

Narrating Memory, History and Place

Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University

Professor: Marie Cruz Soto
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Course: k20.1535 - 001
Semester: Spring 2009
Time: T&TH 9:30-10:45am
Location: 401, 715 Broadway



Photograph of graffiti in Brazilian favela
(http://www.2spare.com/item_92381.aspx)

Course Description:

The past is a contested terrain open to divergent interpretations in which the relationship between the past and memory and history (as two forms of historical narrations) is not always clear or simple. The relationship, on the contrary, is mediated by everyday struggles over which narratives are validated as more accurate representations of the past. These struggles are many times urgent for people and communities involved considering that historical narrations can shape and transform common understandings of places. The meanings endowed to places, in turn, can dictate the usage and the extent of control that people and communities exercise over them.

This course examines how people imagine a place of their own through historical narrations. It explores the relationship between memory and history as two different forms of historical narrations central to the process of transforming places. This relationship between memory and history is crucial in the struggle of disempowered communities, especially in (post)colonial contexts, to claim a place of their own. The course, however, builds on an expanded definition of narration that includes but is not limited to writing and the written text. Narration, for this class, refers to human activities that endow meaning, attempt to structure time and space and plot daily life. To approach the subject, course readings range from Jamaica Kincaid's narration of postcolonial Antigua in *A Small Place* to Steven Hoelscher's study of photography as a haunting urban marker in postdictatorship Guatemala City.

The main goals of the course are for students: to familiarize with some influential scholars in the study of memory, history and places, to explore multiple manifestations

of historical narrations, to delve into different communal struggles over places, and to understand the relevance of historical narrations in people's claims to places.

Course Requirements:

To successfully complete the course students are required to attend and participate actively in class, to write ten reaction papers and two essays and to do a class presentation based on the second essay. The final grade for the course is divided into five parts: participation, reaction papers, first essay, second essay and class presentation. Participation, reaction papers and the first essay are each worth 20% of the final grade. The second essay is 30% and the class presentation is 10% of the final grade.

The participation grade depends on the careful reading of the course texts, attendance, and the active participation in class discussions. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and to contribute on a regular basis to discussions with respectful and informed comments that engage the course texts. The participation grade may also include quizzes designed to evaluate students' readings of the assigned texts. In terms of attendance, each student is entitled to one non-justified absence. Each absence thereafter will result in a one-fifth deduction of the participation grade.

In the reaction papers students should engage the texts for a given week with its topic. Reaction papers are not summaries. On the contrary, students should react critically to the texts keeping in mind the overall topic for the week. The reaction papers, one-page typed, are to be handed in by the Thursday of the week it is assigned. While reaction papers are a weekly exercise, students should note that not every week has a reaction paper assigned to it.

The first essay is due on Monday March 9th. This five-page essay will address how historical narrations intertwine with the narration of places. The second essay is due on Monday May 4th. This eight-page essay should address the particularities of a community's experiences and struggles to imagine a place, especially a place of their own. Students, nonetheless, will develop their own specific topic for the second essay in close dialogue with the professor. Students should visit Blackboard for detailed instructions about the writing of these two essays. Both essays, in addition, must be submitted as a digital copy on Blackboard and as a paper copy in the box outside the professor's office by 9:30am of their due dates.

The class presentation, scheduled for Week XIII and not to exceed 10 minutes, must be based on the student's topic for the second essay. Students will be graded on the rigorousness of their research and on their creativity engaging and communicating the topic. The class presentation should help students think about their topic for the final essay.

Deadlines:

Reaction papers and essays should be handed in within the established deadlines. Late papers will not be accepted except with valid and preferably medical written excuses. Incompletes are not an option. A student with a compelling reason for wanting an incomplete should talk to the professor before the last week of class.

Special Accommodations:

Students who require special accommodations because of a disability should visit the Henry and Lucy Moses Center (240 Greene Street, 2nd Floor) and talk to the professor during the first week of class.

