



trauma:technology:memory

MEDIA STUDIES 9220b, WINTER 2018, Dr. Tim Blackmore, FNB 4070, Thursday 9-11:50 a.m.

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!**

MS9220: REMEMBER FOREVER



Spirited Away, Miyazaki, Hayao

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 **by** each class. Because this is a seminar class, your participation is crucial. Without you, this class will be miserable. We may cut back the work load as the term progresses, but no matter what, read, then come and discuss.

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, or as a batch in the last 5 weeks of term. **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):

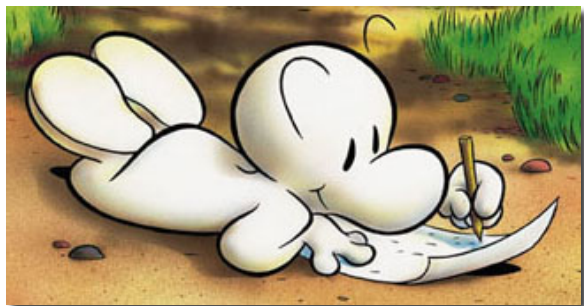
HERE I AM IN PERSON: 4019 FNB: two rights after the elevator;

AND ON EMAIL: tblackmo@uwo.ca (this is the route of choice); **BY PHONE:** (519) 661-2111 ext. 88513

OFFICE HOURS: WEDNESDAY: 12:30-1:30, **THURSDAY:** 12:30-2:30

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 (bookstores? I wish). **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 or campus or life 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.



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Bone, by Jeff Smith

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

(I thought so, too.)

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^{never} suffer in silence!! Be **strong**, be **bold**, join the **COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND!**
www.cbldf.org



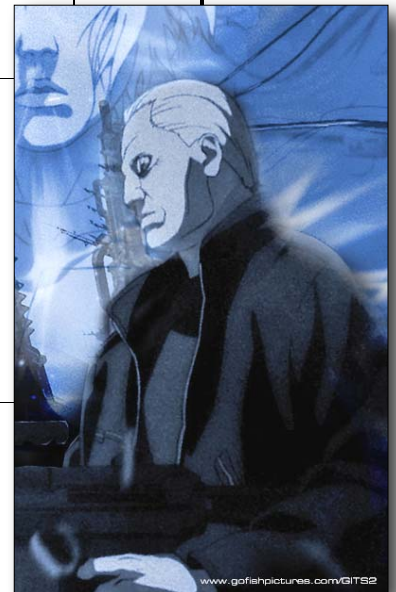
Solaris, Tarkovsky

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT | DUE |
|--|--|---|----------|
| JAN. 11 | Remembering that we'll be okay. | | |
| JAN. 18 | THE ATROCITY OF MAGIC: Seeing through the mirrors in everyone's heads, looking into the depths | O'Brien, <i>Lake of the Woods</i> , Sturken Intro, Caruth Intro, Lifton (CC) | Log 1 |
| JAN. 25 | THEME PARKS OF THE FUTURE PAST: When we come to destroy the future, let it be entertaining, and not without a decent sense of irony | <i>Solaris</i> , Saunders "CivilWarLand," Sturken 2, Jelin Intro, 1, 2 | |
| FEB. 1 | GUIDED BOMB UNIT: 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>In This Corner...</i> , Sturken 3, Kessel, Blank (CC) | Log 2 |
| FEB. 8 | SYMPHONIC OUTRAGE AND ACCEPTABLE HEROES: the sounds of art in national forgetting. | Banks, <i>Look to Windward</i> , Haldeman "Time Lapse" Virilio 1 | |
| FEB. 15 | PHANTOMS IN OUR OWN MINDS: Who got in there and started pulling out the wires, the antiques from the future we haven't yet had? Someone has to be responsible. | <i>Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence</i> , <i>Spirited Away</i> , Sturken 4, Virilio 2 | Souvenir |
| FEBRUARY 18-23 READING W(H)EEEEEEEEEE!(K) | | | |
| MAR. 1 | PLAYING WITH FIRE: It is and is not there, always. | Shapton, Jelin 4, NIA Team (CC), Herman (CC) | |
| MAR. 8 | LOOPS AROUND OUR LIVES: 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 3 | Log 3 |
| MAR. 15 | TRANSFERENCE IN TRANSIT: Denial will carry you a long way, maybe all the way. Maybe. | <i>Dark City</i> , Bechdel, Jelin 3 | Log 4 |
| MAR. 22 | MOM, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE KIDS? 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 "Jeffty," <i>Arrival</i> , <i>Advantageous</i> , <i>Official Story</i> , Goonan "Bride," Sturken 5, Jelin 6 | Log 5 |
| MAR. 29 | NOSTALGIA ISN'T WHAT IT WANTS TO BE: 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> , Van der Kolk (CC) | |
| APR. 5 | CREATING NEW WORLDS OF CATASTROPHE: Print through—the analog 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 3, Felman (CC) | |
| APR. 12 | INSCRIPTIONS AND HOPE: Ancient solutions for remembering what's (probably) important; revising the past one last time in order to get the future right. | <i>Lonestar</i> , Sturken 6 | Paper |

