspectives.

Please be on time to class.

If you need to eat or drink, please do so discreetly.

Academic Integrity

At this level I assume you are familiar with and avoid any kind of plagiarism or cheating. If you have questions about what this means, please ask me, or visit: <http://www.concordia.ca/info/students/integrity.php>

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

Texts are listed under the class session in which they are scheduled to be discussed

Week 1 (9/6) - What is Violence? What is a Document? What is a “Good” or “Successful” Document of Mass Violence?

- *Before It Had A Name – Act I: Mr. Boder Vanishes* (listen from 6:20 to 29:20)
http://www.thislife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?sched=959

Week 2 (9/13) - What do we owe to the dead? Empathy, Reflexivity, and the Pain of Others

- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*
- Weissman, Gary. Ch. 2: “The Holocaust Experience.”
- Hirsch, Herbert. “Trivializing Human Memory: Social Science Methods and Genocide Scholarship.” *Genocide and the Politics of Memory: Studying Death to Preserve Life*. 1995: 73-82.

Related Resources

Scarry, Elaine - “The Difficulty of Imagining Other Persons.” In: *Human Rights in Political Transitions*.
Morris, David B. - 1997. “About Suffering: Voice, Genre, and Moral Community.”
Yaeger, Patricia. - “Consuming Trauma; or, The Pleasures of Merely Circulating.”
Bartov, Omer – “Seit die Juden Weg Sind”: Germany, History, and Representations of Absence.

Week 3 (9/20) - Why begin with theory? Why begin with the Holocaust?

- Rothberg - *Traumatic Realism*

Related Resources

Levi, Neil & Rothberg, Michael - “General Introduction: Theory & the Holocaust.” *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*. Rutgers, 2003.
Lang, Berel - *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics*.
Rosenbaum, Alan – *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*.

Week 4 (9/27) - Visual Evidence, Visual Memory, and Making Sense of Events

- Zelizer – *Remembering to Forget*
- Roskis - “A genocide without images: white film noirs.”
http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-108212-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Related resources:

Struk, Janina. *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of Evidence*. 2004.
Barnouw, Dagmar. *Germany 1945: Views of War and Violence*. 1996.
Starrett Gregory. “Violence and the Rhetoric of Images.” *Cultural Anthropology* 18(3), Aug. 2003: 398-428.
Kleinman & Kleinman. 1997. “The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times.”

Week 5 (10/4) - Testimony I: Who speaks for whom, and how? (Victim memoir)

- Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. 1984 *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian woman in Guatemala*.
- David Stoll. 1999 *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*. (Preface, Ch. 1, Ch. 20)
- Arturo Arias, ed. 2001 *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy*. [chapters by Arias, Pratt, Rodriguez, Warren, Smith, and Stoll]

Related resources:

LaCapra, Dominick, 2001. "Holocaust Testimonies: Attending to the Victim's Voice." *Writing history, writing trauma*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press. Pages 86-113.

Greenspan, H. (1999) 'Imagining Survivors: Testimony and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness', in H. Flanzbaum (ed.) *The Americanization of the Holocaust*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 45-67.

Kushner, Tony. "Holocaust Testimony, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation." *Poetics Today* 27:2 (Summer 2006).

Ozick, Cynthia. "Who Owns Anne Frank?" *The New Yorker*, October 6, 1997: 76-87.

Week 6 (10/11) - Testimony II: Facing the Other & Reconciliation (Journalism)

- Krog – *Country of my Skull*
- Brent Harris and Carolyn Hamilton. "The archive, public history and the essential truth: the TRC reading the past." Pp. 161-177 in *Rereading the Archive*.

Related resources:

Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla - *A Human Being Died That Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness*.

Wilson, Richard A. "Technologies of Truth: The TRC's Truth-Making Machine." In *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001: 33-61.