Writing:

Writing is an essential part of this course and of the academic life in general. Great ideas can be lost if the writing is not clear, just like readers can be lost if the writing is not evocative. Students are therefore encouraged to visit the professor during her office hours and the Gallatin Writing Center (715 Broadway, Room 809) in order to discuss the writing process.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the use of ideas without giving the proper credit to its author. Students should refer to page 94 of the 2008-2009 Gallatin Bulletin (available at <http://www.nyu.edu/gallatin/pdf/GallatinBulletin.pdf>) and to the chapter "Plagiarism" in the 6th edition of the MLA Handbook for a more detailed definition of plagiarism and its consequences. Students who commit plagiarism and/or any other activity that portrays academic dishonesty will not receive credit for the work in question and may automatically fail the class. The matter will further be taken up with the Associate Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs of Gallatin School.

Course Readings:

Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. Revised ed. London and New York: Verso, 1991.

de Certeau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Kincaid, Jamaica. A Small Place. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

These books may be purchased at the NYU Main Bookstore (18 Washington Place). The rest of the readings are either in the coursepack or in the Blackboard course site. The coursepack may also be purchased at the Main Bookstore. In addition, copies of the course texts not found on Blackboard are available on reserve in the Elmer Holmes Bobst Library (70 Washington Square South, Lower Level 2).

Course Schedule:

**WEEK I:
INTRODUCTION**

☞ January 20th and 22nd ☞

Required Texts for January 22nd:

Massey, Doreen. "Places and Their Pasts." History Workshop Journal 39 (Spring 1995): 182-192. -Blackboard-

Said, Edward W. "Invention, Memory, and Place." Critical Inquiry 26 (Winter 2000): 175-192. -Blackboard-

**WEEK II:
THE POLITICS OF MEMORY**

☞ January 27th and 29th ☞

Reaction Paper One

In-class screening:

History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige. Dir. Rea Tajiri. Electronic Arts Intermix, 1991.

Required Text for January 27th:

Hirsch, Marianne. "The Generation of Postmemory." Poetics Today 29:1 (Spring 2008): 103-128. *-Blackboard-*

Required Text for January 29th:

Taylor, Diana. "Performance and/as History." The Drama Review 50:1 (Spring 2006): 67-86. *-Blackboard-*

**WEEK III:
THE POLITICS OF HISTORY**

☞ February 3rd and 5th ☞

Reaction Paper Two

Required Text for February 3rd and 5th:

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995. *-Book-*

**WEEK IV:
NARRATING THE PAST IN PLACE**

☞ February 10th and 12th ☞

Reaction Paper Three

Required Texts for February 10th:

Cronon, William. "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative." The Journal of American History 78:4 (March 1992): 1347-1376. *-Blackboard-*

Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." H-Net. 2009. H-Net. January 8, 2009 <<http://www.h-net.org/~hst203/documents/turner.html>>. *-Blackboard-*

Required Texts for February 12th:

Hite, Katherine. "Resurrecting Allende." NACLA 37:1 (July/August 2003): 19-24, 42. *-Blackboard-*

Low, Setha M. "The Memorialization of September 11: Dominant and Local Discourses on the Rebuilding of the World Trade Center Site." American Ethnologist 31:3 (August 2004): 326-339. *-Blackboard-*

National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center. 2008. National September 11 Memorial and Museum. January 9, 2009

<http://www.national911memorial.org/site/PageServer?pagename=New_Home>. -Blackboard-

**WEEK V:
NARRATING A SMALL (POST)COLONIAL PLACE**

☞ February 17th and 19th ☞
Reaction Paper Four

Required Text for February 17th:

Kincaid, Jamaica. A Small Place. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988. -Book-

Required Text for February 19th:

Cruz Soto, Marie. "Inhabiting Isla Nena: Imperial Dramas, Gendered Geographical Imaginings and Vieques, Puerto Rico." Centro Journal 20:1 (Spring 2008): 164-191. -Blackboard-

**WEEK VI:
IMAGINING COMMUNITIES**

☞ February 24th and 26th ☞
Reaction Paper Five

Required Text for February 24th and 26th:

Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. Revised ed. London and New York: Verso, 1991. -Book-

**WEEK VII:
IMAGINING RACIAL AND GENDER COMMUNITIES**

☞ March 3rd and 5th ☞
Reaction Paper Six

Required Text for March 3rd:

Hoelscher, Steven. "Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 93:3 (2003): 657-686. -Blackboard-

Required Text for March 5th:

