Visual Culture and the Politics of Memory: Global Perspectives
June 4-22, 2012
NYU Buenos Aires, Argentina

Course Description:
This course examines the intersections of visual culture, commemorative politics, social movements, and nationalism in an analysis of the politics of memory in the global context. We will examine the debates and contestations over memorialization and artistic engagements with the memory of traumatic events in several key sites around the world, including Argentina, the United States, Chile, Germany, and South Africa. The course will have a particular focus on the politics of memory at work in Argentina over the memory of its so-called “dirty war” from 1976-1983, with visits to particular sites and projects in Buenos Aires in which artists, architects, and activists are engaging with questions of memory and the aftermath of trauma. It will put these local sites into comparative dialogue with examples of artistic and architectural memorialization in other contexts such as the memorialization of 9/11 in the United States, of the Holocaust in Germany, of Apartheid in South Africa, of political terrorism in Colombia, and of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile.

We will examine the key role of visual culture in the politics of remembrance and the relationship of commemorative politics to social movements. The realization of memory through architecture, design, art, photography, digital media, and museums has been central to the politics of the memory of violence and trauma over the last few decades. Through explorations of how art, photography, and design have played a key role in shaping cultural memory in these contexts, we will investigate the aesthetics of memory, the role of pedagogy in remembrance, the spatialization of memory, and the deployment of memory through these forms into political action. The course will draw on the scholarship in visual culture and memory studies to examine the politics of memory from a global perspective.
The course will take place over a three week period in Buenos Aires, meeting regularly at the NYU-Buenos Aires site and with field trips to relevant sites in the city, including the Parque de la Memoria, ESMA (a former military school and site of torture that is now a museum and cultural center), the Plaza de Mayo, and Memoria Abierta, a nonprofit organization that has produced a Topografía de la Memoria through the work of designers and architects. We will take one trip to Rosario, 180 miles away, where the country’s first national Museum of Memory was recently opened and where grassroots memory art is visible in streets throughout the city. Guest speakers in Buenos Aires and Rosario will include architects, curators, designers, artists, and activists involved in memorial projects in the city.

The course will be conducted in English, with additional recommended readings in Spanish for bilingual speakers.

Course Requirements:
Students are required to attend all seminars, to undertake the reading assignments seriously, and to participate fully in seminar discussions. Readings will be prioritized each class.

Students will write one short paper (5-8 pages) on course themes in the first week, and then will produce a written and/or written and visual project. Proposals will be reviewed in the second week of the course.

Grades will be calculated: Participation 25%  Short Paper 25%  Project 50%

Required Books:

Elizabeth Jelin, State Repression and the Limits of Memory (University of Minnesota, 2003)
Marita Sturken, Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero (Duke, 2007)
Victoria Donda, My Name is Victoria: The Extraordinary Story of One Woman’s Struggle to Reclaim Her True Identity (New York: Other Press, 2010)/Mi Nombre es Victoria

All other readings will be distributed as essays in pdf on Blackboard.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1—

Class 1 (Monday June 4): Introduction (Class at NYU-BA, Borges Room) 11-1
Reading:
Victoria Donda, My Name is Victoria/Mi nombre es Victoria
Marita Sturken, Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero
Beatriz Sarlo, “Cultural Landscapes, Buenos Aires”
Jorge Luis Borges, “Funes the Memorious”

Class 2 (Tuesday June 5): Visit to Parque de la Memoria
Reading:
Monumento a las Victimas del Terrorismo del Estado Parque de la Memoria (All essays are in English and Spanish, including two essays by Florencia Battiti)
Andreas Huyssen, “Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia” and “Memory Sites in an Expanded Field”

Special guest: Florencia Battiti, art historian, curator

Class 3 (Wednesday June 6) Models for Thinking about Memory (Class at NYU-BA, Borges Room, 11-1)
Reading:
Michael Rothberg, Multidirectional Memory, Introduction
Marita Sturken, Tangled Memories, Introduction
Elizabeth Jelin, State Repression and the Labors of Memory, Introduction plus first five chapters.

Recommended:
Michael Rothberg, “Hidden Children: The Ethics of Multigenerational Memory After 1961,” from Multidirectional Memory

Class 4 (Thursday June 7): Visit to Plaza de Mayo (Madres protest) and Iglesia de la Santa Cruz
Reading:
Marguerite Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture, Chapter 1, “A Lexicon of Terror,” (pp. 19-62)
Elaine Scarry, The Body in Pain (excerpt)
Class 5 (Friday June 8): Visit to ESMA
Reading:
Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, “The Scilingo Effect: The Past is Predator” (pp.193-255)
Marcelo Brodksy, *Memory under Construction: El debate sobre la ESMA*

WEEK 2

Class 6 (Monday June 11) The Photograph, the Object, and Memory
(Class at NYU-BA, Borges Room, 11-1)
Reading:
Marianne Hirsch, “Past Lives”
Marianne Hirsch, “Mourning and Post-Memory”
Marcelo Brodsky, *Buena Memoria/Good Memory and Nexo*
Gustavo Germano, *Ausencias* (viewed in class)

Recommended:
WJT Mitchell, “What do Pictures Want?”
Nicholas Mirzoeff, Introduction to *The Right to Look*

Special guest: Marga Steinwasser, artist, discussion of her projects “Quimica de la Memoria” (“Memory Chemistry”) and “Trapo” (“Cloth”)

SHORT PAPER DUE.

