

Catastrophe and Collective Memory
Fall 2016
Department of Sociology
Rutgers University (16:920:570)
Syllabus

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Overview:

This seminar takes up the epistemological challenge of how sociologists might most wisely study catastrophe and disaster given their variability and complexity. At the heart of this project is an intellectual tension between the extraordinary, unprecedented, and un-patterned, which commonly characterize catastrophes and disasters, and a commitment in many of the social sciences to analyze everyday structures, processes and contexts, aiming to generalize and theorize empirical findings. Acknowledging that some instances of change and disruption common to catastrophes are also seemingly increasingly routinized (e.g., diaspora/resettlement), the seminar aims to develop a conceptually rigorous and empirically informed set of research tools for how best to study catastrophe.

One key approach to studying catastrophe relies on the literature on collective or social memory—how groups of people remember the past in the present for some future purpose(s). Whether the unit of analysis is global, national, or collective, people recall the past as members of various groups and those recollections are shaped by social and cultural formations. Collective memory touches upon the content of recollection—what is remembered, forgotten and avoided as well as the documentation and evidence of memory—archives, memorials, and commemoration. As this area of inquiry has its beginnings before the study of catastrophe and disaster emerges as a distinct field, we begin our readings with some of these earlier texts.

In substantive terms, the seminar is organized along multiple themes and foci, which inform each other. We consider questions of conceptualization of disaster, catastrophe; trauma and its aftermath; victim, perpetrator and witness; and collective and social memory as well as commemoration. We investigate questions of evidence and archives, and how to assess what counts and what is missing. We also grapple with the relationship between human rights abuses and what kinds of evidence matters, focusing on ideas of truth, reconciliation and justice. Lastly questions of commemoration and memorialization inform our study how catastrophe is recalled locally, nationally and transnationally.

The seminar aims to provide the analytic tools for you to pursue your own well-defined research interests within these parameters. We have 11 weeks of common readings, and two weeks of workshopping people's research projects. In practice what this means is for eight of the 11 weeks of assigned readings, everyone will submit a 2 – 3 page reading memo (double-spaced) online by Monday noon that stresses the ideas that are

most exciting and productive, and identifies the questions, problems, gaps, and sources of confusion in the texts. Every week one person will co-facilitate class discussion. On November 8th everyone will give preliminary presentations on their papers in progress, having posted a 2 – 3 page overview on November 7th by 9 a.m. We will workshop final papers in-progress on December 6th. All term papers are due on December 16th by 5 p.m. The quality of your weekly reading memos, contributions to seminar discussions, and your final paper each carry equal weight in determining your final grade. I reserve the right to rebalance this three-part grading schema in your favor. Except under the most unusual of circumstances, late papers will not be accepted and incomplete grades will not be given. Final grades will be calculated based on the work completed during the regularly scheduled term.

Expressed in somewhat different terms, the learning goals for this seminar are: 1) Conceptualize key ideas including catastrophe, disaster, trauma, collective memory, social memory and forgetting, witness, survivor and perpetrator. 2) Understand the epistemological tensions presented by studies of catastrophe and disaster on the one hand, and more ordinary, routine, and predictable events on the other. 3) Identify the major intellectual trends in memory studies, and recognize the field's relative strengths and weaknesses. 4) Assess the merits of the literature on trauma and consider how it has shaped our knowledge of catastrophe, and vice versa. 5) Critically review the "work" victim, perpetrator, witness, and bystander do in various texts. 6) Critically assess the role of empirical evidence including questions of how reliability and validity inform our knowledge of catastrophe and disaster. 7) Identify how ideas of social justice and reconciliation shape the scholarship on catastrophe, and conversely how ideas of catastrophe define knowledge about social justice and reconciliation.

This seminar strives to create and sustain an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all its configurations, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, language, (dis)ability, region/country of origin, and political orientation. Moreover, we recognize the importance of varied, sometimes conflicting theoretical and methodological perspectives, and aim to foster an atmosphere of constructive intellectual exchange. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles, and have instituted clear and respectful procedures to respond to any and all grievances.

All work for this course must adhere to the specific practices and ethos of the University's policy on academic integrity, which should be read at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>. Full compliance with the academic integrity policy is mandatory.

