

Syllabus – Spring 2016

GESM 130g: Witnessing—Media, Memory and Social Justice

Professor: Chris Smith

Day/Time: Tues/Thurs, 9:30 – 10:50 a.m.

Classroom: ANN 211

Office Hours: Monday, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Course Description

What does it mean to be a witness? What is the ethical nature of witnessing? Do media turn us into witnesses, and if so what might this mean? What are the social, political and cultural consequences of witnessing in an era of global—and hyper-local—media networks? How is our individualized and collective sense of history, the archive, and memory of the traumatic dependent upon mediated perception? What do the technologies of event dissemination tell us about emergent and established trends in the politics of representation? These are some of the questions that will be taken up in this seminar.

Witnessing is a long-standing area of inquiry in religion, law and history—and it has assumed recent significance in philosophy, literature, communication and journalism studies. The last century has seen not only the rise of the witness in the wake of unprecedented catastrophic events, from the Holocaust to Hurricane Katrina, but also the development of media infrastructures that redefine the scope and relevance of what it means to be a witness. This seminar positions the significance of witnessing in our present age between these two poles, bringing it to bear on key issues in journalism, communication and media studies.

Course Goals

1. To familiarize students with an interdisciplinary range of scholarship on witnessing spanning communication, journalism, history, sociology, and cultural studies.
2. To formulate “the witness” and “witnessing” as useful tools for introducing students to the study of (post-) modern communication networks.
3. To offer students opportunities to reflect and write critically about the role of witnessing in contemporary cultural experience.

Competencies and Evaluation

Participation	10%
Blog Posts	30%

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Midterm Papers	30%
Shoah Institute Student Testimonies	30%

Course Readings

Required (available at USC Bookstore):

1. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Hannah Arendt
 2. *Willful Blindness*, Margaret Heffernan
 3. *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi
 4. *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag
 5. *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940*, Amy Louise Wood
- Course Reader (via University Graphics – Quick Pix, 2820 S. Vermont Ave, #12.)

Reading Schedule

(Course Reader= CR); (Blackboard=BB); (Handout=HO)

Week 1

Tues. 1/12: Introduction – Roundtable Meet & Greet

Thurs. 1/14: Testimony, Witnessing and Memory: Background & New Debates. Pt.1

Reading:

(BB) L. Friedman, “Some Thoughts on the Horizontal Society”

Week 2

Tues. 1/19: Testimony, Witnessing and Memory: Background & New Debates. Pt. 2

Reading:

(CR) G. Thomas, “Witness as a Cultural Form of Communication,” *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, eds. Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 89-111

*Guest Speaker: Heidi Johnson, Exec. Dir., The Association of Catholic Student Councils (TACSC)

Thurs. 1/21: Lynching and Spectacle. Pt. 1

Reading:

Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (North Carolina UP, 2009) Introduction, Ch. 1

Leavey Library Reserve Material: *Without Sanctuary* (2000)

Week 3

Tues. 1/26: Lynching and Spectacle. Pt. 2

Reading:

Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (North Carolina UP, 2009) Chs. 3 & 6

(BB) *Without Sanctuary* website

Leavey Library Reserve Material: *Without Sanctuary* (2000)

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Thurs, 1/28: Testimony, Witnessing and Memory: Background & New Debates, Pt. 3

Reading:

(CR) J. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: California UP, 2004) Ch. 1, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," pp. 1-30

*Off-site visit: Crispin Brooks, curator of USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive

*Paper #1 Assigned; Due Friday, Week 6

Week 4

Tues, 2/2: Testimony, Witnessing and Memory: Background & New Debates, Pt. 4

Reading:

(CR) S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (NY: Routledge, 1992), Chs. 2 & 3

Thurs, 2/4: Testimony, Witnessing and Memory: Background & New Debates, Pt. 5

Reading:

S. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (NY: Picador, 2003), Ch. 5

*Off-site visit: Michaela Ullman, Exile Studies Librarian, University of Southern California Special Collections

Week 5

Tues, 2/9: Testimony, Witnessing and Memory: Background & New Debates, Pt. 6

Reading:

P. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (NY: Vintage, 1989), Preface, Chs. 1-4, pp. 11-104

In-class Screening: *Shoah* (1985)

Thurs, 2/11: Eichmann in Jerusalem, Pt.1

Reading:

H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (NY: Penguin, 1963:2006), Chs. 1-4

Week 6

Tues, 2/16: Eichmann in Jerusalem, Pt.2

Reading:

M. Heffernan, *Willful Blindness: Why We Ignore the Obvious at Our Peril* (NY: Bloomsbury (2011), Ch. 6

H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (NY: Penguin, 1963:2006), Chs. 13-15, Epilogue

In-class Screening: *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann* (1997), Pt. 1

Thurs, 2/18: Eichmann in Jerusalem, Pt.3

Reading:

(BB) A. Pinchevski, T. Liebes and O. Herman, "Eichmann on the Air: Radio and the Making of an Historic Trial," *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 27(1), 1-25. (2007)

