



## trauma:technology:memory

**MEDIA STUDIES 9220** ♦ Professor Tim Blackmore

**PLACE AND TIME: STAGING BUILDING ROOM 250, 9:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M. TUESDAY MORNINGS**

**TECHNOLOGY**, our memory bank, has only ever grown in scope, power, and speed. Yet we seem to fear that we have lost sensibilities, authenticity, we once had—the future isn't what it used to be. Etched in stone, pulp, silicon, or nanostrips, we record memories in an attempt to make human life last longer, seem more valuable. The encroaching speed machine that puts mass storage and femtosecond information retrieval within easy industrialized reach has done nothing to ameliorate our terror of forgetting. At the intersection of trauma and memory is a crisis over interpretation: what the human community may most need to remember—events that happened in disaster—are those circumstances about which we may have no reliable records. *Remember Forever* traces many of ways that technology can aid, harm, skew, and drive the process of remembering cultural and personal anguish. We must be suspicious about memory and crisis, and yet we cannot afford to leave disaster alone. The grimmer the event, the more we work at extracting the mystery and poison from its occurrence. This course uses documentary, fiction, film, and graphic texts in an attempt to understand what is at work when we say about an event that it is something we will “remember forever.”

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- \* To study the hermeneutics of interpreting texts wedged apparently permanently open;
- \* To explore various claims stakeholders make about the intractability of history;
- \* To consider the ways in which we may define progress, and the sequelae to those definitions;
- \* To descend into a maelstrom of disasters (personal, national, ecological, popular) and resurface **together**, alive and refreshed, by golly, and;
- \* Above all: to privilege students' commentaries concerning texts for which there may yet exist no scholarly resources, to strengthen students' writing and speaking, and to sidestep the many tricks and traps of high theory that so often obscure our own thoughts, modest as they may be.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS, BUT FIRST, A NOTE ABOUT READINGS:**

Grad school seems to be the place we discover that there's no longer pleasure in reading, that thinking must occur at an even faster, higher pace than it has before. Here the reassurance that it's all about exegesis fades and, as Prufrock knows, one hears “voices dying with a dying fall,” about the joy of actually discovering something for one's self. Here there is no balm in Gilead, no happy forgetfulness in junk culture, for junk culture is now the stuff of doctorates. Well, **nonsense!** If this is going to be all grim and insufferable, **let's not do it that way. We shall try other methods!**

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**OUR ABILITY TO ACTUALLY DO THE READING:** I know, **believe me**, how high the demands are on you all. I have organized the readings so that two heavy things don't follow one after the other. I have interposed film where I thought you would need time to prepare for other things, accepting that (for some *bizarre* reason) this probably isn't the only course you're taking, and that you're probably also teaching. So here's the deal: each week, read at least a little something. There are always small things to see or read. I need you to have done the readings (ideally, or at least give it your best shot) **by** each class. Because this is a seminar class, your participation is crucial. Without you, this class will be miserable, if not wretched. We may cut back the work load as the term progresses, but no matter what, read whatever it is, then come and discuss.

*Spirited Away, Miyazaki, Hayao*

Isn't this a good time to take a breath and relax?

(I thought so, too.)

**GENERAL WRITING:** There will be short generally bi-weekly writing assignments (500-word responses to the week's text[s]). The main essay (or project) will be of **your own design and about your own topic**. This course can be formed to suit your needs, so think about what you'd like to do and don't worry so much about what you think I want you to do.

**LOGS:** The logs are a crucial part of 9220, which is why they're worth 35% of the total mark (note that each log **is not worth** a portion of the grade). In them you can pursue topics that may be germane to you alone, explore the texts in a variety of ways, but most of all, develop a sense of voice and personal style that is relaxed and powerful. Exemplary logs will be thoughtful, probing, and (even!) funny, witty, or full of brains on toast. (Don't forget about pushing the machine aside, too!)