Readings:

The books listed below are available for purchase at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore in New Brunswick. All other articles and chapters are posted on the seminar's Sakai website.

Erll, Astrid. 2011 [2005]. *Memory in Culture*. Translated by Sara B. Young. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fassin, Didier and Richard Rechtman. 2009 [2007]. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*. Translated by Rachel Gomme. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub, M.D. 1992. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York and London: Routledge (selections).

Jelin, Elizabeth. 2003. *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*. Translated by Judy Rein and Marcial Godoy-Anativia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Malkki, Liisa H. 2015. *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.

Wieviorka, Annette. 2006 [1998]. *The Era of the Witness*. Translated by Jared Stark. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.

Weekly Schedule:

September 6 Seminar Overview and Syllabus Review

September 13 Collective Memory, Social Memory: Foundations and Themes

Hallbwachs, Maurice. 1992. Pp. 41-53 in *On Collective Memory*. Lewis Coser, ed. and trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nora, Pierre. 1989. "Between Memory and History." *Representations* 26:7-24.

Erl, Astrid. 2011. *Memory in Culture*, Chapters 1 – 4 and 7.

Confino, Alon. 1997. "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method." *American Historical Review* 102:1386-403.

Olick, Jeffrey K. and Joyce Robbins. 1998. "Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24:105-40. (recommended)

Baehr, Peter. 2002. "Identifying the Unprecedented: Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Critique of Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 67:804-31. (supplementary)

September 20 Memory and the Nation State

Jelin, Elizabeth. 2003. *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*.

Sarkar, Mahua. 2015. "Changing Together, Changing Apart: Urban Muslim and Hindu Women in Pre-Partition Bengal." *History & Memory* 27:5-42.

September 20, continued

Greenberg, Jonathan D. 2005. "Generations of Memory: Remembering Partition in India/Pakistan and Israel/Palestine." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25:89-110.

September 27 Witness and Testimony

Wieviorka, Annette. 2006 [1998]. *The Era of the Witness*.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub, M.D. 1992. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. (selection tba)

Stein, Arlene. 2014. *Reluctant Witnesses: Survivors, Their Children, and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness*. New York: Oxford University Press. (recommended)

October 4 Conceptualizing Victimhood and Trauma

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma." Pp. 1-30 in Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hirsch, Marianne. 2008. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29:103-28.

Kidron, Carol A. 2004. "Surviving a Distant Past: A Case Study of the Cultural Construction of Trauma Descendant Identity." *Ethos* 31: 513-44.

Eyerman, Ron. 2004. "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity." Pp. 60-111 in Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

October 11 Whose Narrative, Whose Voice?

Caruth, Cathy. 1996. "Introduction: Wound and Voice." Pp. 1-9 in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kleinman, Arthur and Joan Kleinman. 1997. "The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times." Pp. 1-23 in Kleinman, Arthur, Veena Das and Margaret Lock, eds. *Social Suffering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

October 11, continued

Yaeger, Patricia. 2002. "Consuming Trauma; Or the Pleasures of Merely Circulating." Pp. 25-51 in Miller, Nancy K. and Jason Tougaw, eds. *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Cvetkovich, Ann. 2003. *Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. (selection tba)

October 11, continued

Giesen, Bernard. 2004. "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity." Pp. 112-54 in Alexander, Jeffrey, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

October 18 Disaster Research—Natural and/or Social

Erikson, Kai. 1996. "Notes on Trauma and Community." Pp. 183-99 in Cathy Caruth, ed. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

_____. 2006. "Disaster, Environment and Social Order: Reflections on Katrina." Gaylord Nelson Retrospective Lecture Series.

Vaughan, Diane. 2004. "Theorizing Disaster: Analogy, Historical Ethnography, and the Challenger Accident." *Ethnography* 5:315-47.

Clarke, Lee. 2008. "Possibilistic Thinking: A New Conceptual Tool for Thinking about Extreme Events." *Social Research* 75:669-90.

Clark, Nigel, Vasudha Chhotray, and Roger Few. 2013. "Global Justice and Disasters." *The Geographical Journal* 179:105-13.

