This course explores how catastrophes are remembered, both by the individuals who lived through them and by the those who have come after them. It focuses 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 — and examines the differing ways in which they have been remembered. The forms of memorialization we investigate include architectural monuments, museums, memoirs, poems, photographs, films, musical compositions, and digital archives. The questions with which we will be concerned include the relationship between individual testimonies and public narratives, the conflict between historical documentation and artistic representation, the impact of trauma on memories (both personal and collective), the difficulties of drawing analogies between individual and collective memories, and the troubled relationship between “history” (i.e., the study of past events) and “memory” (i.e., the way in which the past reaches into the present). The aim of the course is to understand individuals and the cultures in which they live about making sense of events that would seem to defy comprehension, to examine how they attempt to preserve the memory of what has been lost, and to reflect on how the work we will be doing in this course might, itself, be understood as an example of the complicated relationship between memory and history.

This is a rather demanding course. We will be drawing on a wide variety of materials (e.g., scholarly articles, memoirs, magazines, photos, movies, digital archives, etc.) and there is a great deal of it. You may also find that some of these materials (particularly the images) are quite disturbing. We will be spending quite a bit of time trying to make sense of how people and societies wrestle with horrible events and, as a result, this course inevitably raises (but cannot pretend to answer) questions about how to deal with loss, suffering, and death. All of this can be quite emotionally draining. Depending on what else might be going on in your life at the moment, it might be worth considering whether you want to spend this semester confronting the material this course will ask you to face.

**Course Structure and Requirements:**

This is not a lecture course. Class meetings will consist of discussions of the assigned materials (which should be read prior to class meetings), explorations of their implications for the broader themes of the course, and reflections on the relevance of the material we are discussing for the projects on which students will be working. In order to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in discussions, I may sometimes select students at random to initiate discussions.

The main assignment for this course will be the construction of a website that exploring some of the questions we have been examining this term. The particular focus of the site is open ended, though it should be recognizable concerned with the broader issues (though not necessarily the particular cases) that we have been exploring this term. For example, while you are welcome to focus on one particular aspect of the cases we have examined, you should feel free to explore how the work we have been doing might be applied to other catastrophes. Sites examining broader questions (e.g., the relationship between “memory” and “history”, or issues involving the role of particular media in the process of memorialization) are also welcome. In evaluating the final projects, both the substantive content (e.g., its use of relevant sources, the quality of its analysis) and in the quality of its presentation of this content. In other words, while the final project will require you to do the sort of research that goes into producing an acceptable term paper, a successful website is something more than an uploaded term paper. Examples of previous student projects will be available for you to review and you will receiving ample feedback and aid in completing this project and should come away from the experience with a better sense of how to go about presenting your work to a wider audience.

By noon on Friday, November 6, students will be required to submit the url for a preliminary version of their course project, which will be linked to the course website. Through a random selection process, students will be assigned...
three projects to review. These peer reviews will be due on November 18. Final revisions of the projects must be completed by 11:59 PM on Monday, December 9.

In addition to the final project, students will be asked to write four short (1500-2500 words) papers in response to questions that will be drawn from issues raised in the readings, class discussions, and the course’s online discussion forum. These papers will be due on October 7, October 28, November 13, and December 4.

Students will also be expected to make regular (i.e., at least twice a week) contributions to the “Discussion” section of the course website analyzing the assigned materials, suggesting future lines of discussion, drawing connections between the differing parts of the course, and offering links to (and discussions of) other relevant materials.

Finally, form time to time, other events and activities (e.g., film screenings, site visits, concerts, etc.) outside of class time. While attendance at these events is not required, I hope that you will make an effort to attend at least some of them: given the range of the questions we will be investigating, there is only so much that can be accomplished in the classroom.

In computing final grades for this course, the final project will count for 40% of the final grade, the four pages will count for 40%, and participation (which includes contributions to class discussions and to the online forum, as well as project peer reviews will count for 20%. More than two absences from classes will result in a lowering of your grade.

Academic Conduct, Privacy Rights, and Copyright

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 provides clear examples of what each involves. Since past experience indicates that, unfortunately, 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, they are, and ought to 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 context remain somewhat unclear, I have restricted access to the main WordPress course site to students enrolled in the course. I do, however, hope to aggregate the best work done in this course on a public website on the BU domain. If you would prefer that your work not be included on such a site, please notify me.

