

COM 421
Rhetoric of Social Issues

Instructor:

Email:

Phone:

Office:

Office Hours:

Required Readings and Materials:

Phillips, K.R. (ed) (2004). *Framing Public Memory*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press.

Dickinson, G., Blair, C. & Ott, B.L. (eds) (2010) *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press.

Readings on the BB site for this class.

Course Overview:

Public memory is a rich rhetorical landscape for exploration, analysis, and evaluation. Relying on a series of categories of public memories that provide us with rhetorical artifacts we will build a common understanding of how individuals and collectives work to understand our public memories and their impacts on all of us. The purpose of this course is to teach students about the important role of public memory in culture, politics, and civic life. We will focus on questioning the politics of commemoration and memorializing, on interrogating the role of memory in creating group identity, and on the ways that memories are mediated and circulated. One likely outcome of our time together will be disagreement about theories, facts, values, policies, and worldviews, but to the extent that we conduct ourselves with mutual respect and an eagerness to learn such disagreement can enrich us all.

Course Goals:

During and by the end of this course, it is my hope that you are capable of accomplishing the following:

1. Become familiar with the ways in which scholars discuss public memory and its role in society and politics;
2. Begin to articulate an understanding of the rhetorical conceptualization of public memory research and the materiality that is produced.
3. Be able to understand and 'see' how public memories are circulated, are constructed, and how they impact our identities, our social collectives, and our popular culture.

School note: This is an upper division course and has certain pre-requisites. If you do not meet these pre-requisites you will be asked to drop the class and/or will be administratively withdrawn from the class. If you have questions about your eligibility, please consult your advisor or take other steps to determine your status.

Attendance Policy:

It is my sincere hope that you will find the course material and our in-class discussions engaging and that, as a result, you will attend class faithfully. Because this is an upper-division course and I expect each of you to take responsibility for your choices and your own learning experience, you may have 3 days that you miss during the semester. Once you have used up those 3 days you will have 3 points removed for each day absent for any reason. **You begin the term with 25 points for attendance.** If you choose not to attend class, you should be aware of the following consequences:

*First, many of the announcements, concepts, and issues that we address during lecture and discussion are not covered in your readings, so your absence may seriously compromise your ability to perform competently on the various assignments.

*Second, you will find that some of the assigned reading material is difficult to understand if you have not been in class, so your absence further compromises your competency.

*Third, if you are absent on the day that an assignment is due; you will receive no credit for that assignment. I will grant exceptions to this policy only under two circumstances:

--You may notify me *before* your absence and provide justification that your absence will be absolutely necessary, for reasons that are beyond your control.

--Or you may contact me immediately after your absence and missed assignment and provide documentation explaining that your absence was absolutely unavoidable, and I may deem the absence, missed assignment and documentation to be valid.

If you meet the conditions of either of these exceptions, you will be allowed a reasonable opportunity to make up the assignment at a different time and date.

Those who need to miss class to participate in religious holidays or to represent the university should notify me in advance of the event.

Course Assignments: Paper and project.

1. Critical Essay: Writing is a process. And writing well requires careful attention and diligent effort at multiple stages in the process. In a series of writing events, you will present the results of your semester long engagement with a public memory or commemoration. I will expect thoughtful and rigorous discussion of salient aspects of history, context, and argument as well as analysis of the specific event or issue that may have created the memory. Furthermore, in your writing you should demonstrate your ability to synthesize and apply ideas, concepts, and arguments that emerge from class readings and discussion. The Critical Essay process has four components:
 - a. 10 pts. Paper proposal: A two-to-three (2-3) page essay (not including references) in which you identify the commemoration; public memory, person, or event that has created the memory. Justify its selection as a topic for this paper, and develop a list of questions that you will ask. For example, who got to contribute to the way we remember this event or person? Who benefits if we remember the event or person in this manner? Etc. The point of this proposal is to provide me an opportunity to give you

feedback and guidance on your project before you have invested extensive time and energy, thereby avoiding problems down the road.

- b. 40 pts. Annotated Bibliography: Ten (10) annotated sources about the event, pop culture artifact, commemoration, person, public memory, or anything that you feel is relevant to our understanding.
- c. 50 pts. Context Essay: A four to six (4-6) page essay (not including references) in which you describe historical and contemporary aspects of the above. This may include the history of the event, may include the media surrounding the event and how it was used or shaped our understanding of the event or anything that will provide us a context for understanding.
- d. 60 pts. Analysis Essay: A five-to-seven (5-7) page essay (not including references) in which you perform your analysis on the public memory.
- e. 100 pts. Final Essay: A fifteen-to-twenty (15-20) page essay (not including references) that builds upon your revised Context and Analysis Essays, engages in further analysis from the above, and frames your research project with an introduction and conclusion.