Wilson, Geoff A. 2015. "Community Resilience and Social Memory." *Environmental Values* 24:227-57.

Olick, Jeffrey K. 2016. "The Poverty of Resilience: On Memory, Meaning, and Well-being." *Memory Studies* 9:315-24.

Cerulo, Karen A. 2006. *Never Saw It Coming: Cultural Challenges to Envisioning the Worst*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Koslov, Liz. 2016. "The Case for Retreat." *Public Culture* 28:359-87. (supplementary)

October 25 Trauma, Victimhood Rethought

Fassin, Didier and Richard Rechtman. 2009. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*.

November 1 Evidence, Silence and Erasure

Wajnryb, Ruth. 1999. "The Holocaust as Unspeakable: Public Ritual versus Private Hell," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*: 20:81-93.

Kirli, Biray Kouuoglu. 2005. "Forgetting the Smyrna Fire." *History Workshop Journal Issue* 60: 25-44.

Halilovich, Ariz. 2014. "Reclaiming Erased Lives: Archives, Records and Memories in Post-War Bosnia and the Bosnian Diaspora." *Arch Sci* 14:231-47.

Auslander, Leora. 2010. "Archiving a Life: Post-Shoah Paradoxes of Memory Legacies." Pp. 127-46 in *Unsettling Histories*. Alf Lütke and Sebastien Jobs, eds. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Menalansan, Martin F. IV. 2014. "The 'Stuff' of Archives: Mess, Migration, and Queer Lives." *Radical History Review* 120:94-107.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. 2006. *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press. (supplementary)

Crane, Susan A. 2008. "Choosing Not to Look: Representation, Repatriation, and Holocaust Atrocity Photography." *History and Theory* 47:309-30. (supplementary)

November 8 Preliminary Presentations of Final Projects
Post a 2-3 page overview by November 7th, 9 a.m.

November 15 Objects, Museums, Commemoration

Phillips, Adam. 2005. "The Forgetting Museum." *Index on Censorship* 2:34-7.

Williams, Paul. 2003. "The Atrocity Exhibition: Touring Cambodian Genocide Memorials." Pp. 197-214 in Smith, Anna and Lydia Wevers, eds. *On Display: Essays in Cultural Tourism*. Wellington: Victoria University Press & Fergus Barrowman.

Coombes, Annie E. 2003. "District Six: The Archaeology of Memory." Pp. 116-48 in *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Brower, Benjamin C. 1999. "The Preserving Machine: The 'New' Museum and Working through Trauma--*The Musée Mémorial pour la Paix of Caen*." *Memory and History* 11:77-103.

November 15, continued

Sturken, Marita. 2016. "The Objects that Lived: The 9/11 Museum and Material Transformation." *Memory Studies* 9:13-26.

Zerubavel, Yael. 2014. "'Numerical Commemoration' and the Challenges of Collective Remembrance in Israel." *History and Memory* 26:5-30.

November 22 N.B. No class meeting (Thursday class day at Rutgers University)

November 29 Care and Humanitarianism

Malkki, Liisa H. 2015. *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism*.

Feldman, Ilana. 2015. "Looking for Humanitarian Purpose: Endurance and the Value of Lives in a Palestinian Refugee Camp." *Public Culture* 27:427-47.

December 6 Workshop Final Papers
 Guidelines forthcoming

December 13 Transitional Justice

Bar-On, Dan and Saliba Sarsar, 2004. "Bridging the Unbridgeable: The Holocaust and Al-Nakba," *Palestine-Israel Journal* 11:63-70.

Bevernage, Berber. 2010. "Writing the Past Out of the Present: History and the Politics of Time in Transitional Justice." *History Workshop Journal* 69:111-31.

Savelsberg, Joachim J. and Hollie Nyseth Brehm. 2015. "Representing Human Rights Violations in Darfur: Global Justice, National Distinctions." *American Journal of Sociology* 121:564-603.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2014. "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Bakiner, Onur. 2015. "One Truth Among Others? Truth Commissions' Struggle for Truth and Memory." *Memory Studies* 8:345-60.

December 15 Final Papers Due

