This course explores how catastrophes are remembered, both by the individuals who experienced them and by those who have lived after them. We will focus on four events: the Battle of the Somme (1916), the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945), the first decade of the AIDS pandemic (1981-1991), and the attack on the World Trade Center of September 11, 2001. Our goal will be to examine the differing ways in which the memory of these events has been preserved and how those memories continue to shape the present.

The forms of memorialization we will explore include personal memoirs, literary works, architectural monuments, museums, photographs, films, musical compositions, and digital archives. The questions with which we will be concerned include the often-problematic relationship between individual testimonies and public narratives, the difficulties of drawing analogies between individual and collective memories, and the tension between “history” (i.e., the construction of empirically grounded narratives of past events) and “memory” (i.e., the various ways in which the past continues to live on into the present).

Course Structure:

The Monday and Wednesday meetings of the course will be devoted to a discussion of the readings assigned for the day. You should come to class prepared to discuss the materials, examine their implications for the broader themes we will be discussing, and draw connections between the materials with which we have been working. The focus and structure of the Friday meetings will vary from week to week and, in addition to further discussion of the week’s readings, will include further discussions of points raised in posts to the course WordPress site, visits to sites on or near to campus, work on course projects, meetings with invited guests, screenings and discussion of short films.

This site will also serve as a way for me to post brief comments about the materials we will be discussing. New posts will appear by noon on Fridays and will remain open for comments until noon on Thursdays. At some point during the period when the posts are open for comment you should post responses that analyze the assigned materials, suggest future lines of discussion, draw connections between the differing parts of the course, and/or offer links to (and discussions of) related materials. From time to time, the site will also be used as a way of generating comments for discussion in the Friday workshops.

Course Requirements:

In addition to faithful attendance and regular participation in class discussions, a significant requirement for this course will be the creation of an entry on Clio, a crowd-sourced public history site, documenting a Boston area memory site. Instructions and interim deadlines for the completion of the various stages of this project can be found on the “About the Clio Project” tab on the course’s WordPress site. To receive full credit, the project must be completed and approved by noon on Monday, December 9, 2019.

You will also be asked to write four short (1500-2500 words) papers in response to questions drawn from issues raised in the readings, the course’s online discussion forum, class discussions, and topics explored in the Friday workshops. Dates for the short papers are listed on the syllabus. In computing the grade for this component of the course, the lowest of the four grades will be dropped.

In determining final grades for this course, the Clio project will count for 40% of the final grade and the three best grades on the short papers will count for 30%, contributions to the online discussion forums and randomly scheduled in-class analysis exercises will count for 30%. Grading rubrics for the assignments are available on the course WordPress site.
Policy on Digital Devices, Absences, Late Papers, Incompletes, and Learning Disabilities

Students are welcome to use computers or portable digital devices for note-taking and/or accessing course materials in class, but please mute any alarms and notification sounds. It goes without saying that you should refrain from using these devices during class times for tasks other than those connected with the course. Since I reserve the right, as needed, to ask you to cease using such devices, so you may want bring alternative note-taking media (e.g., paper and pen) with you.

If possible, please advise me of any unavoidable absences prior to class. Frequent (i.e., more than three) unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade by a half step (i.e., from B to B-). Late papers will not be accepted unless there is a compelling explanation (computer malfunctions typically do not constitute a “compelling explanation”: it is your responsibility to make backups of your work, update your system software, and submit work on time).

Incompletes will be given only in cases of serious illness, family emergencies, and other matters of sufficient gravity to render you incapable of finishing the course. If at all possible, we should discuss arrangements for the completion of coursework prior to my issuing an Incomplete.

Should any problems arise (e.g., absences, issues with the course site, scheduling of meetings), I can best be reached via email. Messages can also be left on my office phone (617-358-1781), but it will take longer for me to respond.

Students with learning disabilities that may require adjustments in course arrangements should contact me by the second week of class.

Academic Conduct and Privacy Rights

All students should review the university’s Academic Conduct Code. Particular attention should be paid to the exhaustive discussion in the section entitled “Plagiarism,” which reviews the variety of forms that plagiarism can take and offers clear examples of what each involves. Since past experience suggests that students tend not to be aware of the range of actions that constitute plagiarism, it is imperative that you review this section of the code. It amounts to nothing less than the fundamental rules that govern the work we do as scholars and, as such, these rules will be strictly enforced.

Students also enjoy various rights under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Since the implications of FERPA for the use of social media in a classroom setting remain somewhat unclear, I have restricted access to the course WordPress course site to students enrolled in this course. Your contributions to the Clio site will, of necessity, be publicly accessible and identified as your work.