Policy on Digital Devices, Absences, Incompletes, and “Information Overload Days”

Students are welcome to use computers or portable digital devices for note-taking, but please mute any alarms or notification sounds and refrain from using these devices for tasks other than those connected with the course. Mobile phones should, of course, also be silenced.

Should any problems arise (e.g., absences, problems with the course site, scheduling of meetings), I can best be reached by email (messages can also be left on my office phone, but I don’t always notice them).

While I would like for this class to be the most important thing in your life, I am aware that it is likely to have significant competition from other quarters. In recognition of that fact, I have adopted the policy pioneered by Ryan Cordell (Northeastern University) of allowing students to claim up to two “information overload” (“IO days”) days during the semester, which exempt them from participation in class discussions (you will, however, be expected to show up for class and may not use your IO days to supplement your two excused absences, nor do they exempt you from having to fulfill assignments). You must notify me at the start of class if you plan to claim an IO day.
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 meet to discuss arrangements for the completion of coursework prior to my issuing an Incomplete.

**Course Materials:**

All of the readings for the course will be available online and can be accessed from the links on this syllabus. In the case of materials housed on Mugar Electronic Reserves, you will need to search by course number.

**Course Schedule**

The syllabus contains clickable links that should take you to the materials assigned (please notify me of any broken links or other problems). For materials housed on proprietary databases (e.g., JSTOR, Project Muse, etc.), the links will take you to the BU proxy server. After signing in with your user name and password, you should be able to access the material. For materials placed on Mugar Electronic Reserve, you will need to search for the material (the drop down menu allows searches by author, title, course number, and instructor).

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

9/4    Mourning, Melancholia, and Catastrophic Loss

*Walter Benjamin,* “On the Concept of History,” Section IX

[available from *Mugar Electronic Reserves*]


9/9    Memories, Individual and Collective


9/11    History vs Memory


**II. The Battle of the Somme**

9/16    The Somme as History and Memory

*The Times* [London], July 3, 1916

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* 3-35 [Mugar Electronic Reserves], “Battle of the Somme,” Wikipedia article [look at both the main entry and the “Talk” tab]

Additional Digital Resources to review:
First World War Centenary (Imperial War Museum)
First World War Centenary (Oxford)
Europeana 1914-1918

9/18 Siegfried Sasson: Notes and Memoirs

Excerpts from *Siegfried Sassoon, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*

9/23 War Poetry

Jessie Pope, “Play the Game” and “The Call,” in *Jessie Pope’s War Poems* (1915)
Edmund Blunden, “Report on Experience”
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*

9/25 & 10/2 Mass Death and Modern Memory

Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* 36-51, 64-74. 310-335 [Mugar Electronic Reserves]
Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* 29-53, 204-229 [Mugar Electronic Reserves]
Note: because of copyright restrictions, these readings will be made available in two parts: the first group of selections from Fussell and Winter will be available until September 25; the second group will become available on September 26.

10/7 Missing Bodies and Public Memorials

*Remembrance Day Ceremonies at the Cenotaph* (23 minute video of 2011 ceremony)
Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* 78-116 [Mugar Electronic Reserves]

10/7 First Short Paper Due

III. Hiroshima

10/9 American Reports and Reactions

“A Tale of Two Cities” [US Government film]
“Hiroshima After One Year” [Universal Newsreel]

10/14 Monday Schedule —— No Class

10/16 Hibaksha Narratives


10/21 Drawings and Confiscated Photographs


10/23 Rituals, Museums, and Memorials: The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

Hiroshima Peace Site

10/28 Historians, Veterans, and Politicians: The Enola Gay Controversy


10/28 Second Short Paper Due

IV. The AIDS Pandemic

10/30 Memoirs of Researchers and Activists

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

11/4 Diseases & Metaphors


By Noon, Friday November 6: Launch Preliminary Version of Course Site, Commence Peer Review

Photography & Memory


Douglas Crimp, “Portraits of People with AIDS,” in Crimp, Melancholia and Moralism, 82-107 [Mugar Reserves].

A Day with HIV, 2013 Gallery

Memorialization & Action: The AIDS Quilt

The Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt


Third Short Paper Due

Submit Peer Reviews

V. September 11, 2001 in Manhattan

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)


11/20 & 25
Narratives: Spoken, Written, and Graphic

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


12/2
Memorials: Spontaneous, Public, Virtual, and Musical

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


12/4
The National Memorial Museum

National September 11 Memorial Museum


12/4
Fourth Paper Due

By 11:59 PM, Monday, December 9: Complete Revisions on Course Sites

12/9
Presentation and Discussion of Course Sites