#### **GRADING:**

**FIVE LOGS** (500-word [or more, as the mood takes you] freely written responses to text and issues):

**NOTE:** no log is worth a particular grade. For you to receive a final grade, you must hand in all the logs. One log is not worth 7% etc. If you're not clear on this, ask me. Each log must be handed in sequentially. I won't take more than one log at a time, and I won't take them all in the last five weeks of term. I add this because some previous bagels have tried this. Yeesh. **35%**

**EARLY SHORT PAPER** (2-3 page souvenir): **15%**

**SEMINAR PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE:** **15%** (Is a bum in a seat worth something?)

**FINAL PROJECT:** **35%** (Includes a one-page 200-word proposal, do **not** get all strung out about this).

#### **STAYING IN TOUCH** (and other mechanical matters):

**HERE I AM IN PERSON:** 441 NCB. Up the back stairs, avoid the Hulk and Spider-Man labs;

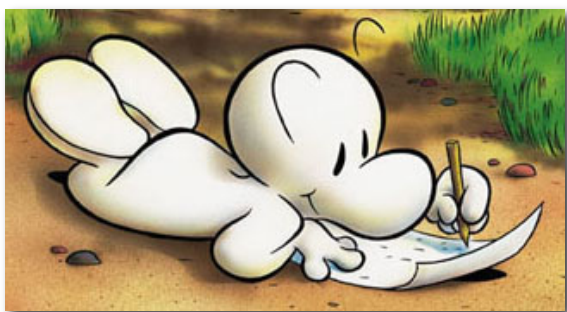
**AND ON EMAIL:** tblackmo@uwo.ca (this is the route of choice);

**OR, YACK, BY PHONE:** (519) 661-2111 ext. 88513 (I often forget to check this).

#### **OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY: 11:45-1:00, WEDNESDAY: 11:00-1:00**

Look, I run an open office. That means *everybody* is welcome as long as I'm there. If the door is closed, I'm probably betting furiously on eBay or buying books online (we live in London). **Please come** and hang out, show us your wild side (or sites), meet the other tea-drinkers lurking about, be dazzled by the amazing stories you will hear (sky-diving air-traffic controllers, sushi chefs who draw [not simultaneously], head cheeses of non-existent blintz colonies, Hiro Protagonist's avatar): you don't have to have "a problem" to come and visit in the office. Use the office hours as a chance to meet me, chat, or work out course issues. Everybody is welcome, you **don't** need to be a genius to have good ideas.

If you're feeling shy, you can always come and sit on the shelves, and just listen. You'll find undergrads, overgrads, zerodegreegrads of all sorts—I expect students to help and support each other, not to waste any energy in competition. If none of these times are good, we can make an appointment for another time. Don't let inconvenience put you off from getting in touch, or approaching me about course issues.



We can **always** meet in private if you're feeling shy. And! If there's something bugging you, toss a note in a bottle, hang a flag out the window, but above all, never<sup>never</sup> suffer in silence!! Be **strong**, be **bold**, join the **COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND!**  
www.cbldf.org



