

Living Collections: Memory & Performance – Production Studio Course

NMDS 5286 A / CRN 5758, Fall 2016
Instructor: Prof. Nitin Sawhney, Ph.D.
6 East 16th Street, Room D-603
Thursdays 4:00 – 6:45 pm

Email: nitin@newschool.edu
Phone: 212.229.5600 x4302
Office: 79 Fifth Ave, 16th Fl, Rm 1622
Hours: Wednesdays 3:00 - 6:00 pm

Course Description

How do we make sense of memory and human experience, whether in everyday life or in conditions of conflict and crisis? How do we investigate, aggregate, organize and act on visceral, sensory and dynamic phenomena that are not easily digitized, classified and archived? From the everyday experience of walking in the city, to contested memories of war and conflict, to artistic interventions and dialogues, to the performance of bodies in urban space, experiences, memories and expressions often require multi-modal representations, diverse interpretations, as well as non-linear, parallel and relational framing in order to be organized. In this course, we will explore the design of “living collections” of experiences, memories and expressions by examining theoretical constructs, ideas and practices from the humanities/social sciences, computation/information design, and the visual/performing arts.

We will conduct case studies of digital and networked online projects — organizing complex media and information from oral histories, testimonies, performances, civic actions, and socio-political events — that are not simply archival, but represent unfolding, inter-related and dynamic phenomena. Students will collaborate in teams to conceptualize, design and implement a prototype of a digital collection, while working closely with domain experts and participants in the process. We will consider the affordances and limitations of using living collections to rethink domains of inquiry, conduct cooperative research, and engage diverse participants to act on the emerging “data” through visualization, cultural analytics, or public dissemination.

Course Requirements and Grading

The course is designed to allow students to excel individually and collaboratively in ways that are most meaningful to their own learning goals. The production studio seeks to foster a participatory learning environment through shared contributions and creative inquiry towards collective design projects.

1. General participation and engagement with activities in class: 15%
2. Responses to readings and contributions on the course blog: 15%
3. Completion of creative assignments & presentation in class: 20%
4. Midterm project presentation, proposal and participatory review: 20%
5. Final presentation of design project and write-up (mixed-media essay): 30%

While group projects are expected, individual contributions will be carefully examined. All grades are final and are not subject to change. Incomplete or “I” grades are strongly discouraged.

Academic Honesty: By taking this course you agree that you will adhere to The New School’s Standards of Conduct, as well as the New School Academic Honesty policy. The work you do for any assignment should be your own and due credit should be given if developed in collaboration with others in or outside class.

Course Blog: <http://livingcollections2016.wordpress.com>

Zotero Collection for Readings: http://www.zotero.org/groups/living_collections_2016/items

Course Topics and Weekly Schedule

Week (Date)	Topic	Proposed Activities
Week 1: (Sept 1)	Introduction and Expectations	<i>Overview of the course, introductions of participants, memory activity and examples of prior design projects</i>
Week 2: (Sept 8)	Situating Memory and Nostalgia	<i>Why should we care about memory and designing living collections? How can we conduct critical inquiry around notions of memory for creative media/design projects? >> Workshop on Designing Digital Collections</i>
Week 3: (Sept 15)	Memories of Self, Family and Everyday Experiences	<i>Exploratory inquiry of autobiographic, family & everyday memories using audio, visual and interactive tools. >> Present your creative explorations in class.</i>
Week 4: (Sept 22)	Collective Memory and Cultures of Connectivity	<i>Critical understanding of collective memory and the cultures of connectivity in networked sites online. >> Examine compelling networked memory sites.</i>
Week 5: (Sept 29)	Sites of Memory and Place	<i>Examining memory in the context of urban spaces and sites of violence, conflict and trauma. How do social scientists, artists and performers engage and activate such sites? >> Present your own site-specific inquiry.</i>
Week 6: (Oct 6)	Performing Memory and the Body – Screening of <i>Zona Intervenida</i> , a performance documentary film based in Guatemala	<i>Performance as embodied practices of testimony memory to activate sites of remembrance or injustice. How does body, movement and place intersect to help us rethink or transform the past?</i>
Week 7: (Oct 13)	Designing for Remembering	<i>How do we design digital technologies, archives and collections? How do they help preserve, transform or resituate memory and knowledge? >> Examine examples of digital collections and designing with new platforms.</i>
Week 8: (Oct 20)	Midterm: Presentation of Project Concepts + Critical Essay/Proposals	<i>>> Present compelling design proposals for memory based-project concepts (as individuals or groups)</i>
Week 9: (Oct 27)	Forgetting and Erasure	<i>We examine seven types of forgetting that serve different values and how these processes function in community contexts and in the digital network world.</i>
Week 10: (Nov 3)	Working with Memories and Designing Memory Probes	<i>Designing narrative, audio/visual and imaginative probes to conduct memory research + discussion of project design updates.</i>
Week 11: (Nov 10)	The Future of Memory	<i>Newly emerging concepts inspired from philosophy, quantum physics and neuroscience may allow us to reimagine futures invoked by memory. >> Design experimental and imaginary cultural memory probes.</i>

