Winter 2008

German 5390/7390 – Graduate Seminar: Memory, Trauma, and Holocaust Representation

Instructor: Prof. Anne Rothe
Contact Info: (313) 577-3024 (dept. office)
(313) 577-6237 (my office)
453 Manoogian Hall
rothe@wayne.edu

Course Description

This graduate seminar will explore how both individuals and societies remember their past and how the individual and cultural memory processes differ if this past involves traumatic experiences. We will analyze how memories are externalized from the individual mind and ‘translated’ into interpersonally communicable forms of representations in cultural artifacts, such as literature, film, TV, monuments, and oral history testimony. We will discuss the collective processes of meaning construction and dissemination of collective memories in and through such cultural artifacts and how the culturally negotiated collective memories are re-internalized in the reception processes. Furthermore, the seminar will explore which specific processes occur when traumatic events, such as imprisonment in concentration camps, are remembered by survivors as well as the collective processes involved when cultural memories of traumatic events, such as the Holocaust, are externalized through embodiment in cultural artifacts and in turn ‘re-internalized’ by an audience who has no first-hand experience of them.

We will contextualize the explorations into memory, trauma and Holocaust representation in the current fascination of Western culture with trauma, suffering and victimhood embodied in innumerous artifacts – e.g. in representations of child abuse, rape, war crimes, the exploitation of the disenfranchised in the developing world, and even ‘sci-fi-sounding’ alien abduction stories. And we will question how the trauma narratives constructed Holocaust representations and embodied (as potential) in memory artifacts function in the contemporary culture of trauma and victimhood.

Materials

Recommended
The course assumes familiarity with the core historical events and developments in the history of the Holocaust as well as with canonical forms of its representation. If necessary, please familiarize yourself with them before the start of the semester. I recommend the following texts:

History of the Holocaust:
Canonical Cultural Artifacts Representing the Third Reich and the Holocaust:
E. Wiesel, *Night*
P. Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*
A. Spiegelman *Maus*, vol. I and II
Ch. Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster*
St. Spielberg, *Schindler’s List*
R. Benigni, *Life is Beautiful*

These texts and films are available in the library or through interlibrary loan and can be purchased at on-line book stores in used and new form.

**Required**
All research articles and book chapters on theories of memory, trauma, and representation, all secondary literature as well as Wilkomirski’s text *Bruchstücke* are available for download and print-out at the course **Blackboard** site.

In addition, you will need the following **books**:
R. Klüger, *weiter leben*
B. Schlink, *Der Vorleser*
P. Weiss, *Die Ermittlung*
W. Schumann, *Being Present, Growing up in Hitler’s Germany.*
They have been ordered at Barnes & Noble. But you may also order the three German books via ibis@ibiservice.com and Schumann’s memoir via amazon.com or other American on-line book stores.

**Requirements**
Attendance & Participation in Class Discussion  20%
Regular in-class presentations (approx. 7 to 8 presentations per student; exact number depends on class size)  50%
Final Paper (8-10 pages in either English or German)  30%

**Presentations**
There will be at least one student presentation in each class. The serve as our roter *Faden* for class discussion, i.e. presentation and discussion will not be separate but integrated.

You are required to make a **handout** summarizing (as bulletin points, not complete sentences) the core ideas from the readings on which you will present. Please email the handout to me, the **deadline** is the day before the class in which you present at 2pm. I will edit the handout – I may supplement ideas you did not include, and/or cut ideas you did include, and/or paraphrase what you wrote – and email it back to you some time (usually in the late evening) the same day. Please print the edited handout.

You will also need to come and see me the day of your presentation (between 1.15 and 4pm in my office) and we will discuss your presentation. This should take about 30 minutes. Please bring the edited handout to our meeting and read over it several times before the meeting to make sure you understand my changes.
Please make copies of the edited handout for everyone and bring them to class.

Final Papers
Your final papers do no require additional readings but you are of course free to do so. Please start thinking about a topic early and come and see me and/or email me so we can ‘fine-tune’ it together. If you decide on a topic that does require additional readings, I will assist you in selecting them.