80 points 2) Presentations and discussions of readings. Working in pairs, you will be asked to choose two chapters or articles and you will present the material to the class. This presentation should be interesting and include, youtube clips or visual information. Each chapter or article is worth 40 points and your points will be assigned by how involved you get us in the discussion. Each student in the pair will receive the same points.

Objectives: The presentations are designed to:

1. Facilitate your understanding of the concepts, terminology and issues addressed in the week's readings.
2. Enable you to satisfy the course objectives through the contribution of original ideas, ways of seeing things, and analysis of the course materials.
3. Allow you to demonstrate your ability to apply the course material to events and respond to the viewpoints of other participants.
4. Gain an understanding and appreciation of the viewpoints of other participants.

100 points 3) Midterm exam. You will take an in-class examination. This exam will challenge your understanding of the critical concepts, and definitions regarding public memories. Material for the exam will come from assigned readings, lectures, and in-class announcements and activities.

65 points 4) Critical Essay presentation: Your presentation should convey the results of your research into the public memory artifact that you've chosen. These presentations

will occur in class during the last few weeks of class. We will assign presentation dates in advance.

25 points 5) Attendance—you have three times you can miss class, starting with your 4th time you will lose 3 points each time you are absent for any reason. The only reasons that will be excused are referenced above in the attendance policy.

530 points total in the class.

Grading:

1). Generally in this course excellent work earns “A” grades, “good” work earns “B” grades, “average” work earns “C” grades, unsatisfactory work earns “D” grades and “poor” work earns “E” grades. More specifically I employ the following scale:

- A+98-100% (519-530)
- A 94-97 (498-518)
- A-90-93 (477-497)
- B+ 87-89 (461-476)
- B 84-86% (445-460)
- B- 80-83% (424-444)
- C+ 77-79 % (408-423)
- C=70-76% (371-407)
- D=60-69% (318-370)
- E=0-59% (0-317)

2). All assignments are due in class and must **be submitted to SafeAssign** on the BB site. Please do not submit assignments to me electronically or by giving them to the office staff.

3). Be sure that all writing on your midterm exam is legible; if I cannot read what you wrote then you will not receive credit for it.

4). I will be happy to talk to you about your grade during office hours, but I will not discuss a grade with you on the day that I return an assignment. I reserve the right to ask you to present your grade concerns to me in writing. And I also reserve the right to lower your grade if you ask me to re-read something and to re-grade an assignment.

5). Those who would benefit from alternative sites for taking the midterm exam **and** who are registered with Disability Resources should notify me during the first two weeks of the semester. I will gladly work with you and accommodate your needs.

6). I do not offer extra credit in this course; please do not ask for extra credit options.

Academic Honesty:

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication strongly believe in academic integrity; thus, instructors in the College and School do not tolerate cheating and plagiarism. If a student is charged with academic dishonesty and found to be in violation, disciplinary action will be taken and a student’s name will be kept on file. Disciplinary action may result in the student being suspended or expelled from the College, given an XE on his or her transcript, and/or referred to Student Judicial Affairs. For further information, please read the Student Academic

Integrity policy and the code of conduct for The Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at: <https://hdshc.asu.edu/acadintpol/>

Special Instructions/Pet Peeves

1. There are few phenomenons that disturb the classroom climate as much as smartphones. Please do not sit in class and text, it is rude behavior. Phones that ring, sing, or beep for texts or calls are disruptive—please turn them off before entering class. In addition, arriving or leaving the classroom to go to the bathroom, to answer a phone call, to get something to drink or eat is disruptive. As an adult I assume you can schedule these above events before class or after the class is over. Do not leave class for any of the above reasons.
2. Please do not use computers in my class unless you are *sitting in the front row*. Unfortunately for you, others that have come before you have misused their computers by playing games, checking Facebook pages, writing emails, and otherwise ‘multi-tasking’ as they put it. I don’t believe that you can multi-task in a classroom, so please sit in the front row if you are using a computer or ipad.
3. I will answer your emails in a timely fashion. If you haven’t heard from me in 48 hours you might send a follow up email as I may not have received your email. I usually will answer in a few hours.

Course Schedule: Scheduling is done in a vacuum when I have not met any of you; therefore this schedule is flexible and not written in stone. Any changes that directly affect your exams or dates when papers are due will be announced in advance and usually in writing. **Names below in boldface are your author names and page numbers in texts. When you see BB that is an article that is on our BB site for the class.**