DATE	TOPIC	TEXT	DUE
JAN. 8	Remembering that we'll be okay. Better than!		
JAN. 15	<b>THE ATROCITY OF MAGIC:</b> Seeing through the mirrors in everyone's heads, looking into the depths	O'Brien, <i>Lake of the Woods</i> , Sturken Intro	Log 1
JAN. 22	<b>THEME PARKS OF THE FUTURE PAST:</b> When we come to destroy the future, let it be entertaining, and not without a decent sense of irony	Shapton <i>Important Artifacts</i> , Saunders "CivilWarLand," Sturken 2	
JAN. 29	<b>GUIDED BOMB UNIT:</b> Struggling in the cockpit over the Norden bombsight—the fever of just cause and rage over visions of what might have been.	Fussell, Robinson, Bataille, Dower, Anderson, Dickey, <i>Testament</i> , Sturken 3, Virilio 4, Kessel	Log 2
FEB. 5	<b>SYMPHONIC OUTRAGE AND ACCEPTABLE HEROES:</b> the sounds of art in national forgetting.	Banks, <i>Look to Windward</i> , Haldeman "Time Lapse"	
FEB. 12	<b>PHANTOMS IN OUR OWN MINDS:</b> Who got in there and started pulling out the wires, the antiques from the future we haven't yet had? Who's responsible?	<i>Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence</i> , <i>Spirited Away</i> , <i>Code 46</i> , Sturken 4,	Souvenir
FEB. 26	<b>MIND IS ITS OWN PLACE:</b> until reality butts in...	Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> , <i>Thin Blue Line</i> , Virilio 13 & 14	
MAR. 5	<b>LOOPS AROUND OUR LIVES:</b> The tracery of printing circuit memories into our lives; the happy potential for yet more eternal sunshine; (yet more) cyber-tropes and the speed of mind at death.	Haldeman "Mind," Budrys "The Price," Knight "Life," Varley "Overdrawn," Dick "I Hope," Crowley, Virilio 6 & 7	Log 3
MAR. 12	<b>TRANSFERENCE IN TRANSIT:</b> Denial will carry you a long way, maybe all the way. Maybe.	<i>Gateway</i> , <i>Dark City</i> , <i>Northfork</i>	Log 4
MAR. 19	<b>GOOD LORD, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE KIDS??</b> What kind of parent is the culture that forgets its kids, and can't even keep them in the jolly jumper? Gaslighting moms and dads—bad cultural news.	Ellison "Jeffy," <i>Forgotten</i> , <i>Flight Plan</i> , <i>Official Story</i> , Goonan "Bride," Sturken 5, Virilio 11	Log 5
MAR. 26	<b>NOSTALGIA ISN'T WHAT IT WANTS TO BE:</b> You can go and look, but in the end, better to stay home. Open a can of the future and close the box of the past.	Chris Ware, <i>Jimmy Corrigan</i> , <i>Smartest Kid on Earth</i>	
APR. 2	<b>CREATING NEW WORLDS OF CATASTROPHE:</b> Print through—the analogue nightmare of transmissible death imprints, the passing across of unbearable burdens; searching for the creation of a new world (forget this old thing, we've had it for years!).	Shepard "Delta Sly Honey" Haldeman "Summer's Lease," Ellison "Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes," Virilio 10,	
APR. 9	<b>INSCRIPTIONS AND HOPE:</b> Ancient solutions for remembering what's (probably) important; revising the past one last time in order to get the future right.	<i>The Pillow Book</i> , <i>Men With Guns</i> , Sturken 6	Paper

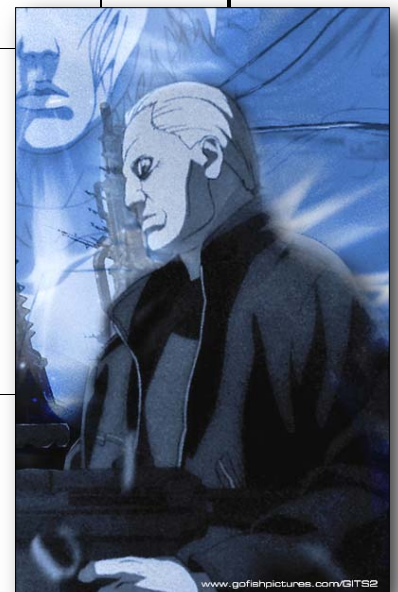
#### COURSE TEXTS

Iain Banks, *Look to Windward*  
 Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*  
 Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*  
 Frederik Pohl, *Gateway*  
 Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property...*  
 Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories*  
 Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb*  
 Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan, Smartest Kid on Earth*  
 MS 9220: course pack