The paper should be well-researched and well-argued. It can be concise (8-10 pages) but may also be longer. I only require comparatively short papers because I did not want you to have to ‘blow up’ a well-argued and concise paper by inserting ideas and extensive quotes not necessary to the argument solely to achieve the required length. I consider a well-argued, shorter paper a realistic expectation for this course whereas well-argued and well-researched papers of significantly more than 10 pages would, I believe, take more time than you realistically have. In short, I take quality over quantity and did not want to experience the ‘sticker shock’ of having to write a 20-25 page paper either.

Papers may be entirely theoretical or combine theory and the analysis of a cultural artifact (memoir, film, fictional literary text, photograph/s, museum, memorial, commemorative performance). In the latter case, the focus may be on the theory, on the analysis of the artifact or equally on both. You may either chose artifacts and/or theories we did not discuss in class to discuss in your paper or elaborate on class readings and discussions in it. The artifact/s you discuss do not have to be representations of the Holocaust as long as you use theories of memory in your discussion, e.g. you could discuss the collective memory of the GDR in recent memoirs of East German childhood or the use of the (male) Jewish body as a (counter-)memory artifact in the Zionist ideal of the Muskeljude.

Language Use
We will speak both English and German in class. Generally, if the readings are in German, the language of our discussion will be German, if readings were in English we will speak English. But you may use either language in any class.

SEMINARPLAN

I. MEMORY & TRAUMA

Introduction


Session 2  Aleida Assmann “Gedächtnis als Leitbegriff der Kulturwissenschaften,”
Individual Memory & Trauma

Session 3 Anne Rothe (2003) “Trauma and Memory” Constructing Memory in/through Contemporary German Literature, PhD. Diss UCLA, pp. 90-139.

Session 4 Anne Rothe (2003) “(Traumatic) Memory and Language” Constructing Memory in/through Contemporary German Literature, PhD. Diss UCLA, pp. 140-177.

Collective Memory


Session 6 Anne Rothe (2003) “Collective Memory” Constructing Memory in/through Contemporary German Literature, PhD. Diss UCLA, pp. 224-244.


Collective Trauma & Trauma Culture


Anne Rothe “Introduction: Victim Culture” and “Conclusion: Trauma
Culture and Victimhood” A. Rothe “Ich erlaube ihr nicht, den Opferstatus für sich zu beanspruchen” – The Competition for Victim Status in Erica Fischer’s *Aimée und Jaguar*, unpubl. manuscript, pp. 1-3, 8-10.


**Cultural Artifacts as Memory Media**


**II. HOLOCAUST REPRESENTATION**

**Representation “after Auschwitz”**


**TV**


Film

Anton Kaes (1990) “History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination” History and Memory 2:1, pp. 111-129.

Session 16 Bernd Eichinger, Der Untergang

Session 17 Eli Cohen, Ha kayts shel Aviya (The Summer of Aviya)
Eli Cohen, Ets ha-domin tafus (Under the Domin Tree)
Anne Rothe, “Delusional Holocaust Memories and their Intra- and Intergenerational Transmission in Eli Cohen’s Film Adaptation of Gila Almagor’s (Post)Holocaust Texts The Summer of Aviya and Under the Domin Tree,” International Conference “Trajectories of Memory: Intergenerational Representations of the Holocaust in History and the Arts” Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH (March 2006)

Session 18 Eitan Fox, La-Lechet al ha-maym (Walk on Water)

Oral Testimonies

Session 19 Guest Speaker: Holocaust Survivor George Vine

Session 20 James Young (1990) “Holocaust Video and Cinematic Testimony” J.
Memos


Session 22 Ruth Klüger, weiter leben


Session 23 Willy Schumann, Being Present. Growing Up in Hitler’s Germany.

Fiction

Session 24 Peter Weiss, Die Ermittlung


Session 25 Benjamin Wilkomirski, Bruchstücke

Session 26  Bernhard Schlink  *Der Vorleser*


**Photography**


**Memorials**


Session 29  Summary session, to be held at my house

=>every student should prepare a 10-15-minute presentation (and handout) with the core ideas of their research paper (handout also needs to include a bibliography of three to five additional articles or book chapters serving as resources for paper and presentation)