

IAS-494/JHR-598  
**CRITICAL TRAUMA STUDIES**

**Professor Monica J. Casper**

Spring 2012

Tuesday 4:40 – 7:30 PM, FAB B-10

monica.casper@asu.edu, 602-543-6024

Office hours: Thursday 11 AM – Noon, or by appointment

Office location: FAB N230-G

*“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 Tougan, 2002

*“A society that turns a blind eye to injustice becomes an unwitting collaborator in a pattern of abuse, linking, even if unconsciously, authority with injustice, rendering an impunity to violence and quietly condoning the victory of the strong and unscrupulous over those who are vulnerable.”*

—Susan Griffin, 2011

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The study of trauma has been institutionalized into a loose, 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 fertile intellectual space has been shaped by and encompasses twentieth-century catastrophes including war, genocide, and forced migration alongside everyday experiences of violence, loss, and injury. Historically, clinical and psychological perspectives 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 to encompass a more critical understanding. At the conceptual heart of *critical* 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." The category of trauma is not taken for granted but rather is unraveled and interrogated to assess the political and cultural work that trauma does. We critically consider the various social and material practices that cohere around contemporary notions of trauma, asking such questions as: what counts as trauma, for whom, under what circumstances, and with what symbolic and material consequences? This course offers an intensive examination of trauma theory, trauma cultures and representations, 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.

## COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Because Critical 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 Critical Trauma Studies as an interdisciplinary field, including core concepts and debates
- Comprehend theories of/about trauma and how various disciplines relate to Critical Trauma Studies
- Know key definitions, categories, critiques, and controversies that comprise research and scholarship in Critical Trauma Studies
- Understand conceptual possibilities and limits of “trauma” as a conceptual framework vis-à-vis suffering, vulnerability, marginality, inequality, injustice, and catastrophe
- Situate “overwhelming” experience(s) 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 Critical Trauma Studies
- Explore new frontiers for your own engagement with “trauma” and/in related fields of knowledge and practice



## 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:

- Bartók, Mira. 2011. *The Memory Palace: A Memoir*. New York: Free Press.
- Bradshaw, G.A. 2009. *Elephants on the Edge: What Animals Teach Us About Humanity*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Carrington, Karin Lofthus and Susan Griffin, eds. 2011. *Transforming Terror: Remembering the Soul of the World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Caruth, Cathy. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cho, Grace M. 2008. *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Margolick, David. 2000. *Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday, Café Society, and An Early Cry for Civil Rights*. Philadelphia: Running Press.
- Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Class 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 (a lot!) and attempting to engage it as fully as possible, therefore your committed participation is crucial. Active participation—that is, not just showing up, but being prepared to discuss the readings and ideas and actually discussing them—will be worth 10% of your final grade.
2. Discussion Board. Throughout the semester, there will be 5 discussion board forums on Blackboard, focused on topics related to the readings. You are required to post to each of these forums, dialoguing with your colleagues and me about the material. Each discussion is worth 6% of your grade (30% total). To receive full credit for each post, you must respond to the original question, as well as any follow-up questions posed by your classmates, in sufficient depth to indicate that you've read and are engaging with the material. When responding to posts, use people's names so that we know what issues/concerns you're following up on. Responses will be due within 48 hours after I post each question; after 48 hours, the forum will close and no new posts will be accepted, although the forum will still be visible.
3. Discussion Leadership. Each student will be responsible for coordinating the discussion about a reading or group of readings in class. This includes producing a set of discussion questions to share with the class, posing your own questions about the material, facilitating our conversation, and otherwise guiding our thinking about the material. You can prepare a PowerPoint or other visual aid, bring handouts, use show and tell, or apply any other pedagogical strategy when it is your turn to facilitate. Reading assignments (i.e., matching of students to readings) will be made by the second week of class and posted on Blackboard. The discussion leadership assignment is worth 15% of your final grade.
4. Final Project: Each student will be required to submit a final project in this course:

A. TRAUMA JOURNAL. Option 1 is to create a “critical trauma journal,” selecting a specific trauma to focus on throughout the semester. 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 (including digital), but it should offer critical reflection alongside creativity. You may integrate narrative, images, essays, journal entries, creative writing, poetry, news coverage, media, objects, and/or other materials into your journal. You will give a short oral presentation about your journal during our final class session. Journal topics will be due by January 24<sup>th</sup>. The trauma journal is worth 45% of your grade and will be due on or before April 24<sup>th</sup>. No late assignments will be accepted.

OR

B. ANALYTICAL PAPER. Option 2 is to write a 15-page analytical paper on any topic related to the course. The paper could do any of the following: analyze a specific “trauma” or disaster using literature from the course; analyze a topic related to your thesis or applied research, but using material/ideas from the course; offer a synthetic, critical review of several readings from class; innovate theory in the field of Critical Trauma Studies; or anything else you choose and I approve. You will give a short oral presentation about your paper in our final class session. Topics will be due by January 24<sup>th</sup>. The analytical paper is worth 45% of your grade and will be due on or before April 24<sup>th</sup>. You must submit papers to me via email (as an attachment); they should be typed, double-spaced, and formatted in MLA style. No late assignments will be accepted.



