German 441/CLS 488:
*Trauma, Politics, and the Uses of Memory*
A course co-curated by Professor Anna Parkinson and Dr. Candice Jansen

© Wangechi Mutu, “She’s Got the Whole World in Her Hands” (2015)

Professor. Anna Parkinson  
Fall 2020  
Time: Tu & Th, 1:00-2:20pm  
Online course (@ Zoom via Canvas)

Email: a-parkinson@northwestern.edu  
Online Office Hours: Tu & Th 3:00-4:00 by appointment (via Canvas)  
Office address: 3-321 Kresge Hall

Trauma Studies has become an integral interpretative paradigm for critical theorists, politicians, activists and the popular media alike, where it functions as a diagnostic tool that articulates specific relationships between violence, vulnerability, and late capitalist modernity. Initially embedded in a psychoanalytic framework, the paradigm of trauma attempted to capture the violence wrought by modernity, primarily in the context of twentieth century Western Europe. Seismic upheavals caused by forms of totalitarian government and Western colonial rule, and subsequent attempts of decolonization, ask us to rethink trauma as a decidedly international phenomena and a transmutable category that exceeds national
boundaries, even as it is at times mobilized by the nation state as cause for new acts of violence.

Critical approaches to trauma will be considered through a transnational approach to memory and politics, as we seek to understand the universalist appeal of—and arguments against-- this model of (de)subjectivity in cultural contexts that overlap, contrast, and challenge one another, even when ostensibly speaking the same critical language. We will examine a range of archives and media: film, testimonies, biography, novels, poetry, memorials, and photography.

**Schedule of Classes**

**Week 1, Sept 16: Trauma: European and Anglo-American Frames of Reference**

- Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) ([Online Access NU Search](#))

**Week 2, Sept 23: Trauma and Witnessing: Truth and Reconciliation (TRC in South Africa)**

• *Long Night’s Journey into Day.* New York: Infobase, [2014], c2000. (94 minutes) (F/Accessible to stream online through NU Search)

**Week 3, Sept 30: Trauma and Witnessing: The Era of the Witness and Performance of Memory**

• For the full performance of the *Ubu* play, please search on youtube (88 minutes)

[Extra reading: Bennett, Chp. 1: “On the Subject of Trauma.”)(Available online via NU Search at HATHI Trust]

**Week 4, Oct 7: Monuments and Memorialization: Land- and Timescapes**


[Short film through our library: Andreas Huyssen speaking about memory, trauma, history, and modernity: https://fod-infobase-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=188666# ]

**Week 5, Oct 14: Ontological Exclusions: Flesh, Wounds, and Hauntings**


**Week 6, Oct. 21: Sounds of Post-colonial Rwanda on the Airwaves: Radio Hate (Radio Télévision Libre de Milles Collines), Theater and Film**

- *Hate Radio, Press Kit.* (C)
• Eefje Blankevoort and Anoek Steketee: http://www.loveradio-rwanda.org/episode/1/onair/about
• Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krause (directors). *The Birds are Singing in Kigali*. 2017. (160 minutes) (F/C)


**Week 7, Oct 28: Trauma and Visuality: Image, Identification, and Identity**

• Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (excerpts TBA)

**PAPER ABSTRACT WITH BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE TODAY, Oct. 28th, VIA EMAIL**

**Week 8, Nov. 4: Trauma and Visuality: The Implications of the Moving Image**

• Susan Sontag, *On Regarding the Pain of Others* (excerpts TBA)
• László Nemes, *Son of Saul* (F/C)
• Georges Didi-Huberman, “Images in Spite of All” (CR)

**Week 9, Nov 11: The Avant-Garde of Trauma? Collaboration, Gender, Violence, and Aesthetics**


Week 10: Nov 18: The Future of Trauma? Migration, Postcolonialism, Speculations on History


**FINAL PAPER: DUE MONDAY, DECEMBER 1ST BY 8PM VIA EMAIL

Course Objectives

• Evaluation and critique of prominent critical theories of trauma and memory.
• Articulation of theoretical concepts as they are performed in different media.
• Interpretation of the geopolitical and aesthetic relationship between theory and international memory studies.
• Formulation of an abstract, collation of a bibliography, presentation of your research, discussion of ideas with peers, and the production of either a short independent research paper on a subject of your choice or an annotated bibliography (15 books/articles/films, etc.—only 5 can be taken from class .
Course requirements

Attendance of all class sessions, as well as attentive, lively participation is mandatory. Please carefully prepare all readings for the class before each meeting. Each Monday evening by 11pm, students should submit via email a 1-2 page response paper on the readings for the week. Use this paper to explore ideas related to the course’s central themes and the way in which an article/play/film engages with these concepts; be sure to formulate any critical or open questions you might have of the texts/other media that you think will add to our discussion. In addition to completing these papers, participating in class discussion and facilitating discussion through a 10-15 minute presentation once during the quarter, students are expected to spend the quarter working on an individual research project evaluating and analyzing a central issue or key theme/s of the course.

Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class presentation/leading discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Papers</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract/Paper proposal (1-2 pages)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper (7 pages) OR Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation

Each student will select one class session in which they are responsible for introducing the reading material and facilitating discussion (10-15 minutes). Exhaustive coverage of the day’s reading is not expected, rather the presenter may choose to touch on the main arguments in the reading and/or discuss an aspect of the primary texts for that class; she or he may choose to relate two texts for that day to each other; or, alternatively, he or she may discuss the day’s reading in relation to texts we have already read. Students should focus on reflecting on, analyzing, and posing questions to one or more aspect(s) of their chosen text(s) such that they ideally motivate the day’s discussion.
Independent research projects

The primary goal of the seminar is that students work towards a paper similar in approach and format to an article that would be published in a scholarly journal. This project will be completed in two stages, with the following requirements:

- **An abstract/paper proposal (1-2 pages), due Wednesday, October 28th**, outlining the preliminary area of enquiry for your final paper. Your abstract should include a bibliography of at least eight secondary sources in addition to the primary texts or other artifacts you wish to analyze. In assembling your bibliography, you should use all available databases (see course bibliography) as well as consult with me. Abstracts and bibliographies will be shared with the class.

- **A final paper (7 pages)** that represents original research and that includes the standard apparatus positioning your work in relation to other important research on the topic (footnotes, bibliography, etc.; consult here a recent edition of either the *MLA Handbook* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*). In terms of format, you should aim to produce an essay that looks like a (mini) publication in an appropriate scholarly journal.

**OR**

- **An annotated Bibliography**.

**Final papers/Annotated Bibliographies are due Monday, December 1st, by 8pm, and should be submitted via email.**

Bibliography

As graduate students, you are expected to read extensively on your own. As you begin to think about your papers, you will need to build a bibliography. The following databases are a good place to start searching:

- MLA International Bibliography
- WorldCat (accessible by clicking on “Electronic Sources” on the library home page)