BU HUB Learning Outcomes:

Completion of this course satisfies the following BU HUB Learning Outcomes:

1. **Historical consciousness**: Our fundamental concern will be with examining the ways in which individuals and the cultures in which they live have gone about making sense of events that would seem to defy comprehension. This will involve examining a variety of primary source materials (e.g., contemporary newspaper accounts, individual diaries, letters, and other archival materials, etc.). We will also explore the diverse ways (e.g., memoirs, memorials, museums, ceremonial rituals, literary works, motion pictures, musical compositions, etc.) in which memories of catastrophic events have been passed on to subsequent generations. Memoirs, magazines, photos, movies, musical compositions, digital archives, etc.). My hope is that, in the process, we may come to appreciate the myriad ways in which human beings have sought to preserve the memory of what has been lost and to reflect on how the work in which we are engaged might itself serve as yet another example of complicated relationship between memory and history.

2. **Aesthetic Exploration**: Since one of the ways in which the past remains present is in works of art, we will be considering the ways diversity of ways in which artworks serves as memorials. This will require us to learn to “read” not only written testimonials, but architectural monuments (e.g., the
Whitehall Cenotaph), literary works (e.g., the poems by soldiers and AIDS activists), films (e.g., *Hiroshima mon Amour*), and musical compositions (e.g., Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem* and Steve Reich and John Adams’ 9-11 compositions).

3. **Research and Information Literacy:** Increasingly, the memory of catastrophic events has been preserved in online digital archives. You will need to shuffle between the roles of consumers, critics, and contributors to this undertaking. Much of the material we will be examining will be drawn from these archives and part of our job will be to reflect, compare, and criticize the way in which these new “memory sites” go about their work. You will be making your own contribution to these endeavors by documenting a Boston area memory site on Clio, an online, crowd-sourced, public history site.

Finally, for those who are (or decided to become) History majors, this course can be used to satisfy either the American or the European area requirement.

**Caveats:**

It is unlikely that anyone will be conversant with all of the material we will be exploring. The good news is that this means that you are sure to learn something new; the bad news is that some of the materials will present greater challenges than others. Since it may not be obvious which materials may be stumbling blocks, you should be careful not to fall behind.

Since we will be spending the semester examining how people have been forced to wrestle with horrible events, this course inevitably prompts (but cannot pretend to resolve) questions that lie at the very heart of the human condition, among them the ultimate meaning of the seemingly inevitable experience of loss, suffering, pain, and death. This can be quite emotionally draining and, while these are matters that we must all ultimately confront, it might be worth considering whether — depending on what else is going on in your life at the moment — you want to deal with them this semester. I will indicate which materials might present particular problems and am receptive to discussing any particular concerns you might about the materials I will be asking you to examine.

**Course Materials:**

All of the readings for the course will be available as downloads from Mugar library. We will also make use of the following collection of readings that offers a convenient survey recent literature on the questions we will be addressing: Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, editors, *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham University Press). The entire text can be downloaded from the Mugar Library site. The rest of the materials for the course is available on the course website.

**Course Schedule & Readings:**

The syllabus contains clickable links that should take you to the materials assigned (please notify me of any broken links or other problems).

I. **Introduction: History, Memory, and Memory Sites**

Sept. 6  
Friday Workshop

Visit to Marsh Chapel (gather outside the front doors)

Sept. 9  
Heritage, History, and Public Monuments

Quin Hillyer, “In (partial) defense of the New Orleans Monuments” (May 1, 2017)
John Daniel Davidson, “Why We Should Keep the Confederate Monuments Right Where They Are,” The Federalist (August 18, 2017)
Benjamin J. Dueholm, “We don’t erase history by pulling statues down. We do it by putting them up,” Washington Post, August 23, 2017.

Sept. 11 Memories, Individual and Collective


Sept. 13 Friday Workshop

Sept 16 “Memory Sites”

Ross Poole, “Memory, History and the Claims of the Past,” Memory Studies 1:2 (2008): 149–166

II. The Battle of the Somme

Sept. 18 The Somme as History and Memory

“Battle of the Somme,” Wikipedia article [look at both the main entry and the “Talk” tab]
Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (ACLS Humanities Ebook) 3-55, 74-81

Sept 20 Friday Workshop

Search these sites come prepared to share what you found:

First World War Centenary (Imperial War Museum)
First World War Centenary (Oxford)
Europeana 1914-1918

Sept 23 Journals and Memoirs

Excerpts from Siegfried Sassoon, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer
Selections from Edmund Blunden, Undertones of War
Selections from Robert Graves, Good-bye to All That
Selections from Ernst Jünger, Storm of Steel
Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory 82-122
Sept. 25  War Poetry: Sassoon and Owen

