Of all the human faculties memory is the most tragic. It is sufficiently vivid to remind us of our sorrows, yet sufficiently unreliable to make us doubt ourselves when we would commemorate our achievements. We cannot discount memory, and we cannot count on it. -- David Gordon, 1995, p. 340.

Taken at face value, the results of National history tests portray Americans as an ahistorical horde, arrogantly presentist in orientation, blithely unconcerned about their origins, and woefully unprepared to think about anything more complicated than choosing between a Big Mac or Whopper. Not only does this indictment hang over the heads of today’s test takers but if we go back to the 20s, 40s, 60s, and 70s we’ll find similar indictments, each more dire than the next. This from 1917: “Surely a grade of 33 in 100 on the simplest and most obvious facts of American history is not a record in which any high school can take pride,” wrote J. Carleton Bell at a time when only the elite—less than 10% of the general population—went to high school. Bell fretted about young men going to war ignorant of the history that would convince them of the rightness of their cause. Clearly, we survived the Great War . . . and have done okay since.

So here’s the conundrum:

If we’re so oblivious to the past, why is it that we tune into the History Channel by the millions; gobble up the latest Steven Ambrose or David McCullough thriller; trip over each other lining up to see Cold Mountain, Glory, Saving Private Ryan, Schindler’s List or whatever historically-based film Hollywood churns out; spend thousands of precious vacation dollars on a family hajj to Gettysburg, the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial, or Historic Williamsburg? How can we be at once so dumb about history and so passionately engaged with it?

As educators, our trouble starts when we equate test scores with an understanding of and engagement with the past. As Michael Schudson writes in Watergate and American Memory, the past has a way of seeping into our “cultural pores”

Even if not in a form readily retrievable by seventeen-year-olds answering a quiz. Schoolroom historical knowledge is not without value but to assume that it constitutes all there is to historical knowledge short circuits real analysis of the American sense of the past (p. 64)

If Schudson’s right, how, exactly, does all this “cultural seeping” go on? How accurate are those iconic Norman Rockwell images (granddad bouncing Johnny on his knee regaling him with stories of the olden days) in an Instant-Messagerized age of MTV-histories and Oliver Stone seminars?

These are the kinds of question we will consider. Together we’ll try to understand how history and memory mix to influence young people’s understanding of their world. How do Americans of different ages and different walks of life use the past to construct a personal and collective identity? How do nation-states and their institutions package and present the past, sometimes with little if any connection to the documentary record? How do multiple perspectives and differing interpretations become “official history” as set down by the state’s textbooks? How do people—some active, inquiring, and curious; others, credulous and unsuspecting—“consume” the products of memory? What influences them as they construct a historical self and why are some “memory products” more effective than others? This last question, above all, implicates education. It demands that we broaden our notion of the history curriculum from written textbooks and state standards to embrace the much broader and influential “cultural curriculum.” It forces us to consider whether there are history teachers in the land more influential than a Ken Burns or a Robert Zemeskis.

To address these questions no single discipline suffices. The literature on memory spans multiple research traditions and invokes disparate methodologies. Consequently, our time together will engage history, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. Together we will try to impose conceptual order on fields of study that in theory ought to interconnect but too often resemble ships passing each other in the night.

Required Texts


Spiegelman, Art (1993). *Maus I & II: A survivor’s tale* and *Here my troubles began*. New York: Pantheon. (make sure you have both I and II). (also listed as the Complete Maus.)

Class Format

This class will be conducted as a seminar, requiring thoughtful preparation before class and active participation during it. While is impossible to engineer a successful seminar (so much rests on the make-up and chemistry of participants), it is possible to take steps toward making our discussions generative. To align ourselves in the same direction and to provide an initial point of departure, you will come to class with one page of comments (“Response Papers”) addressing a question I assign the previous week. Where we go from there depends on our own interests and passions.

I have tried to save on the costs of the Reader by providing URLs to readings that are at the Stanford Library. Please print them out rather than leaving them as files on your computer. I
make this request for several reasons: 1) it takes extra time for people to scroll through a file on their hard drive; 2) when an article is printed out, it is easily to highlight and make marginal comments; 3) when everyone has a laptop open in seminar it is difficult to see faces and engage each other interpersonally.

Presenting your work: Because each one of us will be engaged in the active study of memory practices, I have reserved the last class meeting, June 2, for a mini-conference in which we will all have an opportunity to present our work.

