Spectral Cities: Modernity, History, Post/Memory from Balzac and Baudelaire to Sebald and Sebbar

Schedule: Tuesday, 3:00-5:30pm in Phelps 6206C & 6 enhancement sessions in French (dates below in blue)
Instructor: Professor Catherine Nesci
E-mail: cnesci@frit.ucsb.edu
Office hours: Thursday, 2:00-3:50pm, in Phelps 5218 & by appointment.

[Photograph: Eugène Atget, Rue Hautefeuille, Paris. 1889]

Seminar Description
In this seminar we will read French and German literary texts and screen three movies featuring urban walks and city settings, and dealing with disturbing, violent events of varying scope, from rapid modernization and industrialization to brutal repressions of anticolonial movements as well as major traumatic events such as the Holocaust and the dropping of the first nuclear bomb in Hiroshima. We will combine several critical tools to analyze the work of witnessing, memorialization, and literary testimony as well as the relations between literature, historiography, and Holocaust studies. We will also shed critical light on the current trends in trauma and memory studies, and address the different media (print text, “iconotext,” fixed image, moving image) in which the work of memory is being carried out.

Required Purchase

- Sebald, G. W. Austerlitz. NY: Modern Library, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-0375756566 [if you are in the German track, please also read the book in German; you may get it through Interlibrary loan].

You may order the following other readings via interlibrary loan:
Camus, Albert. The Fall. In French: La Chute.
Modiano, Patrick. Dora Bruder.

Requirements

1. Attendance at all seminars and careful participation are mandatory.
2. Active and informed discussions. The quality of this graduate seminar will depend on your sustained preparation for and engagement in all our discussions. Careful preparations will support strong intellectual conversations and informed participation.

3. Before every seminar, and by noon the day before the seminar (on Monday), you will post two questions on the readings of the seminar on GauchoSpace, referencing precise passages in the primary and secondary readings or movies. **DO NOT GO** over 200 words.

4. You will give a formal 20-mn presentation on a primary reading or screening, outlining clearly the topic, goals, and organization of your presentation. Do not go over 20mn: you will be interrupted after 20mn.

5. You will give a second, shorter presentation of 10mn on a critical reading to start our collective conversation on the reading. Do not go over 10mn: you will be interrupted after your time is up.

6. You will write a final project of 5,000 words (exclusive of footnote and bibliography), the project of which will need to be uploaded by weeks 8-9 of the seminar on GauchoSpace.

**Grading**
All areas below need to be satisfactory in order to pass the seminar. If you are not taking the seminar for a letter grade (but on an S/U basis), you do not need to complete #4, but 1–3 must be completed and satisfactory.

1. **15%**. Active and focused participation in discussions, including 20 questions posted on GauchoSpace by noon on Monday, the day preceding the seminar.

2. **30%**. A formal 20-mn presentation based on a primary reading or screening.

3. **15%**. An informal 10-mn presentation on a critical reading.

4. **40%**. Your final project (5,000 words; double-spaced; pitch 12 of Times New Roman, and in WORD: posted on GauchoSpace by **December 10 at noon**). **10% of the grade** will count for the paper proposal (800 words), including a description of the project and main questions, and an annotated bibliography, due on **November 29** on GauchoSpace by noon.

**Course policies**
No food at all in class (please keep for the break); dispose of all drinks and containers carefully; the use of laptops and tablets is only allowed for working on our materials and taking notes (no internet browsing or emails); keep your phone in your bags; respectful interactions with all classmates.

**Schedule of Readings**

**Week 1, October 3 – Introduction to the seminar: modernity and its discontent; the flâneur’s city; media and post/memory; cultural trauma … or not.**


**Week 2, October 10 – The Specters of History (I): Balzac’s Queer Fiction**
Primary readings (2 novellas): Balzac, *Colonel Chabert* (France, 1832); *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* (1834–35).
Optional primary reading: Balzac, *Ferragus*.

**Week 3, October 17 – The Specters of History (II): Sebald’s Haunted Fiction**

**Weeks 4 & 5 – A Tale of Four Cities: Post/Memory, Media, and the Archives in Holocaust Fiction/Non-Fiction**
**October 24:** From Adler’s testimony on the Theresienstadt ghetto and Auschwitz to Sebald’s *Austerlitz*.
**Presentation #1:** Witnessing and post/memory in Sebald’s *Austerlitz*.

**October 31:** Paris in Patrick Modiano, *Dora Bruder* (France, 1997). Transgenerational Trauma & the Post/Memory of the Shoah.
**Presentation #2:** Modiano’s work of remembrance and the scripting of the city.
[French enhancement session to be scheduled that week: 6:30 to 8:00pm; watch movie *Monsieur Klein* by Joseph Losey (1976) in addition to reading Modiano’s text]

**Weeks 6 & 7 – Shock, Modernity, and the Urban Palimpsest: The Flâneur down Memory Lane.**
**November 7:** Primary readings: Baudelaire, “Le Cygne”; “Les Sept Vieillards” from the “Tableaux parisiens” section of *Les Fleurs du mal* (2nd ed., 1861); read all prose poems from *Paris Spleen*.
**Presentation #3:** On Baudelaire and any aspect of memory work in his prose or verse poetry.
[French enhancement session to be scheduled that week: 6:30 to 8:00pm]

**November 14:** Primary readings: Aragon’s *Paysan de Paris* & Kafka’s *Betrachtung*.
**Presentation #4:** on either Aragon’s or Kafka’s texts.
Week 8, November 21 – Photography and Post/Memory: The Spectral Image
Primary reading/viewing: Breton’s Nadja; Sebald’s Austerlitz; Christian Boltanski
Presentation #5: on either Breton’s Nadja, Sebald’s Austerlitz, or Boltanski.

Week 9, November 28 – Traumatic Flashbacks: The Film Media and the “Phantom Intermediate City of Memory” (M. Duras & A. Resnais, Hiroshima Mon Amour)
Presentation #6: On any aspect of the movie and the treatment of memory.

Week 10, December 5 – (Failed) Testimonies, Holocaust Memory, and the Algerian War
Reading: Camus, La Chute [The Fall] (1956); screening: Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, Chronicle of a Summer (France, 1961).
Presentation #7: On Camus’s text or Rouch’s movie and the treatment of memory, history, and witnessing.

Last 2-hour French enhancement session to be scheduled – “October 17, 1961: A Site of Holocaust Memory?”
Secondary reading: excerpt from Part IV of Michael Rothberg, Multidirectional Memory, pp. 227–308.