COURSE TEXTS

Iain Banks, *Look to Windward*
 Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*
 Cathy Caruth, *Listening to Trauma* (CC)
 Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*
 Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*
 Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property...*
 Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories*
 Paul Virilio, *The Great Accelerator*
 Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan, Smartest Kid on Earth*
 MS 9220: course pack

About Time, dir. Richard Curtis
Advantageous, dir. Jennifer Phang
Arrival, dir. Gilles Villeneuve
Dark City, dir. Alex Proyas (any version)
Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence, dir. Oshii, Mamoru
In This Corner of the World, dir. Katabuchi, Sunao
Lonestar, dir. John Sayles
Official Story, dir. Luis Puenzo
Solaris, dir. Andrei Tarkovsky
Spirited Away, dir. Miyazaki, Hiyao
The Thin Blue Line, dir. Errol Morris



Batou, Oshii, Mamoru

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC OFFENCES

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/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

SUPPORT SERVICES

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Ah look, space for poetry! (There's always room for poetry!)

One Art

by Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

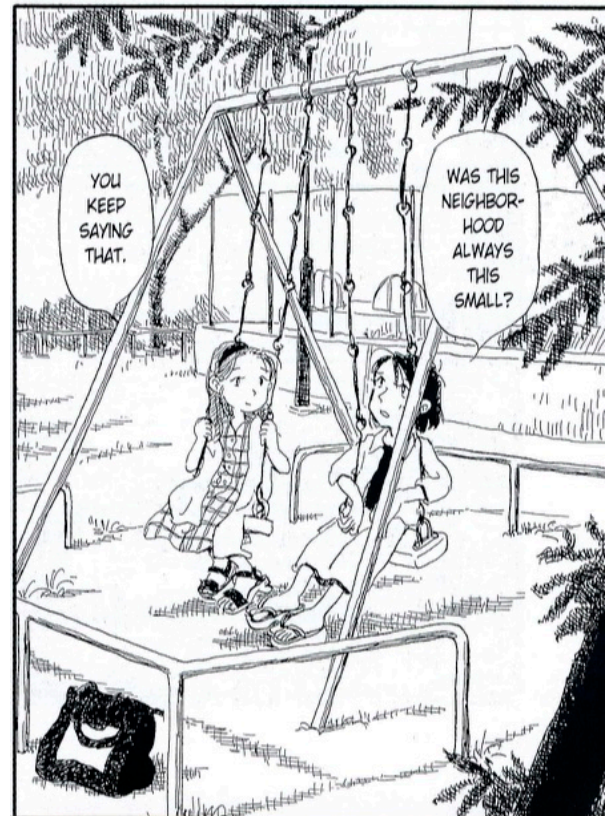
Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

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

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.



Art by Fumiyo Kouno