

JHR/AEP 598
CRITICAL TRAUMA STUDIES
Professor Monica J. Casper
Spring 2010
W 4:40-7:30 PM, Sands 231
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“The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word unspeakable. Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried.”
—Judith Herman, 1992/1997

“The twentieth century may well be remembered as a century of historical trauma. As citizens facing the third millennium, we daily confront the unthinkable... Global disasters challenge our sensibilities with occasions for communal mourning too numerous to chronicle. How have we survived, both individually and collectively, in the face of unimaginable trauma?”—Suzette A. Henke, 2000

“If every age has its symptoms, ours appears to be the age of trauma. Naming a wide spectrum of responses to psychic and physical events often with little in common beyond the label, trauma has become a portmanteau that covers a multitude of disparate injuries.”—Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougaw, 2002

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Recently, the study of trauma has become institutionalized into a loose and somewhat amorphous field of scholars, perspectives, journals, conferences, curricula, and publications. Although contention surrounds the boundaries, scope, and content of "trauma studies," there is general consensus that this intellectual space been shaped by and encompasses twentieth-century catastrophes including war, genocide, and forced migration alongside everyday experiences of violence, loss, and injury. At the conceptual heart of trauma studies is a set of tensions between the everyday and the extreme, between individual identity and collective experience, between history and the present, between experience and representation, between facts and memory, and between the "clinical" and the "cultural." Historically, clinical and psychological perspectives have dominated trauma studies, for example in understandings of PTSD. However, new perspectives in sociology, comparative studies, cultural studies, literary studies, gender and race studies, history, and other fields have broadened the scope of trauma studies. In the face of this proliferation of perspectives, it becomes increasingly important to ask, what is this 'trauma' of trauma studies? This is precisely what this course brings to the conversation; rather than taking common understandings of trauma or the traumatized subject as given, we critically consider the various social and material practices that cohere around contemporary notions of trauma. This course offers an intensive, critical examination of trauma theory, trauma cultures, trauma interventions, and empirical studies of trauma, with particular attention to issues of gender, race, sexuality, citizenship status, and geography. The course is ideal for social scientists, humanists, and professional students in social work, religion, ethics, counseling, social justice and human rights, law, and health care.

[The design of this course has emerged in collaboration with Professor Maurice Stevens, an expert in trauma theory in the Department of Comparative Studies, Ohio State University. Professor Stevens is author of numerous publications, including a forthcoming book From the Past Imperfect: Towards a Critical Trauma Theory. For more information, see <http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/stevens368/>. His course "Critical Trauma Theory" at OSU is taking place alongside our own, and we hope to facilitate cross-fertilization and dialogue.]

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Because Trauma Studies is an emergent area of investigation and scholarship, this course is designed to provide you with the conceptual tools and theoretical background to contribute to its formation and practice. Upon completion of the course, you should:

- Understand the emergence of Trauma Studies as an interdisciplinary field, including core concepts and debates
- Comprehend theories of/about trauma and how various disciplines relate to Trauma Studies
- Know key definitions, categories, critiques, and controversies that comprise research and scholarship in Trauma Studies
- Understand conceptual possibilities and limits of 'trauma' as a conceptual framework vis-à-vis suffering, vulnerability, marginality, inequality, and catastrophe
- Situate 'overwhelming' experience in social, historical, temporal, economic, and cultural contexts globally, nationally, and locally
- Articulate social justice and human rights possibilities and limitations as produced in and through the field of trauma studies
- Explore new frontiers for your own engagement with 'trauma' and/in related fields



REQUIRED COURSE READINGS

Selected articles and other materials will be posted on Blackboard (designated BB in syllabus). In addition, you will be reading the following books, available at the campus bookstore:

- Appadurai, Arjun. 2006. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Brison, Susan J. 2002. *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cho, Grace M. 2008. *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Erikson, Kai. 1994. *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disasters*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Fassin, Didier and Richard Rechtman. 2009. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry Into the Condition of Victimhood*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kaplan, Ann. 2005. *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Sturken, Marita. 2007. *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Class attendance and participation. As you might expect, the fact that we meet only once per week makes it imperative that you attend all class meetings. We will be covering a lot of material and attempting to engage it as fully as possible, therefore your committed participation is crucial. Active participation will be worth 10% of your final grade.
2. Response Papers. Each of you will be required to write three (3) response papers during the semester, based on the readings. These 1-2 page responses will represent your creative/critical engagements with the material. You may decide to take up a particular issue, contest an author's argument or position, offer critical analyses, or provide a review of several materials for that week's readings. Each response paper will be worth 10% of your grade, toward 30% of your final grade. Please email these to me as you complete them. The only requirement is that *all three* must be turned in no later than April 7th.
3. Seminar leadership. Each student (either individually or in pairs) will be responsible for coordinating and leading one of our course seminars, including facilitating discussion, posing questions, and guiding our thinking about the material. The seminar leadership will be faculty- and peer-evaluated and is worth 20% of your final grade.
4. Trauma Journal. Finally, each student will keep a "critical trauma journal" throughout the semester, selecting a specific trauma about which to write. The idea here is that you will choose something that might be considered 'traumatic' to reflect upon. This does not necessarily have to be a trauma you have experienced (and indeed you are encouraged, though not required, to look beyond your own lives for exemplary 'objects of analysis'). The journal should take account of your chosen site (this could be a singular event, something that's ongoing, some kind of individual experience, a collective experience, something happening to humans, non-humans, or the environment) through the various theoretical lenses and perspectives we'll engage in class. The journal can take any form you choose, but it should offer critical reflection alongside creativity. You may integrate narrative, images, essays, journal entries, creative writing, poetry, news coverage, media, and other materials into your journal. You will give a short oral presentation about your journal on our final day of class. The trauma journal is worth 40% of your grade and will be due April 28th. *No late assignments will be accepted.*

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENT STANDARDS

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Grade</i>
Active Class Participation	10%
Response paper #1	10%
Response paper #2	10%
Response paper #3	10%
Seminar Leadership	20%
Trauma Journal	40%
Total	100%

Grading scale:

91-100%=A- to A; 81-90%=B- to B+; 71-80%=C- to C+; 60-70%=D- to D+; and 0-59%=E.

LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment, we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.west.asu.edu/drc/>) to assist me in verifying the need for accommodation and in developing appropriate strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Disability Resource Center, I encourage you to do so as early in the semester as possible.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND COLLEGIALITY

Plagiarism is unacceptable and students are expected to abide by the ASU Student Code of Conduct (<http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/vp/safetyresources/index.htm#conduct>). You, the student, are responsible for authenticating any assignment in this course. If asked, you must be able to produce proof that the assignment you submit is actually your own work. I recommend that you engage in a verifiable working process on assignments. Keep digital copies of all drafts of your work, write brief summaries of research materials, keep logs or journals of your work on assignments and papers, learn to save different drafts or version of assignments under different names, etc.

Regarding collegiality, I consider the classroom to be a space for collaborative learning. That is, contrary to the idea that learning happens only inside somebody's head, learning also happens through our interactions and collective efforts. Following the tenets of critical pedagogy, I view teaching as the development of critical consciousness in my students. Teaching and learning are part of broader political struggles to create a more just and egalitarian society, beginning with the classroom. Rather than ascribing to a "top down" notion in which I talk at you, the passive recipient, I believe that all of us are responsible for creating a productive, engaged learning environment. In doing so, I encourage you to be respectful toward your co-participants in this course.



A BRIEF FACULTY BIO

I joined ASU's New College in 2008 to direct the Division of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies (HArCS, where I'm also Professor of Women and Gender Studies and Social and Behavioral Sciences. My research and teaching interests include bodies and sexuality; feminist technoscience studies; medical sociology; gender, race, and class; women's health; environmental health and justice; cultural politics of reproduction; public health aspects of security and war; disability studies; trauma studies; and bioethics—in short, biopolitics and "life itself". I received my B.A. in sociology from the University of Chicago in 1988 and my Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, San Francisco in 1995. I

spent a year at Stanford University as a Fellow in Biomedical Ethics and was on the sociology faculty at UC Santa Cruz for seven years. In 2003, I served as Executive Director of the Intersex Society of North America, and from 2004-2008 I directed the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Vanderbilt University. I am co-author of *Missing Bodies: The Politics of Visibility* (NYU Press, 2009), author of *The Making of the Unborn Patient: A Social Anatomy of Fetal Surgery* (Rutgers University Press, 1998) and editor of *Synthetic Planet: Chemical Politics and the Hazards of Modern Life* (Routledge, 2003). My current research projects investigate the biopolitics of infant mortality in the U.S., the HPV vaccine for cervical cancer, and permanent non-surgical sterilization technologies.



WHY TRAUMA STUDIES? WHY NOW?