Class 7 (Tuesday June 12): Art and the Politics of Memory
(Class at NYU-BA, Borges Room, 11-1)
Reading:
Katherine Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration* (Chapters 3,4, Epilogue)
Doris Salcedo, *Plegaria Muda*
Mieke Bal, *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo’s Political Act* (excerpts)
Vincent Druliolle, “Remembering and its Places in Post-dictatorship Argentina”
Grupo Escombros from *ArtNexus*
Class 8 (Wednesday June 13) The City as a Receptor of Memories/The Street as Site of Protest (Meet at NYU-BA, Borges Room, at 11)

Reading:
Gonzalo Conte, “Topography of Memory Program, of Memoria Abierta” in Architecture and Memory (Memoria Abierta)
Andreas Huyssen, “The Voids of Berlin”
Diana Taylor, “Acts of Transfer” and “You Are Here” From The Archive and the Repertoire

Recommended:
Juhani Palasmaa, “Space, Place, Memory and Imagination”

Special guest: Gonzalo Conte, Memoria Abierta, architect

NOTE:
PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE.

Class 9 (Thursday June 14) Counter-Monuments and Memory Museums (Class at NYU-BA, Borges Room, 11-1)

Reading:
Marita Sturken, Tourists of History, Chapter 5
James Young, “Memory, Countermemory and the End of the Monument” and “Memory Against Itself in Germany Today,” from At Memory’s Edge
Annie Coombes, History After Apartheid (excerpts)
Diana Taylor, “Trauma as Durational Performance”

Class 10 (Friday, June 15) Field Trip to Rosario (Leave from NYU-BA at 9 am)

Reading:
Katherine Hite. Politics and the Art of Commemoration (Chapters 1, 5)

1 pm, Lunch at Bajada España with Rubén Chababo, Director of Museum of Memory.

Walking tour, Plaza San Martín, visit to clandestine detention center and to the Museum of Memory. Finish at 6:30 pm.

Meeting, tour with Rubén Chababo, Director of Museum of Memory, Rosario
Saturday, June 16th, Rosario
Reading:
Alejandra Buzaglo, “Experiences in Treatment of Spaces of Recovered Sites” (from Architecture and Memory p.51) and “A Sundial and the Memories”

10 am. Special guest: **Alejandra Buzaglo**, architect, Coordinator of Human Rights in the School of Architecture, Design and Planning, National University of Rosario. Presentation at the Museum of Memory.

Visit to home/studio of **Fernando Traverso**, artist

Return to Buenos Aires, departing at 2 pm, Saturday afternoon

WEEK 3:

Class 11 (Monday June 18) De-briefing, Reflections
(Class at NYU-BA, Borges Room, 11-1)

Special guest: **Elizabeth Jelin**, sociologist

Class 12 (Tuesday June 19) The Consumerism of Memory
(Class at NYU-BA, Borges Room, 11-1)
Reading:
Ksenija Bilbija, “Tortured by Fashion: Making Memory through Corporate Advertising”
Laurie Beth Clark and Leigh Payne, “Trauma Tourism in Latin America”
Alice Nelson, “Conclusion: Marketing Discontent: The Political Economy of Memory in Latin America”
Marita Sturken, “Memory Tourism”

Class 13 (Wednesday June 20)
NO CLASS, HOLIDAY

Class 14 (Thursday June 21)
Visit to el Olimpo and Memoria Abierta

Class 15 (Friday, June 22) Class Project Presentations
(Class at NYU-BA, Borges Room, 11-1)
Additional Readings in Spanish:

From approximately 1998-2004, Elizabeth Jelin led a major Social Science Research Council collaborative research and teaching project, the Program on Collective Memory of Repression. Its purpose was to produce theoretical and empirical work regarding how memory is (re)constructed in the aftermath of the dictatorships of Latin America’s Southern Cone and Peru. The project trained graduate students who are today leading memory scholars of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, and Peru. In addition, the project produced an influential series of volumes. Today, as we will see in bookstores in Buenos Aires, there is an explosion of writing about visual culture and the politics of memory.

Memorias de la Represion Series, published by Siglo XXI:

Elizabeth Jelin, *Trabajos de la memoria.* (Translated as *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*)

Claudia Feld, *Del estrado a la pantalla: Las imágenes del juicio a los excomandantes en Argentina.*

Elizabeth Jelin, ed., *Las conmemoraciones: las disputas en las fechas ‘infelices’*

Ludmila da Silva Catela and Elizabeth Jelin, eds. *Los archivos de la represión: documentos, memoria y verdad.*

Elizabeth Jelin and Victoria Langland, eds., *Monumentos, memoriales y marcas territoriales*

Ponciano del Pino and Elizabeth Jelin, eds., *Luchas locales, comunidades e identidades*

Elizabeth Jelin and Federico Guillermo Lorenz, eds., *Educación y memoria. La escuela elabora el pasado.*

María Angélica Cruz, *Iglesia, represión y memoria. El caso chileno.*

Elizabeth Jelin and Ana Longoni, eds., *Escrituras, imágenes y escenarios ante la represión.*

Eric Hershberg y Felipe Agüero, eds., *Memorias militares sobre la represión en el Cono Sur: visiones en disputa en dictadura y democracia.*
Elizabeth Jelin y Diego Sempol, eds., *El pasado en el futuro: los movimientos juveniles*.

Elizabeth Jelin y Susana Kaufman, eds., *Subjetividad y figuras de la memoria*.


Claudia Feld y Jessica Stites Mor (Comp.), *El pasado que miramos. Memoria e imagen ante la historia reciente*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Paidós, 2009.

Laura Alcomba, *La casa de los conejos*

Memoria Abierta, *Recorrido por los sitios de la Memoria del Terrorismo de Estado*

Memoria Abierta, *Memorias en la Ciudad*
