

HI 248HP: Catastrophe and Cultural Memory

Tues & Thurs 11 AM -12:30 PM
History Department, Room 304
Office Hours: Tues. 3:30-5, Thurs. 9:30-11

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This course will examine the ways in which catastrophes – both natural and social – enter into the “memory” of cultures. We will focus on five events: the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, the Battle of the Somme (1916), the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the AIDS pandemic, and the attack on the World Trade Center of September 11, 2001. We will be concerned both with exploring differences between responses to these catastrophes and with the broader lessons that can be drawn from these cases about how events of this sort become part of cultural memory. Along the way, we will also address such issues as the relationship between individual testimonies and public narratives, the conflict between historical documentation and artistic representation, the impact of trauma on memories (both personal and collective), and the problem of drawing analogies between individual and collective memories. The ultimate goal of the course is to learn something about how human beings go about making sense of events that would appear to defy comprehension and the significance of this capacity for the writing of history.

Course Structure and Requirements:

We will be discussing a wide range of materials – memoirs, poems, novels, films, musical compositions, etc. – and it is doubtful that any one of us will be able to pull it all together on their own. For this reason, the active participation of all those enrolled in this seminar will be essential to its success.

The principal written requirement for the course will be a final paper (of no more than 3500 words) that draws on what we have learned from our work in the course and examines a particular cultural response to either the events of September 11, 2001 or to an event that we have not explored in the course. Students should meet with me prior to the Thanksgiving break to discuss ideas for the project. A brief (three page) summary of the main points of the paper will be posted the course by site by 9 AM on December 7 and discussed during the class meetings of December 8 and December 10. A final copy of copy of the paper will be due at 11 AM on Friday, December 18.

In addition to the final paper, four other short papers (approximately 1000-1500 words each), responding to questions that will be submitted a week prior to the date they will be due, will be assigned (see syllabus for dates). Students have the option of writing *any two* of these papers. Finally, students will be asked to post at least five brief (maximum 750 words) contributions to the discussion forum on the course website. The first of these will be due on September 10 and should discuss one of the sermons we will be reading for that date (the particular sermon will be assigned at the first class). The remaining posts should discuss any of the subsequent readings in the course, with at least one post devoted to each of the four remaining sections of the course. These posts should draw attention to aspects of the readings that would be worth exploring further, point out connections to other materials we have read, or indicate issues that might be relevant for your final research paper.

In determining the final grade in the course, the final paper will count for 50%, two papers will count for 15% each, and participation in class discussions and contributions to the discussion forum on the course website will count for 20%.

Readings:

The following books have been ordered from the Boston University bookstore:

Voltaire, *Candide and Related Texts* (ed., David Wootton)
Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*
Toyofumi Ogura, *Letters from the End of the World*
John Hersey, *Hiroshima*
Kenzaburo Oe, *The Crazy Iris*
Paul Monette, *Borrowed Time*
Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*

In addition to the books, material will be available on the course website and, in a few cases, on reserve (see syllabus for details).

Readings

Materials designated by an asterisk (*) will be available in the “Course Documents” section of the course website. Items designated with a dagger (†) can be accessed from the “External Links” section of the website. Any changes in assignments will be announced on the front page of the course website, so please check the site regularly.

I. The Lisbon Earthquake, 1755

9/8 Contemporary Reports and Representations

- A Genuine Letter to Mr. Joseph Fowke from his Brother Near Lisbon, Dated November 1755* (London, 1755?)*
An Account of the late dreadful earthquake and fire, which destroyed the city of Lisbon, the metropolis of Portugal. In a letter from a merchant (London, 1756)*
“Mr. Thomas Chase’ Narrative of the Earthquake at Lisbon,” *Gentleman’s Magazine* (London, 1813)*
Antonio Pereira de Figueiredo, *A narrative of the earthquake and fire of Lisbon by Antony Pereria, of the Congregation of the Oratory, an eye-witness thereof.* (London, 1756)*
A letter from a Portuguese officer to a friend in Paris. Giving an account of the late dreadful earthquake, by which the city of Lisbon was Destroyed (London, 1755)*
An account of the earthquake which destroyed the city of Lisbon, on the first of November, 1755 (London, 1800?)*
Images of destruction in Lisbon [see External Links section of the website]†.

9/10 English Responses: Sermons and Addresses

John Wesley, *Serious thoughts occasioned by the earthquake at Lisbon. To which is subjoin’d an account of all the late earthquakes there, and in other places.**

In addition to the Wesley sermon, read one of the following texts (assignment of texts will be done by lot at the first class) and post a brief note to the Discussion Forum contrasting it to the Wesley sermon by noon on Wednesday, September 9/9:

