Public Feelings

This course explores the role of feelings within public life and the cultural formations that create affective public spheres. We will consider what it means to talk about “public feelings” given the way that the public/private divide has so often consigned feelings to the private sphere. Using resources from Marxism, critical race theory, psychoanalysis, feminism, and queer studies, we will explore trauma, sentimentality, mourning and melancholy, and cultural memory. Of particular significance will be cultural theories that link individual affective experience to social and historical experience.

The theoretical work will proceed alongside of an investigation of U.S./American history as a trauma history, and we will explore cultural materials that track the public memory of traumas such as slavery, the Holocaust, migration and diaspora, AIDS, and sexual violence. Primary texts such as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Claude Lanzmann’s Shoah will be read alongside of critical readings in order to consider how culture expresses public feelings. We will pay particular attention to the way that debates about cultural and public memory are being transformed in the wake of September 11, which has created an intense popular interest in cultural memory. “Public feelings” will also be a rubric for exploring the intersections of gender, sexuality and constructions of U.S. national identity. Through a particular emphasis on gay, lesbian, and feminist materials, the course will ask how trauma and affect redefine the public spheres of American culture.

Students will have an opportunity to work on areas of their own choosing, and this course will be adaptable to a range of specializations. The course's interdisciplinarity will also be a subject for discussion, as we consider the role of categories such as trauma and feeling within the discipline of literary studies.

Useful books and collections:
Ann Cvetkovich and Ann Pellegrini, eds. “Public Sentiments” The Scholar and the Feminist Online 2:1 www.barnard.edu/sfonline
David Eng and David Kazanjian, eds. Loss
Cathy Davidson, ed, No More Separate Spheres!
Marita Sturken, Tangled Memories
Lauren Berlant, The Queen of America Goes to Washington City
Wendy Brown, States of Injury
Judith Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence
Shirley Samuels, ed. The Culture of Sentiment
Anne Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*
Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*
Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*
Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System*
Kathleen Stewart, *A Space by the Side of the Road*
Nadia Seremetakis, ed. *The Senses Still*
Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*
Craig Calhoun, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*
Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*
Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance*
Cathy Caruth ed, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*
Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony*
Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*
Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*
Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*
Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*

**Books Ordered at Co-Op:**
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
- Monique Truong, *The Book of Salt*
  Mariner Books ISBN 0618446885
- Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*
  MIT Press ISBN 0262581086
- Cathy Caruth ed, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*
  Johns Hopkins ISBN 080185007X
- Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
  (Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs) (ed. Anthony Appiah)
  Modern Library ISBN 0345478231

Other materials will be available online either through Blackboard or EReserves. I will also prepare a master copy of the material on EReserves and make it available for copying if you prefer to get the readings that way.
Syllabus

1. **Introduction: Current Feelings** (January 17)

Feel Tank Chicago, manifesto and other statements, www.feeltankchicago.net

2. **Public Feelings in American Studies** (January 24)


Recommended:
Ann Cvetkovich and Ann Pellegrini, Introduction to “Public Sentiments,” The Scholar and Feminist Online 2:1. Available at www.barnard.edu/sfonline (Browse the entire issue, some of which we’ll read later.)

3. **Sentimentality** (January 31)

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*


4. **Sentimentality II** (February 7)

excerpts from Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, A Slave* (Chapters 1, 2, and 10) and Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Chapters 1.2, 5, 6, 7, 10)


Linda Williams, from Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson. Princeton UP, 2001. 3-26. (Recommended: 45-95.)
5. **Racialized Public Feelings** (February 14)

Monique Truong, *The Book of Salt*


Recommended:


6. **Feeling Capitalism** (February 21)


__, “Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century” (1935)


Recommended:


7. **Public Sphere** (February 28)


Recommended:

8. **Queer Affects, Performances, and Counterpublics** (Mar 7)

Carmelita Tropicana, *Milk of Amnesia*.

Also: Pause for Reflection and Individual Projects

Recommended:
Solo performance by Lisa Kron, Holly Hughes, Peggy Shaw, Deb Margolin, and others. See *O Solo Homo*, eds. David Roman and Peggy Shaw, and Holly Hughes, *Clit Notes*.

**SPRING BREAK**

9. **Trauma** (Mar 21)

Cathy Caruth, from *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Johns Hopkins, 1995. 3-12; 151-57.
Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah* (excerpts from the film)

10. **Trauma II** (March 28)

Tentative: Art Spiegelman, *Maus*
Possible further readings on: second-generation and transgenerational trauma; museums and memorials; 9/11

11. Testimony and Human Rights (April 4)

Anne Cubilie, “Grounded Ethics: Afghanistan and the Future of Witnessing” in “Public Sentiments” (Available online)
Meg McLagan, “Human Rights, Testimony, and Transnational Publicity” in “Public Sentiments” (Available online)
Steven Reisner, “Private Trauma/Public Drama: Theater as a Response to International Political Trauma” in “Public Sentiments” (Available online)

Recommended:

12. Psychoanalysis and Other Theories of Emotion (April 11)


13. Leftovers (April 18)

A selection from the things there weren’t room for on the syllabus and other items that have surfaced over the course of the semester:
Lauren Berlant, ed. Intimacy; Mark Seltzer, Serial Killers; Sharon Holland, Raising the Dead; Saidiya Hartman and Stephen Best, eds. “The Redress Project, “ Representations 92 (Fall 2005); Paul Gilroy, Postcolonial Melancholia; Ron Eyerman, Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Making of African American Identity; Pierre Nora, “Between History and Memory: Les lieux de memoire”; Miriam Hansen on counterpublics in Negt and Kluge, Public Sphere and Experience; Brain Massumi, Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation; Ruth Leys, Trauma: A Genealogy; Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery; Judith Greenberg, ed, 9-11: Trauma at Home; Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougaw, eds. Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community; E. Ann

14. and 15. Final Projects and Conclusions (April 25 and May 2) (with possible additional meeting on May 9)

Recommended Online Materials:

Jean Carlomusto and Jane Rosett, AIDS: A Living Archive The Scholar and the Feminist Online 2:1 www.barnard.edu/sfonline
Here Is New York (September 11 photography exhibit) www.hereisnewyork.org
The Virtual Casebook Project at NYU: 9-11 And After http://www.nyu.edu/fas/projects/vcb/case_911_FLASHcontent.html
Pixel Press www.pixelpress.org Witnessing the War
Witness: Using Video and Technology to Fight for Human Rights www.witness.org