McDowell, Sara. "Commemorating Dead 'Men': Gendering the Past and Present in Post-conflict Northern Ireland." Gender, Place and Culture 15:4 (August 2008): 335-354. -Blackboard-

**WEEK VIII:
EMPIRES AND THE MAPPING OF COMMUNITIES**

☞ March 10th and 12th ☞
First Essay Due on March 9th

Required Text for March 10th:

Thongchai Winichakul. "Siam Mapped: The Making of Thai Nationhood." The Ecologist 26:5 (September 1996): 215-221. -*Blackboard*-

Required Text for March 12th:

Cummings, Bruce. "Boundary Displacement: Area Studies and International Studies During and After the Cold War." Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences during the Cold War. Ed. Christopher Simpson. New York: The New Press, 1998. 159-188. -*Coursepack and Reserve*-

**WEEK IX:
EVERYDAY PEOPLES, PRACTICES AND PLACES**

☞ March 24th and 26th ☞

Reaction Paper Seven

Required Text for March 24th and 26th:

de Certeau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. -*Book*-

**WEEK X:
IMAGINING THE ETHNIC CITY**

☞ March 31st and April 2nd ☞

Reaction Paper Eight

Class field trip on March 31st:

Lower East Side of New York City

Required Texts for March 31st and April 2nd:

Cardalda Sánchez, Elsa B. and Amílcar Tirado Avilés. "Ambiguous Identities! The Affirmation of Puertorriqueñidad in the Community Murals of New York City." Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York. Eds. Agustín Laó-Montes and Arlene Dávila. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. 263-289. -*Coursepack and Reserve*-

Schmelzkopf, Karen. "Urban Community Gardens as a Contested Space." The Geographical Review 85:3 (1995): 364-381. -*Blackboard*-

Sevcenko, Liz. "Making Loisaida: Placing Puertorriqueñidad in Lower Manhattan." Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York. Eds. Agustín Laó-Montes and Arlene Dávila. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. 293-317. -*Coursepack and Reserve*-

**WEEK XI:
NARRATING THE FORGOTTEN CITY**

☞ April 7th and 9th ☞

Reaction Paper Nine

Required Text for April 7th:

Hoelscher, Steven. "Angels of Memory: Photography and Haunting in Guatemala City." GeoJournal 73:3 (2008): 195-217. *-Blackboard-*

Required Texts for April 9th:

Armstrong, Marcelo. Favela Tour-Rio de Janeiro Tours. Favela Tour. January 6, 2009 <<http://www.favelatour.com.br/>>. *-Blackboard-*

Lerman, Alexandra. "Carnavalesque Dreams of Os Gemeos." ScribeMedia.org. July 1, 2008. ScribeMedia Arts & Culture. January 7, 2009 <<http://www.scribemedi.org/2008/07/01/carnavalesque-dreams-of-os-gemeos/>>. *-Blackboard-*

Muniz, Vik and Bomb. "Os Gemeos." Bomb 102 (Winter 2008): 58-63. *-Blackboard-*
 "Os Gemeos Cavaleiro Marginal." Deitch Projects. 2008. Deitch Projects. January 8, 2009. <<http://www.deitch.com/projects/sub.php?projId=157>>. *-Blackboard-*

Rohter, Larry. "Rio's Squatters, by Guided Tour." New York Times 20 May 2001. New York Times. 2009. The New York Times Company. January 7, 2009 <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=travel&res=9400EFDC173AF933A15756C0A9679C8B63>>. *-Blackboard-*

**WEEK XII:
NARRATING THE FORGOTTEN CITY, PART TWO**

☞ April 14th and 16th ☞
Reaction Paper Ten
(can be handed in on April 21st)

In-class screening:

Cidade de Deus. Dir. Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund. Miramax Home Entertainment, 2002.

**WEEK XIII:
PRESENTATIONS**

☞ April 21st and 23rd ☞

In-class individual presentations

**WEEK XIV:
CONCLUSIONS**

☞ April 28th and 30th ☞

Required Text for April 28th:

Dinzev-Flores, Zaire Z. "De la Disco al Caserío: Urban Spatial Aesthetics and Policy to the Beat of Reggaetón." Centro Journal 20:2 (Fall 2008): 34-69. *-Blackboard-*

Final Essay Due on May 4th