(CR) A. Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Cornell UP, 2006) Ch., 2, "The Advent of the Witness," pp. 56-95

In-class Screening: *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann* (1997), Pt. 2

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Week 7

Tues, 2/23: Trauma, Archive and Memory, Pt. 1

Reading:

(BB) A. Assmann, "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony," *Poetics Today*, 27(2), 261-273 (2006)

Thurs, 2/25: Trauma, Archive and Memory, Pt. 2

Reading:

(CR) A. Wiewiorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Cornell UP, 2006) Ch., 3, "The Era of the Witness," pp. 96-144

Leavey Library Reserve Screening: *Schindler's List* (1993)

Week 8

Tues, 3/1: Media Witnessing, Pt. 1

Reading:

(CR) J. Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London: Tauris, 2000) Chs. 2 & 3, pp. 6-38

Thurs, 3/3: Media Witnessing, Pt. 2

Reading:

(BB) J. Durham Peters, "Witnessing," *Media, Culture & Society*, 23(6), 707-723 (2001)

Week 9

Tues, 3/8: Media Witnessing, Pt. 3

Reading:

S. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (NY: Picador, 2003), Ch. 2

(BB) P. Frosh and A. Pinchevski, "Crisis Readiness and Media Witnessing," *Communication Review*, 12(3), 295-304 (2009)

(BB) F. Ritchin, "Why Violent News Images Matter"

(CR) J. Ellis, "Mundane Witness," *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, eds. Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 73-88

Thurs, 3/10: Media Witnessing, Pt. 4

Reading:

(BB) B. Zelizer, "Finding Aids to the Past: Bearing Personal Witness to Traumatic Public Events," *Media, Culture & Society*, 24(5), 697-714 (2002)

(BB) S. Tait, "Bearing Witness, journalism and moral responsibility," *Media, Culture, and Society*, 33(8), 1220-1235 (2011)

(BB) K. Becker, "Gestures of Seeing: Amateur photographers in the news," *Journalism*, 20(10), 1-20 (2013)

***Guest Speaker: Gabe Kahn, Prof. of Professional Practice, School of Journalism, Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism**

*****Spring Break*****

Week 10

Tues, 3/22: Media Witnessing, Pt. 5

(BB) S. Cottle, "Mediatized Rituals," *Media, Culture & Society*, 28(3), 411-432 (2006)

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Thurs. 3/24: Media Witnessing, Pt. 6

Reading:

(BB) P. Parasher, "Specters and Images: *When the Levees Broke—A Requiem in Four Acts*, *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 8(2), 162-174 (2011)

Leavey Library Reserve Screening: *When the Levees Broke* (2006)

Week 11

Tues. 3/29: Media Witnessing, Pt. 7

Reading:

(BB) J. Fiske, *Media Matters, Everyday Culture and Political Change*, (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1994), Introduction, "Figuring People," pp. 67 – 74

***Paper #2 Assigned; Due Friday, Week 13**

Thurs. 3/31: Media Witnessing, Pt. 8

Reading:

(BB) J. Fiske, *Media Matters, Everyday Culture and Political Change*, (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1994), Ch. 3 pp. 125-149; Ch. 5 pp. 217-227

(BB) "Race & Rage" – Rodney King beating and riots -- CNN documentary [VIDEO]

(BB) E. Pavlić, "Written April 27, 2015 in the Blank Pages at the back of Bolaño's *A Little Lumpen Novelita*, *The American Poetry Review*, Nov/Dec 2015, p. 38

***Guest Speaker: Ed Pavlić, Professor of English and Creative Writing, the University of Georgia.**

Week 12

Tues. 4/5: Media Witnessing, Pt. 9

Reading:

(BB) A. Feldman, "On Cultural Anesthesia: From Desert Storm to Rodney King," *American Ethnologist*, 21(2), 404-418 (1994)

Thurs. 4/7: Media Witnessing & #BlackLivesMatter

Reading:

(BB) A. Baker, J. David Goodman, B. Mueller, "Beyond the Chokehold: The Unexplored Path to Eric Garner's Death," *New York Times*, June 14, 2015

(BB) E. Lieb, "Baltimore Killed Freddie Gray," *Politico*, May 4, 2015

(BB) S. Kuper, "A structure of racism," *FT Weekend*, May 9, 2015, p.2

(BB) J. Caspian King, "The Witnesses," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 10, 2015, pp. 36-53

Week 13

Tues. 4/12: Empathy & Cosmopolitanism

Reading:

S. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (NY: Picador, 2003), Ch. 6

M. Heffernan, *Willful Blindness: Why We Ignore the Obvious at Our Peril* (NY: Bloomsbury (2011), Ch. 9

(BB) L. Chouliaraki, "The Mediation of Suffering and the Vision of a Cosmopolitan Public," *Television & New Media*, 9(5), 371-391 (2008)

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Thurs. 4/14: Witnessing and Disregard, Pt. 1

