

Arts of Memory: Syllabus, Fall 2005

Instructor: W. J. T. Mitchell

Wieboldt 203

Tuesdays, 2-3:30 (sign up sheet by office door).

This syllabus is merely a sketch of a possible sequence of topics and readings. Of course it barely scratches the surface of the subject, and supplementary readings suggested by myself or members of the seminar can be added at any time. Please stay tuned to the course website for additions and changes.

Week 1: Introduction: What are the “arts of memory”? Picturing Memory: The Fundamental Dialectics. Remembering and Forgetting; Memorials, the Immemorial, and the Unmemorable; Words, Images, and the Spaces Between; Memory and History; Individual and Collective Memory; Artificial and Natural Memory; Storage and Retrieval

Mitchell, “Narrative, Memory, and Slavery”

Film: Memento (screening to be arranged)

Weeks 2-3: Mind

Frances Yates, The Art of Memory, ch. 1

Borges, “Funes the Memorious”

Aleksandr Luria, from The Mind of a Mnemonist

Wordsworth, from “Tintern Abbey” and The Prelude

Proust, “Combray,” from Swann’s Way

Hesiod, The Theogony: Mnemosyne and the Muses

Freud, “Note on the ‘Mystic Writing Pad’”

Week 4: Media

Jacques Le Goff, “Memory,” pp. 51-99 of History and Memory

David Krell, selections from Memory, Reminiscence, and Writing

Mary Carruthers, from The Book of Memory

Plato, from Phaedrus

Week 5: Matter

Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory

Week 6: Trauma

Freud, from Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and other writings

LaPlanche and Pontalis, "Trauma" from The Language of Psychoanalysis
Cathy Caruth, from Unclaimed Experience
Ruth Leys, from Trauma: A Genealogy

Week 7: Collective Memory

Edward Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place"
Simon Schama, "Landscape and Memory"
Mitchell, from "Holy Landscape"
Toni Morrison, from Beloved; and "Sites of Memory"
Nietzsche, from The Genealogy of Morals
Maurice Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, excerpts
Other readings to be determined.

Weeks 8-10: Reports on Seminar Projects