



## trauma:technology:memory

MEDIA STUDIES 9220A, Fall 2022, Dr. Tim Blackmore, FNB 4110, Monday 1:30-4:20 p.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!**



**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).

**A SMALL THING YOU'LL BRING US...**but "near-zero" preparation is what I'm after. I'll describe this but no freaking out allowed.

**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: MONDAY:**12:30-1:30, **WEDNESDAY:** 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.



Bone, by Jeff Smith

**MS9220: REMEMBER FOREVER**

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!!

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT	DUE
SEP. 12	Remembering to take a deep breath, right?		
SEP. 19	<b>THE MONSTER OF PLACE</b> What hold does place have; what do we give it, what do we have over it?	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> <i>Only Lovers Left Alive</i> (CR) Sturken Intro and pp.19-26, 42-3	Log 1
SEP. 26	<b>REPETITION AGAIN AGAIN</b> Every day is Groundhog Day in Memoryworld™	<i>Map of Tiny Perfect</i> (P) <i>Thin Blue Line</i> (CR) P.k. Dick "I Hope" (CK) Sturken 2	
OCT. 3	<b>MEMORY THEATER</b> Who gets to play director with our memories?	O'Brien, <i>In the Lake</i> <i>Official Story</i> (CR) Sturken 3	Log 2
OCT. 17	<b>SENSIBILITY</b> The sense(s) of recognition and understanding	<i>Mostly Martha</i> (CR) Jemisin "Cuisine" (CK) Crowley "Snow" (CK)	
OCT. 24	<b>THE BURDEN OF PROOF IN OBJECTS</b> Undeniable evidence something once was	Shapton, <i>Artifacts</i> <i>Lonestar</i> (CR) Saunders, "Civilwarland" Sturken 4	Souvenir
<b>OCT.31-NOV. 6 Reading wheeee</b>			
NOV. 7	<b>DISCOVERY, RECOVERY, UNCOVERY</b> Clarification through persistence	Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> <i>Hugo</i> (CR) Haldeman, "Mind" (CK)	
NOV. 14	<b>THE RIGHT—AND WRONG—TO FORGET</b> Opposite sides fight to a dead silence	Dower (all in CK) Fussell Bataille Robinson Anderson	Log 3
NOV. 21	<b>PHANTOMS IN OUR OWN MINDS</b> Exomemory and the trials of backup	Varley, "Overdrawn" (CK) <i>Ghost in the Shell 2</i> (CR) Goonan "Bride" Sturken 6	Log 4
NOV. 28	<b>RETURNS</b> Finding ways through, if not redemption	Thompson, <i>Blankets</i> 'Round Midnight (CR) Kessel, "Escape" (CK)	Log 5
DEC. 5	<b>READ THE INSCRIPTION, INSTRUCTION</b> The directions to future memories	<i>Arrival</i> (CR) Knight "Life"	Paper
	<b>P:</b> Prime <b>CR:</b> Criterion via Weldon <b>NX:</b> Netfligz <b>CK:</b> Course Kit		
<b>COURSE TEXTS</b> Alison Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> Tim O'Brien, <i>In the Lake of the Woods</i> Leanne Shapton, <i>Important Artifacts and Personal Property...</i> Marita Sturken, <i>Tangled Memories</i> Craig Thompson, <i>Blankets</i> MS 9220: course pack		<b>FILM</b> <i>Arrival</i> , Gilles Villeneuve <i>Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence</i> , Oshii, Mamoru <i>Hugo</i> , Martin Scorsese <i>Lonestar</i> , John Sayles <i>Mostly Martha</i> , Sandra Nettelbeck <i>Official Story</i> , Luis Puenzo <i>Only Lovers Left Alive</i> , Jim Jarmusch <i>'Round Midnight</i> , Bertrand Tavernier <i>The Thin Blue Line</i> , Errol Morris	

**ABOUT THOSE LOGS...**Logs are all about relaxation and thought. I will send out thoughts and ideas, places you might start, use them or toss them, think about the text, then just start writing. Let your writing go for about 500 words (it can be more). Your direction is fine—the log suggestions aren't to be answered or "proven."

**A LOG IS NOT AN ESSAY.** No formal structure is needed. I don't correct grammar or spelling, although I would like to see clean documents. Get used to rereading the final paper so you've checked it over for spelling and obvious problems.



### **THE WHOLE THING ABOUT**

**LOGS** is not to conserve time or engage in word or sound bites, but to let time out, let the clock wind down, let the language and thoughts flow, let the connections make connections. People often note "I'm on a tangent now," but as far as I'm concerned, in logs there are no tangents. Follow the tangents, and then the tangents that spring from them.

### **SO NOW YOU'RE GOING TO BE ALL NERVOUS**

about trying to give me what you think I want; it's such a game to figure out what the professor wants, eh? How tiresome! Let's see if we can avoid that. Remember that the logs will only ever have two readers: you, and me. So you can address me directly, write to me as if you were writing a letter: "Well Tim, I saw \_\_\_\_ and it made me think of \_\_\_\_ that reminded me of...."

### **IN THE LOGS, IT'S YOU.**

There's no proving anything here. In the logs, you decide what's right and wrong. It doesn't matter what I think about it, or whether I agree. These aren't my logs, they're yours. Instead, it's about you getting out your voice, getting hold of the way you write, the way you think, and then going as deeply as possible with those thoughts, following them to their underground labyrinths.

**THE HARDEST THING ABOUT LOGS IS** the backspace key. You sit there and start writing, and then look at it, wonder if it's okay, and the deleting begins. But why? Write a couple of pages, be generous! Words are cheap (they say—whoever "they" are). So spend some. Don't look back and don't delete. And if you can't keep your hand off the delete key, then write by hand. Some people love the process of writing with pen on rich paper.

**THE LOGS AREN'T INDIVIDUALLY WORTH A GRADE.** Somewhere in the term I collect all the logs and grade them. **PLEASE KEEP ALL THOSE LOGS I HAND BACK!** What I'm looking for is not a particular thing—it'll be the whole arc you've drawn from the first logs, which may be tentative and worried, to the last, more comfortably written logs.

Art by Ernest Shepard

## NOTES FROM THE DEAN'S OFFICE

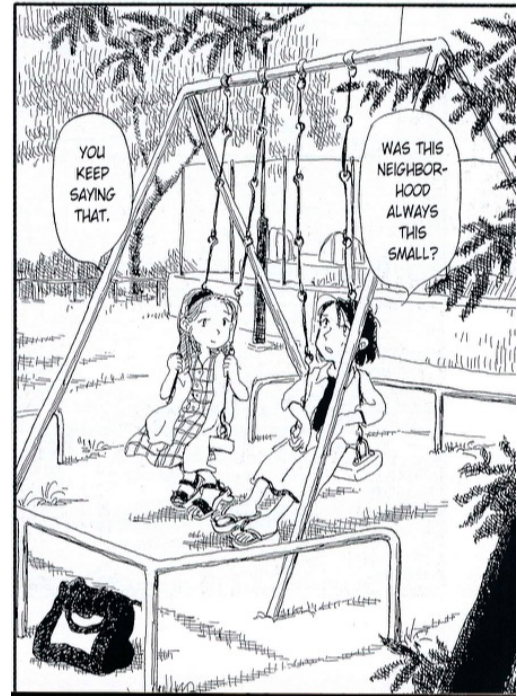
### Health/Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwo.com/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.



Art by Fumiyo Kouno

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

### 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](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

### Enrollment Restrictions

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in FIMS, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.