Week 12: (Nov 17)	Working Production Studio I	<i>Discussing work-in-progress, creative investigations and design of production projects in class; session includes brainstorming and hands-on workshops as needed.</i>
No Class Session	Thanksgiving Holidays	<i>Eat well, rest and reconnect with family ☺</i>
Week 13: (Dec 1)	Working Production Studio II	<i>>> Present work-in-progress projects for peer-review and brainstorming</i>
Week 14: (Dec 8)	Working Production Studio III + Course Reflections	<i>Write-up critical mixed-media essays on experiences of creative inquiry and design (prepare drafts for review)</i>
Week 15: (Dec 15)	Presentation of Final Projects	<i>>> Present final projects with external crits + Discuss ongoing interests & expanding projects in the future</i>

*** Final Papers and Project Deliverables must be submitted online by Monday, December 19th**

Selected Readings

Please note this is a tentative selection of readings, subject to revision (all are available on Zotero or online). Some readings are designated as required, while others will serve as reference material for further inquiry on the topic. In general, you are encouraged to read at least 2 key articles for each topic to prepare a reflective post or design inspiration on the blog each week.

Recommended Book: Fernyhough, Charles. Pieces of Light: The New Science of Memory. Profile Books, 2012.

1. Situating Memory and Nostalgia

Boym, Svetlana. Nostalgia and its Discontents, short essay adapted from The Future of Nostalgia. Basic Books, 2001.

Sturken, Marita. Memory, consumerism and media: Reflections on the emergence of the field. *Memory Studies* 1: 73-78, January 2008.

Willig, C., 2008. Working with Memories. *Introducing qualitative research in psychology adventures in theory and method*. Maidenhead, England; New York: McGraw Hill/Open University Press.

2. Memories of Self, Family and Everyday Experiences

Charles Fernyhough. The story of the self. *The Guardian*, January 13, 2012.

Hirsch, Marianne. Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory. *Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP*, 1997. Read Introduction + Mourning and Postmemory.

David S. Kirk and Abigail Sellen. 2010. On human remains: Values and practice in the home archiving of cherished objects. *ACM Trans. Comput.-Hum. Interact.* 17, 3, Article 10 (July 2010), 43 pages.

3. Collective Memory and Cultures of Connectivity

Assmann, Aleida. Transformations between History and Memory. *Social Research: An International Quarterly of The Social Sciences*. Volume 75. N^o1. The New School for Social Research, 2008.

José van Dijck. Flickr and the culture of connectivity: Sharing views, experiences, memories. *Memory Studies*, October 2011; vol. 4, 4: pp. 401-415.

Michela Ferron and Paolo Massa. Beyond the encyclopedia: Collective memories in Wikipedia. *Memory Studies* January 2014 7: 22-45.

Murakami, Kyoko. Commemoration reconsidered: Second World War Veterans' reunion as pilgrimage. *Memory Studies*, July 2014; vol. 7, 3: pp. 339-353. (Optional)

4. Sites of Memory and Place

Diana Taylor. Villa Grimaldi. The Hemispheric Institute, New York University. [Online Book](#)

Karen E. Till. Artistic and activist memory-work: Approaching place-based practice. *Memory Studies*, January 2008; vol. 1, 1: pp. 99-113.

Yifat Gutman. Where do we go from here: The pasts, presents and futures of Ground Zero. *Memory Studies*, January 2009; vol. 2, 1: pp. 55-70.

Gonzalo Conte. A topography of memory: Reconstructing the architectures of terror in the Argentine dictatorship. *Memory Studies*, January 2015, vol. 8: pp. 86-101. (Optional)

5. Performing Memory and the Body

Diana Taylor. The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas. Duke University Press, 2003. Read Ch 1: Acts of Transfer, Ch 3: Memory as Cultural Practice, and Ch 7: Staging Traumatic Memory.

