

COMM 610: Communication, Memory, and Place
Fall, 2016

Instructor:

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Description:

Over the past two decades, memory has gained a prominent place across the humanities and the social sciences and has found a congenial home in communication and rhetoric. In fact, an explosion of journal articles, books, and edited books engaging rhetoric and memory ably demonstrate the fecundity of these relationships. These studies demonstrate that memory studies in particular needs a rhetorical underpinning.

At the same time, place and space also has gained (or re-gained) growing energy in scholarship in the liberal arts. Far more than the province of geographers, place has become a powerfully resonate key term in disciplines as disparate as anthropology and philosophy, literature and political science. As with memory studies, rhetoric is at the forefront of the spatial turn.

As disparate as these two key terms seem—one dealing with time, the other with space—the fact is that they are intimately linked. In fact, the classical tradition intertwined them inextricably: Memory was one of the five canons of rhetoric and was conceived, in part in spatial terms. Today, the extraordinarily rich scholarship on memorials and museums nearly always intersects these two key terms. And there is good reason for this, as memory often finds its most eloquent expression in what some have called *memory places*. Many find history museums the most compelling experience of the past; memorials like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial are very important sites of tourism and places where personal, communal, and national identity are negotiated and enacted; even spaces as banal as shopping malls and suburban restaurants draw on mnemonics to create powerfully affective spaces. What makes these places so compellingly rhetorical? At least part of the answer lies in their materiality. Place—in its concreteness, its recondite physicality—engages the fully embodied subject and can make memories powerfully and persuasively real.

Finally, these rhetorically compelling intersections of memory, place, and materiality can be extraordinarily helpful in engaging questions of collective identity. For some time now, memory and place have helped scholars grapple with national identity in particular, but they also are a powerful lever for understand other kinds of identity formations.

In this seminar, we will explore the intersections of memory, place, and materiality in communication. We will engage selected literatures from the ancient to the contemporary, and will consider a variety of memory places as illustrative case studies. Drawing on the expertise of the instructor, we will pay particular attention to memory places in the West, defined capaciously but especially as imagined and embodied in the Western United States, including the local

landscapes of Southern California, this seminar will provide an introduction to the rich relations among memory, place, and identity in the materiality of communication.

Core Readings:

Bodnar, John. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993.

Dickinson, Greg, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, eds. *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2010.

Linenthal, Edward Tabor. *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*. 2nd ed. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1993.

Phillips, Kendall R., ed. *Framing Public Memory*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2007.

Rubertone, Patricia E., ed. *Archaeologies of Placemaking: Monuments, Memories, and Engagement in Native North America*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast, 2009.

Sturken, Marita. *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007.