Overview

The Jews are thought to be the people of memory *par excellence*. But how have they transmitted their stories, values, and traditions from ancient to modern times? How have the forms of remembering, transmitting, and commemorating changed? This course examines diverse forms of Jewish religious and cultural memory, beginning with biblical and liturgical sources. We will discuss public, social forms of memory, such as ritual, history, memorial sites, and museums, as well as personal ones, such as memoir, fiction, and autobiography. We will pay special attention to the memory of the Holocaust and the role of collective memory in Zionism. Our unit on museums and memorials will take us into Newton Centre and then Boston, to visit and analyze local monuments and sites of memory--Jewish, American, and African-American. If time permits, and if there is interest, we will make forays into topics such as Freudian psychology, biology, trauma, and testimony. Finally, students will undertake creative projects related to memory throughout the week.

Requirements

1). This course requires active participation, good preparation, and initiative. Students will have opportunities to do independent research and writing, study in chevruta, and lead discussion. Because our topic is so wide-ranging, I am open to following the particular interests of the participants; students are invited to take an active role in shaping the course as it progresses.
2) Students will design and create a project related to themes of the course, and write a more formal critical reflection describing the project, its approach, and sources used. The final project will be presented on the last day of class and submitted in its final form one week after the end of the course. For example, students might produce a personal memoir, a short story, a piece of liturgy, a curriculum, a memorial quilt (using paper or fabric), a video-taped interview, etc.

3) On the first day, we will discuss options for a group memory project. Please think about this in advance and bring your ideas.

**Short Readings** for each day’s discussion will be posted on Schoology by early July. I do not expect you to have read these before coming to Newton.

**Books to be purchased. Please purchase and begin reading in advance of the course.**


This is a long book, and I don’t expect everyone to read it in full by July 19, but we will be discussing it during the course. Start at the beginning, and if you wish, you may skip ahead and read chapters that catch your attention. Try to have read a good segment of the book by the beginning of our class.

2) Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Memory* ISBN 978-0295975191

Begin with the Introduction and Preface, chapters 2, 4

**Books to bring with you to class. (I can also lend you these if you don’t have them.)**

- Tanakh (Hebrew and English Bible, if possible, the Jewish Study Bible)
- Passover Haggadah

**Preliminary Schedule of Topics and Readings.**

I will assign short readings for each day. Others will be studied together in class or in hevruta, and still others are listed here as optional/background reading. **Note: This schedule is subject to change.**

**July 19, Sunday Evening**

- Introductions to the course, participants, and main themes
  - Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*
  - The NAMES project memorial Quilt
- Discussion of group project and individual projects
July 20, Monday: Religious Memory.

How and when does the Hebrew Bible use the word *zachor*? Whom does God remember, and why? Which experiences are Jews instructed to remember? Why are certain “Zachor” verses recited on Rosh Hashanah, and others on a daily basis? Some of the most powerful remembering takes place by way of ritual. Is there a common formula to Jewish religious rituals? How do new rituals compare with their ancient counterparts?

I. Divine and Human Remembering in the Bible

- Genesis 21 (Sarah)
- Genesis 30 (Rachel)
- Genesis 8 (Noah)
- Genesis 19 (Abraham)
- Exodus 20 (The Sabbath)
- Jeremiah 31 (Ephraim)
- Leviticus 26:42 (The covenant)
- Remembering Amalek: Exodus 17, 1 Samuel 15, 1 Samuel 28

II. Liturgy

- Rosh Hashanah, liturgy of Zikhronot in Mussaf
- The Six Remembrances
- The Thirteen Principles of Faith
- Yizkor
- Kaddish

III. Ritual memory

- The Passover Hagaddah as a repository of memory
- “New Rituals for Women’s Tefillah Groups,” Susan Hornstein
- *Ritual and its Consequences*, Seligman, Weller, etc. (excerpts)

Tuesday, July 21. Memory and History

History originated as a Greek enterprise. What is the difference between memory and history? When was Jewish history invented? Do modern historians approach the past differently than the Rabbis did? Why is history such a controversial project in Israel today?

- Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*”
- Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (continued)
- The Creation of the Discipline of Jewish History in 19th Century Germany
Wednesday, July 22. Literature and Memoir.

The first Jewish memoir was written by a Yiddish-speaking Jewish woman living in Germany in the 17th century, Glückel of Hameln; a long tradition of autobiographical writing followed. How do the practices of imaginative writing and autobiography serve as vehicles of remembrance? Amos Oz’s *A Tale of Love and Darkness* is one of the most important literary memoirs of recent years, and will be discussed in detail. We will also introduce the concept of “futurity,” that entails writing about the past in a way that endows agency on the readers. Students will composed a brief memoir of their own.

I. Writing and Memory

- Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*
- Aharon Appelfeld, “Uncle Felix,” from *Story of a Life*
- Dvora Baron, “The First Day”
- J. L. Borges, “Funes the Memorious”
- S.Y. Agnon, “The Kerchief”
- Ruth Kluger, *Still Alive* (excerpt)
- Amir Eshel, *Futurity: Contemporary Literature and the Quest for the Past* (excerpt)

II. Video: The Video Testimony

Thursday, July 23. Monuments and Countermonuments; Museums and the Architecture of memory.
We will spend the morning looking at and studying monuments and museums dedicated to Jewish life and history. What is the difference between a monument and a counter-monument? Is the traditional museum, a repository of the Jewish past, obsolete? How and why are Jewish museums resorting to new technological media to commemorate Jewish history, both in American and in Europe?

In the afternoon, we will take a field trip to visit Boston’s Holocaust monument, the African Meeting House, and continue with a walking tour of other important monuments.

- James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory, Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (excerpt)
- Gillman, A. “Cultural Awakening and Historical Forgetting: The Architecture of Memory in the Jewish Museum of Vienna and in Rachel Whiteread’s ‘Nameless Library.’”
- POLIN – the new Jewish Museum in Warsaw

**Friday, July 24.**

Student Presentations
Completion of Group Project
Concluding Discussion