JANUARY 20

In-Class:

Introductions
Administrative Business
Course Overview

Read:

Ball, Karyn. 2000. "Introduction: Trauma and Its Institutional Destinies." *Cultural Critique* 46: 1-44. (BB)
Ahmed, Sara and Jackie Stacey. 2001. "Testimonial Cultures: An Introduction." *Cultural Values* 5(1): 1-6. (BB)
Culbertson, Roberta. 1995. "Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Re-Establishing the Self." *New Literary History* 26(1): 169-195. (BB)
Killen, Andreas. 2000. "Pundits of Pain." *Salon.com*, February 11. (BB)
Cohen, Patricia. 1999. "The Study of Trauma Graduates at Last." *New York Times*, May 8. (BB)

COLLECTIVE WOUNDS

JANUARY 27

Read:

- Seltzer, Mark. 1997. "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere." *October* 80: 24. (BB)
- Denham, Aaron R. 2008. "Rethinking Historical Trauma: Narratives of Resilience." *Transcultural Psychiatry* 45(3): 391-414. (BB)
- Fassin, Didier and Estelle d'Halluin. 2007. "Critical Evidence: The Politics of Trauma in French Asylum Policies." *Ethos* 35(3): 300-329. (BB)
- Kienzler, Hanna. 2008. "Debating War-Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in an Interdisciplinary Arena." *Social Science and Medicine* 67: 218-227. (BB)
- Henry, Doug. 2006. "Violence and the Body: Somatic Expressions of Trauma and Vulnerability During War." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 20(3): 379-398. (BB)
- Bradshaw, G.A. et al. 2005. "Elephant Breakdown." *Nature* 433:807. (BB)
- Siebert, Charles. 2006. "An Elephant Crackup?" *New York Times Magazine*, October 8. (BB)

ETHNOGRAPHIES OF TRAUMA

FEBRUARY 3

Read:

Erikson, *A New Species of Trouble*

FEBRUARY 10

Read:

Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*

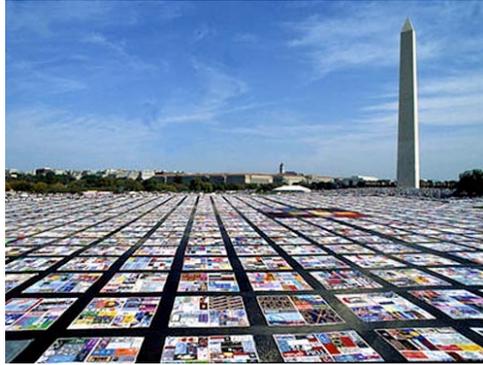


FEBRUARY 17

Read:

Brison, *Aftermath*

(MIS)REPRESENTING TRAUMA



FEBRUARY 24

Read:

Sturken, *Tourists of History*

MARCH 3

In-Class:

View and discuss the documentary film, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*

http://www.americanfilmfoundation.com/order/maya_lin.shtml



MARCH 10

Read:

Kaplan, *Trauma Culture*

MARCH 17

No class—Spring Break

GLOBALIZING TRAUMA

MARCH 24

Read:

Fassin and Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma*

MARCH 31

Read:

Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*

A SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

APRIL 7

Read:

Haaken, Janice. 2002. "Cultural Amnesia: Memory, Trauma, and War." *Signs* 28(1): 455-457. (BB)

Radstone, Susannah. 2002. "The War of the Fathers: Trauma, Fantasy, and September 11." *Signs* 28(1): 457-459. (BB)

Philipose, Liz. 2007. "The Politics of Pain and the End of Empire." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9(1): 60-81. (BB)

Burnham, Gilbert et al. 2006. "The Human Cost of the War in Iraq: A Mortality Study, 2002-2006." Center for International Studies, MIT, Cambridge, MA. (BB)

Okie, Susan. 2009. "Traumatic Brain Injury in the War Zone." *New England Journal of Medicine* 352(20): 2043-2047. (BB)

Corbett, Sara. 2007. "The Women's War." *New York Times*, March 18. (BB)



APRIL 14

Read:

Fischer, Hannah. 2009. "United States Military Casualty Statistics: Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom." A Report of the Congressional Research Service, March 25. (BB)

Dobbs, David. 2009. "Soldiers' Stress: What Doctors Get Wrong About PTSD." *Scientific American*, April 13. (BB)

Visit the Wounded Warrior Project: <http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>

In-Class:

View and discuss the documentary film, *Alive Day Memories* (<http://www.hbo.com/aliveday/>)

