

Curating Public Memory

PGHT 5741, Fall 2023, Tuesdays: 4-5:50pm
Rm 260, 65 W. 11th St.

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Museums and memorials have long functioned as markers of a society's past, most often as sites of celebration and honor. But just as efforts to decolonize the museum are calling for an end to imperial traditions that obscure the exploitation of people, objects, and resources, so too are tragedies, genocide, and ongoing trauma re-shaping curatorial agendas. The field of "public memory" has arisen to explain and activate the space between formal histories and individual memories--often with the goal of using memorials to re-shape the presence of the past to focus on restorative justice through collective memories and actions. Alongside have been anti-monumental and counter-memorial practices by artists that have resisted the ideological imperatives of the state often embedded in monuments. We will work through issues that have roused considerable debate in recent years, such as slavery, mass incarceration, immigration, inequality, and climate devastation.

This is both a seminar and a workshop; as such, you are expected to read and reflect critically in class as well as participate responsibly and fully in your groups. As an intensive curatorial class, there are substantial expectations of work outside class time. The course is constructed around external partners, guest speakers, outside research, and group meetings. Please be prepared to participate fully.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the primary ideas of the field of public memory
- Work collaboratively to create curatorial actions to activate public memory
- Reflect on the ethics of involvement and participation

Readings and Materials

The required reading and materials are available on Canvas and are compiled by week in Modules. To access the materials directly, log on to canvas.newschool.edu with your New School username and password.

Assignments

The course is constructed around two substantive curatorial projects, one collaborative project on incarceration with an external partner and another individually-defined topic of your choice. Public memory unfolds in the context of social engagement—collaborative strategies and collective participation are a significant component of your learning.

Discussion (20%): The primary assignment of the course is spirited discussion of the readings and materials. We consider the following criteria regarding your contribution to discussion: frequency, quality, referencing of readings and materials, and responsiveness to others' ideas.

Family Photo Paper (20%): 5pgs, double-spaced, due September 26.

Choose a photo of your family to explore (please include a copy of your family photo with the paper). Examine it for what it tells us on its face and then either describe or speculate about a more hidden story that it contains, reveals, or obscures. How does memory and family lore shape how you see it? What are its connections to larger social processes, trends, or events of the time? Remember, this is an outward facing project: You do not need to reveal uncomfortable or private family tales or explore issues that are personally troubling. Instead, take the photo as a prompt to consider a personal artifact as public history. Use as your guide Saidiya Hartman's "A Minor Figure" and Latoya Ruby Frazier's portrait of Braddock, PA through images of her family.

The Rikers Public Memory Project (30%): Our partner for this assignment is [Rikers Public Memory Project](#). You will work collaboratively in groups of 3-4 to be assigned in class. Develop ideas for an interactive timeline on the [Rikers Public Memory Project website](#); archival material [here](#). Groups will present the project to the class and guests on October 31.

Individual Curatorial Proposal (30%): Develop a proposal for a curatorial project on a topic of interest to you. Include a Concept Statement, Checklist (objects, artists, programs), Images/Visuals, Estimated Budget, and Timeline. More details will be provided in class regarding this proposal and presentation. Individuals will present the project to the class on November 28 and December 5. Final proposal submitted on Canvas December 8.

Class Schedule

Week 1	Introduction
Aug 29	In-class: Carrie Mae Weems, From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried (1995-6) In-class: Watch : Carrie Mae Weems in "Compassion" (Art21, 2009)
Week 2	Public Memory
Sept 5	Readings: Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History," <i>Representations</i> (1989) James Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany," <i>Harvard Design Magazine</i> (1999) Julian Chambliss, Don't Call Them Memorials , <i>Frieze</i> (23 August 2017) American Museum of Natural History, The Meaning of a Monument (2019 video) Urban Omnibus, 21st Century Monument (2023)

[Masha Gessen article about memory in Germany for F24?

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-weekend-essay/in-the-shadow-of-the-holocaust>

Week 3	Curating in the Public Realm
Sept 12	Readings: Pablo Helguera, <i>Education for Socially Engaged Art</i> (2011), selections Tiya Miles, <i>All That She Carried</i> (2021): Ch.1 'Ruth's Record'; Conclusion 'It Be Filled'; visual essay 'Carrying Capacity' Case Study: The New School Art Collection Essays on Kara Walker, Glenn Ligon, Alfredo Jaar [visit all three artworks before class; note curatorial labels]

