

Literature and Media in Latin America

The Ethics and Politics of Memory and Trauma in Latin American Literature and Cinema

COLT 470, 22060R, Fall 2014, Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00-11:50 am, WPH 106

This course focuses on the ethics and politics of trauma and memory by looking at some examples of Latin American literature and cinema. We explore the way that these literary and cinematic texts function as a mode of witnessing the traumatic past, mediating between subjective and collective experiences. The course will ask: how do these literary and cinematic texts reflect and respond to complex and contradictory political and social concerns with remembering the victims of state terror? How do these literary and cinematic texts articulate the way that state terror impinges on concrete and intangible realities, as Suely Rolnik suggests? Is trauma a helpful theoretical concept to think about how the effects of state terror, whether in Chile, Argentina or Brazil, impact on the present, or to reflect on the experiences of victims of war or state terror, or are we reducing and distilling complex, multilayered and contentious historical, social and cultural processes to the category of trauma? What are the affective, emotional and critical implications in effective witnessing practices? How do literature and cinema represent horror and traumatic experiences without running the risk of objectifying the other and the horrific? Can historical memory be interpreted as symptomatic of the way in which the public use of history could be reduced to its



commemorative dimension, or do literature and cinema function as thoughtful cultural practices that bring together subjective and collective memories and discourses as constitutive forces for a rethinking of the fragments of history? These questions will be considered by looking at the following literary and film texts: *Prisoners without a Name/Cell without a Number* (Jacobó Timerman), *Death and the Maiden* (Ariel Dorfman), *Information for Foreigners* (Griselda Gambaro), *Chile, The Obstinate Memory* (Patricio Guzmán), *The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo* (Lourdes Portillo), *The Blonds* (Albertina Carri), *The Little School* (Alicia Partnoy), *Lumperica* (Diamela Eltit), *Chronicle of An Escape* (Adrián Caetano), *Missing* (Costa Gavras), *In a State of Memory* (Tununa Mercado), *Machuca* (Andrés Wood), *A Hungarian Passport* (Sandra Kogut), and *The Year My Parents Went on Vacation* (Cao Hamburger). The course allows students to become familiar with current theoretical debates on memory and trauma in the US and on the ethics and politics of memory and amnesia in Latin America.

COLT L/M/CT Track: This is a **Media** concentration course.

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