Plate, Liedeke and Smelik, Anneke. Introduction in Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture. *New York: Routledge, 2013.*

Timmy De Laet. Bodies with(out) Memories: Strategies of Re-enactment in Contemporary Dance. In Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture. Edited by Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik. *New York: Routledge, 2013.*

6. Designing for Remembering

Van House, Nancy and Churchill, Elizabeth F. Technologies of memory: Key issues and critical perspectives. *Memory Studies*, September 2008; vol. 1, 3: pp. 295-310.

Elise van den Hoven. A future-proof past: Designing for remembering experiences. *Memory Studies*, July 2014; vol. 7, 3: pp. 370-384.

Diana Taylor. Save as... Knowledge and Transmission in the Age of Digital Technologies. *Convergence Zones: Public Cultures and Translocal Practices, 2010.*

7. Forgetting and Digital Erasure

Connerton, Paul. Seven types of forgetting. *Memory Studies*, 1: 59, 2008.

Corina Sas and Steve Whittaker. 2013. Design for forgetting: disposing of digital possessions after a breakup. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '13)*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1823-1832.

Schwarz, Ori. The past next door: Neighbourly relations with digital memory-artefacts. *Memory Studies*, January 2014; vol. 7, 1: pp. 7-21.

Ramos, Ana Margarita. 'The good memory of this land': Reflections on the processes of memory and forgetting. *Memory Studies*, January 2010; vol. 3, 1: pp. 55-72. (Optional)

8. Working with Memories and Designing Memory Probes

Gaver, W.W., Dunne, A., & Pacenti, E. (1999). Cultural Probes. *Interactions* vi(1), 21–29.

Gaver, W. W., Boucher, A., Pennington, S., & Walker, B. (2004). Cultural Probes and the Value of Uncertainty. *Interactions*, 11(5), 53–56.

Daniela Petrelli, Elise van den Hoven, and Steve Whittaker. 2009. Making history: intentional capture of future memories. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (CHI '09). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1723-1732.

9. The Future of Memory

Schacter, D. L., Addis, D. R., Hassabis, D., Martin, V. C., Spreng, R. N., & Szpunar, K. K. (2012). The Future of Memory: Remembering, Imagining, and the Brain. *Neuron*, 76(4), 10.

Gillespie, G. Window to the Past: The Role of Quantum Entanglement in Memory. *Journal of Consciousness Exploration and Research*. Volume 5. Issue 4, December 8, 2014.

Wray Herbert. Imagining the Future Invokes Your Memory. *Scientific American*, May 7, 2012.

Online References and Resources

Guardian Special Issue on Memory: <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/series/maximising-your-memory>

MoMA Collection: <http://www.moma.org/explore/collection/index>

MoMA Uneven Growth Collection: <http://uneven-growth.moma.org>

MoMA Design and Violence Archive: <http://designandviolence.moma.org/archives/>

Rhizome ArtBase: <http://rhizome.org/artbase/>

New Museum Collection: <http://archive.newmuseum.org/>

New Territories Lab: <http://newterritorieslab.org>

New York Public Library Digital Collections: <http://www.nypl.org/blog/2015/01/21/digital-collections-platform-intro>

Battersea Arts Centre Digital Archive: <http://www.bacarchive.org.uk/>

New School Collection: <http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu>

Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library: <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/hidvl>

Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary: <http://films.nfb.ca/capturing-reality/>

Granito Memory Archive: <http://granitomem.com>

Guatemala Después Exhibit Digital Collection: <http://GuatemalaDespues.org>

#SearchUnderOccupy Exhibit Collection: <http://searchunderoccupy.org>

Tools and Platforms

Wordpress: <http://wordpress.org>

Public Access Digital Media Archive: <http://pad.ma>

Omeka Digital Collection Platform: <http://omeka.org>

Collective Access Digital Collection Platform: <http://collectiveaccess.org>

Scalar Semantic Web Authoring Tool: <http://scalar.usc.edu/scalar/>

Library of Congress Personal Archiving: <http://digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/>

Witness Guide to Video Archiving: <http://archiveguide.witness.org/>

Manovich, Lev. *Visualization Methods for Media Studies*, 8 July 2015.

http://softwarestudies.com/cultural_analytics/Manovich.Visualization_Methods_Media_Studies.pdf