- S. Clark, *A sermon preached at Daventry, December 7, 1755, on occasion of the late earthquake at Lisbon, November, 1, 1755**
Rev. James Hallifax, *A sermon preach’d in St. John’s chapel in the parish of St. Andrew, Holborn, on Sunday February 8, 1756. being the Sunday after the day appointed by proclamation for a general fast and humiliation, on account of the dreadful earthquake at Lisbon.**
James How, *A sermon on occasion of the earthquake at Lisbon, in the kingdom of Portugal, and the present situation of affairs in Great Britain. Preach’d in the parish church of Milton next Gravesend, the sixth of February, 1756.**
*An address to the inhabitants of Great-Britain; occasioned by the late earthquake at Lisbon.**
Thomas Gibbons, *A sermon preached at Haberdashers-Hall, November 30th, on occasion of the tremendous earthquake at Lisbon, November 1, 1755.**
John Milner, *Ruin prevented by repentance, applied to civil societies. In two discourses delivered at Peckham in Surrey. On the general fast, February 6, 1756. Occasioned by the late dreadful earthquake at Lisbon, and the apprehension of nearer threatning calamities.**
Charles Bulkley, *A sermon preached at the evening-lecture in the Old Jewry, on Sunday, November 30, 1755, on occasion of the dreadful earthquake at Lisbon, Nov. 1, 1755.**

9/15 Literary Responses I: Rousseau vs. Voltaire

Voltaire, *Poem on the Lisbon Disaster* in Voltaire, *Candide* 99-108.
Rousseau, *Letter to Voltaire on Optimism* in Voltaire, *Candide* 108-122.

9/17 Literary Responses II: Voltaire’s *Candide*

Voltaire, *Candide* 1-79

9/17 First Short Paper Due

II. The Battle of the Somme

9/22 The Battle of the Somme and Trench Warfare

Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* 3-35, 36-51, 64-74

9/24 War Poetry: Siegfried Sassoon

Sassoon, "The Redeemer," "The Hero," "They," "Base Details," "Blighters," "Fight to a Finish,"
"The General," "Suicide in the Trenches," "Glory of Women," "Editorial Impressions,"
"Trench Duty"*

Sassoon, "A Soldier's Declaration"*

Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* 75-113.

9/29 War Poetry: Wilfred Owen

Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est," "Insensibility," "Strange Meeting," "Futility," "Apologia pro Poemate
Meo," "Parable of the Old Men and the Young," "Anthem for Doomed Youth," "S. I. W.," "The
End," "At A Calvary Near Ancre"*

Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* 270-299

10/1 Trauma, Repression, and Memory

William Rivers, "The Repression of War Experience," *The Lancet* Feb. 2, 1918*

Siegfried Sassoon, "Repression of War Experience" and "Survivors"*

Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* 310-5, 336-342.

Leonard V. Smith, "Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*: Twenty-Five Years Later,"
History and Theory 40, no. 2 (May 2001): 241-260.†

10/6 Memorials I: Lutyens' *Cenotaph*

Allan Greenberg, "Lutyens's Cenotaph," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 48, no. 1
(March 1989): 5-23. †

Alex Moffett, "We Will Remember Them': The Poetic Rewritings of Lutyens' Cenotaph," *War,
Literature & the Arts* 19, no. 1 & 2 (2007): 228-246.*

Laurence Binyon, "The Fourth of August," "To Women," and "For the Fallen"*
Siegfried Sassoon, "At the Cenotaph"*

10/8 Memorials II: Britten's *War Requiem*

Benjamin Britten, *War Requiem* (musical composition, approximately 85 minutes)

Alec Robertson, "Britten's War Requiem," *The Musical Times* 103 (1962) 308-310.†

James D Herbert, "Bad Faith at Coventry: Spence's Cathedral and Britten's "War Requiem"," *Critical
Inquiry* 25 (1999) 535-565.†

10/8 Second Short Paper Due

10/13 No class – Monday Schedule

III. Hiroshima

10/15 Survivors' Accounts

Toyofumi Ogura, *Letters from the End of the World*
Account of the bombing by John A. Siemes, S. J.*
Survivor testimonies at "The Voice of Hibakusha" [External Links]†

10/20 Japanese Visual Representations

Unforgettable Fire: Pictures Drawn by Atomic Bomb Survivors (Mugar Reserve)
Iri and Toshi Maruki, *The Hiroshima Panels* (Mugar Reserve; see also External Links)

10/22 American Reports and Reactions

"A Tale of Two Cities" [US Government film]*
"Hiroshima After One Year" [Universal Newsreel]*
John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (Chapters 1-4 only).
Michael J. Yavenditti, "John Hersey and the American Conscience: The Reception of "Hiroshima","
The Pacific Historical Review 43, no. 1 (February 1974): 24-49.†

10/27 Museums, Memorials, and Rituals

Benedict Giomo, "The Myth of the Vanquished: The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum," *American Quarterly* 55 (2003) 703-728.†
Martin J. Sherwin, "Hiroshima as Politics and History," *The Journal of American History* 82 (1995) 1085-1093.†
Peter Schwenger and John Whittier Treat, "America's Hiroshima, Hiroshima's America," *boundary 2* 21 (1994) 233-253.†
James H. Foard, "Imagining Nuclear Weapons: Hiroshima, Armageddon, and the Annihilation of the Students of Ichijo School," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 1-18.†