Reading:

- M. Heffernan, *Willful Blindness: Why We Ignore the Obvious at Our Peril* (NY: Bloomsbury (2011), Introduction, Ch. 8
- (BB) N. Lemann, “A Call for Help,” *The New Yorker*, March 10, 2014
- (BB) C. Rentschler, “An Urban Physiognomy of the 1964 Kitty Genovese Murder,” *Space and Culture*, 14(3), 310-329 (2011)
- (BB) E. Osnos, “China’s Bystander Effect,” *The New Yorker*, October 18, 2011

Week 14

Tues. 4/19: Witnessing and Disregard, Pt. 2

Reading:

- (BB) M. Johanna Landwehr, “Voyeurism, Violence, and the Power of the Media...,” *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 8(2), 117-132 (2011)
- Leavey Library Reserve Screening: *White Ribbon – Das Weisse Band* (2009)**

Thurs. 4/21: Witnessing and Disregard, Pt. 3

- (BB) R. A. Woldoff and K. G. Weiss, “‘Stop Snitchin’: Exploring Definitions of The Snitch and Implications for Urban Black Communities,” *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 17(1), 184-223 (2010)
- (BB) M. Del Barco, “Too Scared to Talk to Police, Stalker’s Victims Open Up in ‘Grim Sleeper’”
- Leavey Library Reserve Screening: *Tales of the Grim Sleeper* - HBO (2014)**

Week 15

Tues. 4/26:

Video Testimonies

Thurs. 4/28:

Video Testimonies

COURSE ASSESMENT POLICIES

Participation

Class discussion is a critical part of the effectiveness of this course. This is a seminar course, where we collectively grapple with issues and challenges to communication management today. Each individual is expected to be actively involved in class discussion during each class period. The primary assessment will be the quality of those contributions to the group effort.

Good contributions are:

- thoughtful
- analytical
- constructive to the group effort
- topically relevant
- linked to the readings assigned for that day*

Poor contributions:

- simply restate what someone else has already said
- take the discussion on a tangent
- do not respect the other participants
- show that the individual has not done the assigned readings*

This 10% will be based on **overall contributions throughout the semester based on my judgment of overall frequency and quality**. If you skip class, don’t expect a high participation grade. If you want to know how you are doing on class participation, don’t hesitate to ask me.

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Blog Posts

Class participation will be augmented by course blog contributions. The course blog is located on blackboard and will be an opportunity to present and discuss current topics in marketing communications outside of class. Everyone will contribute at least six unique posts on a topic related to the course readings, and will make a substantive response to at least four blog entries posted by other students during the semester. Be creative and showcase your insights. Your contributions should be concise, insightful, and provocative.

Here are two good resources for writing effective blog entries:

<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/how-to-write-effective-blog-posts/>

<http://gilllin.com/blog/2009/12/five-tips-for-effective-blog-writing/>

Midterm Papers

You will receive details about each assignment separately. Each assignment must be completed and handed in on time to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused, or discuss your situation with me in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out. Remember: this is YOUR responsibility.

Video Testimonies

Details for this capstone assignment are forthcoming.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ATTENDANCE

Students are required to do all of the reading, attend all classes, complete all assignments, and participate fully in class discussion. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class meeting. Attendance grade may be affected by your promptness and level of attention during class lecture. You are allowed two absences without explanation, after which there is a deduction off the final grade for each unexcused absence.

Personal computers and wireless Internet are a key part of today's technological culture, but they also can distract you from the class discussion and dampen participation. I expect you to use computers for note-taking purposes only, and to avoid using other mobile devices during class time. Any deviation will result in laptops being banned from the classroom and participation grades being impacted.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

You are responsible for the material covered in class and in the reading. You will be evaluated on the following:

- The level of your engagement with the class materials (as demonstrated in your written work and class participation)
- Your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms
- Your ability to creatively explore the theories and materials presented in the class

All of your work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales:

- How well it demonstrates an understanding of the readings and lectures of the class
- How well it articulates and structures its argument

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COURSE GRADING POLICY

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A+/A outstanding, insightful work and analysis, showing an understanding beyond the basic course material

A-/B+ above average work, demonstrates effort and understanding

B/B- average work, needs improvement on ideas and argument

C+/C shows little effort, lacks clarity and/or argument

C- and below meets the bare minimum, shows little understanding of material

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must first wait 24 hours (cooling off period) before appealing it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate. All concerns should be addressed within 10 days of receiving the graded assignment. After that, no appeals will be accepted for review and the grade will be considered final.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

DISABILITY ACCOMODATIONS:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213)740-0776.

ESL STUDENT ACCOMODATIONS:

Please inform me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations based on your understanding of the English language.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in is your own and no one else's, and that you have not turned in any work for which you have received credit in another class. Do not take this policy lightly!

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled "University Sanction Guidelines." These policies, procedures and guidelines will be enforced. It is important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself.

Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any doubts about any of these practices, you must confer with the professor.