*Code 46*, dir. Michael Winterbottom  
*Dark City*, dir. Alex Proyas (any version)  
*Flightplan*, dir. Robert Schwentke  
*The Forgotten*, dir. Joseph Ruben  
*Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, d. Oshii, Mamoru  
*Men with Guns*, dir. John Sayles  
*Northfork*, dir. the Polish Brothers  
*Official Story*, dir. Luis Puenzo  
*The Pillow Book*, dir. Peter Greenaway  
*Spirited Away*, dir. Miyazaki, Hayao  
*Testament*, dir. Lynne Littman  
*The Thin Blue Line*, dir. Errol Morris

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
 places, and names, and where it was you meant  
 to travel. None of these will bring disaster.  
 —Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art."

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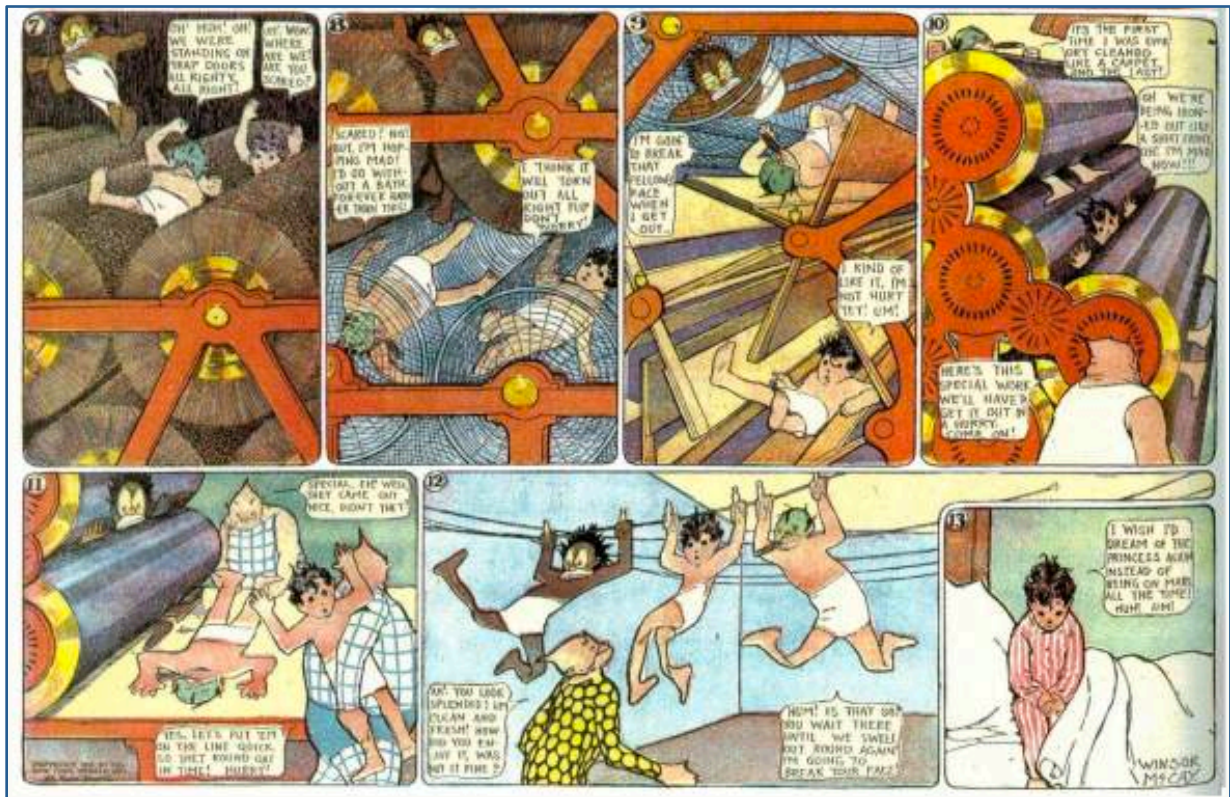


## STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC OFFENCES

The statement: "Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

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