10/29 Japanese Literary Representations

Kenzabur Oe, *The Crazy Iris and Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath*

11/3 Western Cinematic Representations

Noel Burch and Alain Resnais, "A Conversation with Alain Resnais," *Film Quarterly* 13 (1960) 27-29.†
Kent Jones, "Time Indefinite"†
Hiroshima, Mon Amour – directed by Alain Renais (DVD, 91 minutes - Krasker)

11/3 **Third Short Paper Due**

IV. The AIDS Pandemic

11/5 Writing and Witnessing

& 11/10

Paul Monette, *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir*
Paul Monette, "Preface," "No Goodbyes," "Manifesto," "Dreaming of You," and "Brother of the Mount of Olives," in *Love Alone: Eighteen Elegies for Rog**
Lisa Diedrich, "'Without us all told': Paul Monette's Vigilant Witnessing to the AIDS Crisis,"
Literature and Medicine 23, no. 1 (2004): 112-127.

11/12 Mourning, Representation, and Resistance

- Sander L. Gilman, "AIDS and Syphilis: The Iconography of Disease," *October* 43 (Winter 1987): 87-107. †
- Gregg Stull, "The AIDS Memorial Quilt: Performing Memory, Piecing Action," *American Art* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 84-89. †
- Christopher Capozzola, "A Very American Epidemic: Memory Politics and Identity Politics in the AIDS Memorial Quilt, 1985-1993," *Radical History Review* 82 (2002) 91-109. †
- Peter Hawkins, "Naming Names: The Art of Memory and the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt," *Critical Inquiry* 19:4 (1993) 752-779. †
- Douglas Crimp, "The Spectacle of Mourning," in Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism* 196-202. *

11/17 & 11/19 Theater and History

- Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*
- David Savran, "Ambivalence, Utopia, and a Queer Sort of Materialism: How Angels in America Reconstructs the Nation," in Deborah Geis and Steven Kruger, *Approaching the Millennium: Essays on Angels in America* *
- Martin Harries, "Flying the Angel of History," in Geis and Kruger, *Approaching the Millennium* *

11/19 Fourth Short Paper Due

V. September 11

11/24 Apocalypses Experienced and Imaginary

- Neal Gabler, "The Time, The Scene Was Real," *New York Times*, September 16, 2001. *
- Mike Davis, "The Fires of New York," *New Left Review* 12 (Nov-Dec 2001) 34-50. *
- Slavoj Žižek, "Welcome to the Desert of the Real!," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101:2 (Spring 2002) 385-389. *
- Rosemary V. Hathaway, "'Life in the TV': The Visual Nature of 9/11 Lore and Its Impact on Vernacular Response," *Journal of Folklore Research* 42, no. 1 (2005): 33-56. †
- Amy Kaplan, "Homeland Insecurities: Reflections on Language and Space," *Radical History Review* 85 (Winter 2003) 82-93. †
- Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Kodak Moments, Flashbulb Memories: Reflections on 9/11," *The Drama Review* 47, 1 (Spring 2003) 11-48. †
- Mary Marshall Clark, "The September 11, 2001, Oral History Narrative and Memory Project: A First Report," *Journal of American History* (September 2002) 569-579. †

12/1 Representing Absence, Drawing Analogies

- Art Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers* [Mugar Reserve]
- Stephen Burt, "'September 1, 1939' Revisited, or, Poetry, Politics, and the Idea of the Public," *American Literary History* 15, no. 3 (2003): 533-559. †
- Kristiaan Versluys, "Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*: 9-11 and the Representation of Trauma," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 52 (2007) 980-1003. †
- Hillary Chute, "Temporality and Seriality in Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*," *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 17 (2007) 228-244. †
- Michael F. Bernard-Donals, "Conflations of Memory: Or, What They Saw at the Holocaust Museum After 9/11," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 5 (2005) 73-106. †

12/3 Memorials, Private and Public

- Nancy Miller, "Portraits of Grief: Telling Details and the Testimony of Trauma," *differences* 14:5 (2003) 112-135. †
- James B Gardner and Sarah M Henry, "September 11 and the Mourning after: Reflections on Collecting and Interpreting the History of Tragedy," *The Public Historian* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 37-52. †

- Elizabeth L Greenspan, "Spontaneous Memorials, Museums, and Public History: Memorialization of September 11, 2001 at the Pentagon," *The Public Historian* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 129-132.†
- Marita Sturken, "The Aesthetics of Absence: Rebuilding Ground Zero," *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 3 (August 2004): 311-325.†
- Setha M. Low, "The Memorialization of September 11: Dominant and Local Discourses on the Rebuilding of the World Trade Center Site," *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 3 (August 2004): 326-339.†
- Frank Lentricchia and Jody McAuliffe, "Groundzeroland," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 2 (2002): 349-359.†

By 9 AM, on December 7, project proposals must be posted to the Discussion Forum on the course web site.

12/8 & 10 Presentation and discussion of project proposals

Final Paper Due: 11 AM, Friday, December 18.