## GRADING AND ASSIGNMENT STANDARDS

Class Participation	10%
Discussion Leadership	15%
Discussion Board Posts (5)	30%
Final Project	45%
Total	100%

### *Grading scale:*

99-100 % = A+	77-79 % = C+
93-98 % = A	70-76 % = C
90-92 % = A-	67-69 % = D+
87-89 % = B+	63-66 % = D
83-86 % = B	60-62 % = D-
80-82 % = B-	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 DRC, 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 mutually

responsible for creating a productive, engaged learning environment. It goes without saying that you should be respectful toward your co-participants in this course.

### **A BRIEF BIO**

I joined ASU's faculty in 2008 and am currently Professor of American Studies and Women and Gender Studies in the Division of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies (HArCS). 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, the biopolitics of 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 several 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) editor of *Synthetic Planet: Chemical Politics and the Hazards of Modern Life* (Routledge, 2003), and co-editor of *Corpus: An Interdisciplinary Reader on Bodies and Knowledge* (Palgrave 2011). My current research projects investigate varied topics: the biopolitics of infant mortality, the HPV vaccine for cervical cancer, permanent non-surgical sterilization technologies, traumatic brain injury, and parental child abduction.



### **WHY TRAUMA STUDIES? WHY NOW?**

January 10

Administrative Business  
Course Overview  
Questions

#### 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)



## PROBING WOUNDS

January 17

### 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)

## THEORIZING TRAUMA

January 24

### Read:

Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*

### Due:

Journal/Analytical Paper Topics

January 31

### Read:

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

## BODIES OF WAR

February 7

### Read:

Clint Van Winkle, excerpt from *Soft Spots*:

[http://www.clintvanwinkle.com/Excerpt\\_from\\_SOFT\\_SPOTS.html](http://www.clintvanwinkle.com/Excerpt_from_SOFT_SPOTS.html)

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)

### In-Class Film Viewing:

*The Guilt*, produced and directed by Clint Van Winkle

See: <http://www.intheirboots.com/itb/>



February 14

### 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)

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

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

Morrison, Dan and Monica J. Casper. 2012. "Intersections of Disability Studies and Critical Trauma Studies: A Provocation." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, forthcoming. (BB)

February 21

### Read:

Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*

## PACHYDERM PERIL

February 28

Read:

G.A. Bradshaw, *Elephants on the Edge*

Siebert, Charles. 2006. "An Elephant Crackup?" *New York Times Magazine*, October 8. (BB)



March 6

Read:

The Elephant Sanctuary, "Flora," <http://www.elephants.com/flora/floraBio.php>

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, 2011, "Elephants, Trauma and the Ego,"

<http://jeffreymasson.wordpress.com/2011/11/14/elephants-trauma-and-the-ego/>

Joan Vannorsdall Schroeder. 1993. "The Day They Hanged an Elephant in East Tennessee." Blue Ridge Country, May 1<sup>st</sup>. See <http://blueridgecountry.com/archive/mary-the-elephant.html>

Public Screening (location TBA):

*One Lucky Elephant*, directed by Lisa Leeman

<http://oneluckyelephant.com/>

## "BLOOD AT THE ROOT"

March 13

Read:

David Margolick, *Strange Fruit*

Nicole A. Waligora-Davis. 2007. "Dunbar and the Science of Lynching." *African American Review* 41(2): 303-311.

Bettina M. Carbonell. 2008. "The Afterlife of Lynching: Exhibitions and the Re-composition of Human Suffering." *Mississippi Quarterly* 62(1/2): 197-215. (BB)

Amy Louise Wood. 2005. "Lynching Photography and the Visual Reproduction of White Supremacy." *American Nineteenth Century History* 6(3): 373-399. (BB)

Leigh Raiford. 2009. "Photography and the Practices of Critical Black Memory." *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 48 (December): 112-129. (BB)

## MEMORY

March 27

Read:

Mira Bartók, *The Memory Palace*

April 3

Read:

Marita Sturken. 1997. "Absent Images of Memory: Remembering and Reenacting the Japanese Internment." *Positions* 5(3):687-707.

Benjamin Lefebvre. 2010. "In Search of Someday: Trauma and Repetition in Joy Kogawa's Fiction." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 44(3):154-173. (BB)

Fu-Jen Chen and Su-Lin Yu. 2006. "Asian North American Children's Literature About the Internment: Visualizing and Verbalizing the Traumatic *Thing*." *Children's Literature in Education* 37:111-124. (BB)

See also: <http://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/archive/2010/gaman/>



## TRANSFORMATIONS

April 10

Read:

Carrington and Griffin, *Transforming Terror*, Part I

April 17

Read:

Carrington and Griffin, *Transforming Terror*, Part II

April 24

In Class:  
Presentations

Due:  
Trauma Journals and Analytical Papers