Owen, “Preface,” “Strange Meeting,” “Parable of the Old Men and the Young,” “Anthem for Doomed Youth,” “Dulce et Decorum Est,” in *Poems by Wilfred Owen*

Sept. 27  Friday Workshop

Find something in the [Oxford First World War Poetry Digital Archive](http://digitalarchive.ox.ac.uk) to present

Sept. 30  War Poetry: Blunden, Binyon, and Pope

Edmund Blunden, “Report on Experience”
Jessie Pope, “Play the Game” and “The Call,” in *Jessie Pope's War Poems* (1915)
Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* 168-206

Oct. 4  Friday Workshop

Oct. 7  Missing Bodies and Public Memorials

*Remembrance Sunday Ceremonies at the Cenotaph:* 2 hour video of 2014 ceremony — at least watch the first 20 minutes (which includes historical footage), then the wreath laying (from the 30 minute mark to 50 minute mark); the ceremony ends after one hour; the second hour consists of crowd interviews and parade of troops.
*Jay Winter,* “War Memorials and the Mourning Process,” *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* 78-116
*5000 Ice Sculptures Placed on City Steps in Moving World War I Commemoration,* *Birmingham Mail*, August 2, 2014.

Oct. 9  Mass Death and Modern Memory

Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* 29-53, 204-229

Oct. 11  Friday Workshop

Oct. 15  (Tuesday) A Musical Memorial: Britten’s War Requiem

Introduction to the *War Requiem* ([ten minute video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QymZcJOfzCQ))
Benjamin Britten, *War Requiem* ([musical composition, 85 minutes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QymZcJOfzCQ))
October 16 — First Short Paper Due

III. Hiroshima & Nagasaki

Oct. 16 American Reports and Reactions


Account of the bombing by John A. Siemes, S. J.

“A Tale of Two Cities” [US Government film]

“Hiroshima After One Year” [Universal Newsreel]


Oct. 18 Friday Workshop

Oct. 21 John Hersey’s Hiroshima

John Hersey, Hiroshima


Oct 23 Classified Films, Confiscated Photographs, and Hibakusha Drawings


Hiroshima Nagasaki August 1945 (1995 documentary 16 minutes)

Nagasaki Journey (1995 documentary 29 minutes)


John W. Dower, Ground Zero 1945, MIT Visualizing Culture (website).

Oct. 25 Friday Workshop

Oct. 28 Hibakusha Testimonies

Memoirs of Atomic Bomb Survivors, National Peace Memorial Halls for Atomic Bomb Victims

Testimony of Hibakusha, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs


Oct 30 Rituals, Museums, and Memorials: The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

Hiroshima Peace Site


Nov 1     Friday Workshop

Nov 4     Historians, Veterans, and Politicians: The Enola Gay Controversy


November 6 — Second Short Paper Due

IV. The AIDS Pandemic

Nov. 6 Diseases & Metaphors

Susan Sontag, Illness as Metaphor & AIDS and Its Metaphors pp. 3-9, 257-61, 63-67, 104-112, 132-134, 173-183

Nov 8     Friday Workshop

Nov 11    Oral Histories of Researchers and Activists

In Their Own Words: NIH Researchers Recall the Early Years of AIDS (NIH, Office of History)
ACTUP Oral History Project

Nov.13    Paul Monette: The Poet as Witness


Nov. 15   Friday Workshop

Nov. 18   Memorialization & Activism: The AIDS Quilt

The Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt
November 18: Third Short Paper Due

V. September 11, 2001 in Manhattan

Nov. 20 Images

Digital Photos from Site Visitors, September 11 Digital Archive (browse)
Understanding 9/11: A Television News Archive
“9.11.01 The Photographers’ Stories,” American Photo (iPad app or website)

Nov. 22 Friday Workshop

Nov. 25 Narratives: Spoken, Written, and Graphic

Stories, September 11 Digital Archives (browse in a few of the account in the collections)

Dec 2 Memorials: Spontaneous, Public, and Virtual

National 9/11 Memorial
Flight 93 National Memorial
National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial
Boston Logan International Airport 9/11 Memorial

Dec. 4 The National September 11 Memorial Museum

National September 11 Memorial Museum

Dec 6 Friday Workshop

Dec 9 Three Musical Memorials

John Adams, On the Transmigration of Souls (musical composition, approx. 25 minutes)
Steve Reich, *WTC 911* (musical composition, approx. 16 minutes)
William Basinski, *The Disintegration Loops* (the first hour of a five hour musical composition, with the video Basinski recorded from the roof of his Brooklyn apartment of the last hour of daylight over lower Manhattan on September 11, 2001).

Dec 11 Presentation of Clio Projects