Film: *Long Night's Journey Into Day*

Film: *We Are All Neighbors* and *Returning Home* by Tone Bringa (on Bosnia)

Week 7 (10/18) - Perpetrators Perspectives I (Perpetrator Memoir)

- Beah – *A Long Way Gone*
- Wood, Nancy. "Narrating Perpetrator Testimony."
- Primo Levi. "The Memory of Offense."

Related resources:

Giesen, Bernard. 2004. "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity." Pp. 112-54 in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*.

Film: *Mein Krieg (My Private War)*

Week 8 (10/25) – The Ethnographic Genre

Prospectus for final paper due at beginning of class

- Wardle, Huon - *How to Read Ethnography*.

Related resources:

Bowen, John R. "Culture, Genocide, and a Public Anthropology." *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*. 2002.

Week 9 (11/1) - Perpetrators Perspectives II (Ethnography)

- Hinton - *Why did they Kill?*

Related resources:

Film: *Seeing Proof*. Rob Fruchtman 2007. (Cambodia).

Browning, Christopher. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. 2001.

Dean, Carolyn. "History writing, numbness, and the restoration of dignity." *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 17, No. 2-3, 57-96 (2004).

Week 10 (11/8) - Memory, Story, and Identity (Ethnography)

- Malkki - *Purity and Exile* (book)

Related resources:

Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*. New York: Picador, 1999.

Eyerman, Ron. 2004. "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity." Pp. 60-111 in Alexander, Jeffrey, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*.

Brison, Susan. "Trauma narratives and the remaking of the self." In Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe & Leo Spitzer (Eds.) *Acts of memory: Cultural recall in the present*. Dartmouth: University Press of New England, 1999, pages 39-54.

Lehrer, Erica. "Bearing false witness? Vicarious Jewish identity and the politics of affinity." In *Imaginary Neighbors: Polish Jewish Relations After the Shoah*. (Eds.) Dorota Glowacka and Joanna Zylińska. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 2007.

Week 11 (11/15) – Sites & Memorials

- Timothy Ryback, "Evidence of Evil."
http://www.fscwv.edu/users/pedwards/evidence_of_evil_by_timothy_w.htm
- James Young, "Memory, counter-memory, and the end of the monument."
<http://www.arthist.lu.se/discontinuities/texts/young1.htm>
(***Click at the bottom of part I to go to part III!***)
- Jackie Feldman, "In Search of the Beautiful Land of Israel: Israeli Youth Voyages to Poland"
- Marita Sturken, "The aesthetics of absence: Rebuilding Ground Zero."

Other resources:

Andreas Huyssen *Present Pasts*.

Terrance, Marc. *Concentration Camps: A Traveler's Guide to World War II Sites*.

Brueggeman, Rudy. "Photodocumentaries of Genocide" <http://www.rudyfoto.com/studiesinevil.html>

International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience <<http://www.sitesofconscience.org/>>

McDonald, Sharon. "Undesireable Heritage: Fascist Material Culture and Historical Consciousness in Nuremberg." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* Vol. 12, No. 1, January 2006, pp. 9-28.

Marrus, Michael. "The Future of Auschwitz: A Case for Ruins."

Week 12 (11/22) – Museums & Exhibits

- Linenthal – *Preserving Memory*
- Williams, Paul. “Witnessing Genocide: Vigilance and Remembrance and Tuol Sleng and Choeng Ek.” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Volume 18, Fall 2004, pp. 234-254.

Other resources:

Allen, James and John Littlefield. *Photographs and Postcards of Lynching in America: Without Sanctuary*.

Musarium, 2000. [See esp. Leon F. Litwack “Hellhounds” pp. 8-37.]

Apel, Dora. “On Looking: Lynching Photographs and Legacies of Lynching after 9/11.” *American Quarterly*, September 2003, pp. 457-479.

Horton, James Oliver, "Presenting Slavery: The Perils of Telling America's Racial Story," *The Public Historian* 21 (4) Fall 1999, pp. 19-38.

(13) 11/29 – **No class session******

Final papers due at 5 p.m. on Thursday, December 6. There is no exam.