- Week 4
Sept 19
- Linking Individual Stories to Collective Ones
 Readings: Saidiya Hartman, “A Minor Figure,” from *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019)
 Latoya Ruby Frazier, “The Notion of Family,” *The Massachusetts Review* (2015)
 Teju Cole, [The Living Artist](#) (2016)
 Bring to class a family image that you may use for your paper
 Recommended: Frazier’s exhibition, [Monuments of Solidarity, MOMA](#)
- Week 5
Sept 26
- Incarceration+Design
 Guest: Shana Agid
 Reading: Agid, Shana, “How What We Are Shapes What We Can Imagine: De-coupling Design and Punishment” *Space and Culture* (2022), pp 1-16
 Rikers Public Memory Project (RPMP): Read sections on history and timeline on the RPMP [website](#) and browse their [archive](#)
Due: Family Photo Paper
- Week 6
Oct 3
- The Politics of Public Memory Projects Now
 Guest: Liz Sevchenko
 Readings: Liz Sevchenko, *Public Memory for a Post-truth Era* (2022): Intro, chs 8-9
 Browse [Humanities Action Lab](#), esp. [States of Incarceration](#) and [Climates of Inequality](#) exhibitions
 Group work: go through oral histories, materials for possible themes, identify important events or connections
- Week 7
Oct 10
- Workshop group preliminary ideas for interactive timeline
 Recommend: attend Vera List Center, [Corrections* Forum](#), Oct 12-14
- Week 8
Oct 17
- Groups meet separately with Radhika+Julia (20mins each during classtime)
- Week 9
Oct 24
- Practice Group Presentations; Feedback
- Week 10
Oct 31
- Due: Presentation, Rikers Public Memory Projects**
 Respondents: Piper Anderson, Regina Campbell, RPMP
- Week 11
Nov 7
- Review RPMP work+Brainstorm Curatorial Proposals
- Week 12
Nov 14
- Individual Meetings re: Curatorial Proposals
 Individual meetings with Radhika+Julia (10mins each during classtime)
- Week 13
Nov 21
- Work on Curatorial Proposals on your own (NO CLASS)

Week 14 **Presentations: Individual Curatorial Proposals**
Nov 28

Week 15 **Presentations: Individual Curatorial Proposals**
Dec 5

Dec 8 **Due: Individual Curatorial Proposals; NO LATE SUBMISSIONS**

Class Policies

Attendance. All credit students are required to attend class each week, and there is no difference between an excused and an unexcused absence. All absences are treated the same. Your grade for the course as a whole will be lowered one step after 2 absences (i.e., from B to B-). Three or more absences will result in an automatic failure of the class. *You **cannot** complete the course for a passing grade if you have not submitted any assignments by November 1. The last day to withdraw from a course is November 19.*

Late Submissions. Each late submission of any assignment will result in a one-grade-point deduction for each calendar day it is late (i.e., from B to B-).

Academic Honesty. Plagiarism—the use of another person’s words or ideas in any academic work—or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in serious academic penalties, from a failing grade in the class to expulsion from the university.

For information on avoiding plagiarism through proper acknowledgements, including expectations for paraphrasing source material and forms of citation in research and writing, students should visit the [University Learning Center](#). The university’s policies on Academic Integrity and Intellectual Property Rights can be found [here](#).

Please note that students must receive prior permission from instructors to submit the same or substantially overlapping material for two different assignments. Submission of the same work for two assignments without prior permission is plagiarism.

Other Important Information

Libraries. [The New School Library](#) offers frequent research workshops for students, the day, time, and location of which are posted to the Library webpage.

The University Learning Center. The [University Learning Center](#) provides individual tutoring sessions in writing, ESL, math, and economics, and time management. Sessions are interactive, with both tutor and student participating. Appointments can be scheduled via Starfish or stop by for a walk-in session. The ULC also offers several academic and skill-building workshops. The ULC has remote appointments and can be reached at learningcenter@newschool.edu.

Accommodations. If you are a student with a disability/disabled student, or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please first complete the Self ID form on the [Student Disability Services](#) website. Then, head to Starfish and find a time to meet with Nick Faranda, at a

time of mutual convenience. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Student Disability Services (SDS) at studentdisability@newschool.edu, or 212-229-5626.

Student Support. [Student Support](#) works with students who are struggling with non-academic challenges, distressing experiences, and crisis situations. Contact staff for assistance in navigating challenges and connecting to on-and off-campus services and resources, including for emergency financial, housing, food, or other needs. SSCM is located at 80 5th Avenue on the 3rd floor; studentsupport@newschool.edu or call 212.229.5900 x3701. Office hours are Mondays through Thursdays, 9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.; Fridays, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Food and Housing. Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact Student Support for support and access to resources. The New School also has a [food pantry](#) (click on link for hours and all information).

Student Health Services. [Student Health Services](#) works collaboratively to support the physical, emotional and social well-being of its students and promotes a university-wide culture of wellness. They educate students to become discerning health consumers and advocate for their well-being to enable their learning and success both in and out of the classroom. They mobilize resources and support for students facing urgent and critical concerns. Our high-quality services and programs are student-centered, inclusive and based on public health, social justice, holistic and integrative approaches, which empower students to successfully attain their educational goals.

For information about the wide range of medical, counseling, and other services, groups, and opportunities go to the website above, or go in person to 80 Fifth Avenue, 3rd floor (check the website for drop-in hours for medical and counseling services), call 212.229.1671, or email shs@newschool.edu. For after-hours health concerns call 212.229.1671 and a nurse will answer the phone and provide care advice.

Financial Aid. [Financial Aid](#) can help you manage your education costs. They welcome students and family inquiries about Financial Aid eligibility and financing options; tuition and fees; cost of living in New York City; managing your personal finances; individual billing and payment issues. You can reach at finaid@newschool.edu or 212.229.8930, or stop by 72 Fifth Avenue, 2nd Floor, Monday through Friday, 10:00-4:45pm.

Student Emergency Fund. This [program](#) provides currently enrolled students experiencing acute financial distress with one-time financial assistance. It cannot be used to cover tuition; it is expected that a student in need will work with Student Success staff or outside resources to take steps towards long-term stability. Students in need can complete an online application for emergency funding support. Questions and concerns can be submitted to emergencyfund@newschool.edu.