Seminar Paper

Your seminar paper should be a substantive project devoted to the exploration of history, memory, and education as they come together in the hearts and minds of ordinary people. Your paper should be informed by the perspectives we’ve encountered in this course. In other words, how is the topic you’ve researched illuminated by (some) of the thinkers and researchers we’ve encountered over the quarter? This is not a case of “the more authors you cite, the better.” Rather, aim to explore your topic by engaging deeply with the insights, findings, perspectives, and questions one or more authors sets for us.

Option 1: Option 1 is a mini-study that examines how ordinary people “consume” the products of memory—whether as film, software, text, or music—or by bodily enactment, such as visiting a monument or museum, making a pilgrimage, or commemorating an event. These projects can assume a variety of forms—oral histories, analyses of museum exhibits, a tour of a Gold Rush ghost town, ethnographies of a Bible study meeting, the viewing of a contemporary film, a content analysis of a textbook, and so on—but whatever you do, it should include a brush with real people. The first part of your paper should set your particular topic into context. If you study, for example, how parents and children interpret the same history textbooks, you would frame this question with relevant literature. This means that in addition to the weekly readings, you’ll have extra reading to do. I have a pretty good handle on the literature so I can at least get you started. (The bibliography at the end of this syllabus gives you some indication of this literature’s breadth and variety.) The middle part of the paper should report what it is you did and what it is you learned in a format that gives voice to how people use, interpret, and re-make memory artifacts. The final section, the last third of the paper, should step back from your findings and address how they inform the literature you drew on in part one. What have you learned? What nuances or challenges can you introduce to the literature? What new research questions arise from your inquiry? I expect most papers to be between 22-25 pages (double-spaced in 12-point type, either Courier or Times Roman, not including references). Papers can be written using either APA or Chicago style.

Option 2: In some cases your interests and research may lead you to a more traditional review of the literature, which surveys contemporary writing and ends with a proposal for new research. If this is the case, I can also point you in the direction of literature and angles you might not have considered.

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2 Undergraduate papers are expected to be between 15 and 20 pages in length.
Early on, you should begin to think about the kind of paper you want to write. Next week I will pass out a list of possibilities but this is only to get you to start thinking. At **Week 5**, I will ask for an Idea Sketch and an annotated bibliography of at least three items (in addition to course readings).

Your writing counts. You should prepare your written work carefully and leave yourself enough time to re-write and revise so that what I read is your best work. Some basic things to remember when completing your paper:

1) Cite your references using a consistent style. I don’t care whether you use Chicago or APA style but be consistent in how you cite the works you’ve consulted.
2) Make sure that your paper has page numbers.
3) Staple it in the upper left corner.
4) Do not print your paper back to back, as this prevents me from carrying over my marginal comments to the back of the page.
5) When I respond to the papers I differentiate comments that related to exposition from those that relate to substance with the designation ‘w’ (“writing”) and ‘s’ (substance).

Seminar papers are due on the Monday after our last class meeting.

**Idea Sketch**

Due Week 5, your idea sketch should be no longer than two doubled-spaced pages. It should be written informally, and you can pose questions to me about ideas you are considering. Attached to it should be an annotated bibliography of at least three references (not from our readings) that will inform your final paper. (It is expected that our readings, at least some of them, will inform your paper as well.) Your annotations should be two or three sentences each, and briefly explain why the cited work is key to the topic you want to explore.

**Weekly Response Papers**

Each week I will pose a brief question about the readings. Each week you will write and turn in a one-page, single spaced response. Response papers are not graded. They are meant to be informal reflections on your reading in which we (you and me) engage in a weekly dialogue. It keeps both of us honest. Response papers should be written in 12-point type (Times Roman) with normal margins on both sides (so I can write comments).

**Oral Presentations**

During the last two weeks of class, we will use class time to present our work to our fellow classmates. You will be given approximately 7-8 minutes to present your work. We will follow the format widely used in humanities and social sciences conferences--not because it is the ideal form of scholarly communication (it isn’t!)--but because it is something that you will invariably have to do during your professional career. Prior to these presentations, we will talk about the aesthetics of an engaging conference presentation, even in a limited 15-minute format.
Assessment

Eight Weekly Response Papers (graded C/NR, but counted as 4.0) 25%
Six-Seven Weekly Response Papers (graded C/NR, but counted as 3.0)³

Seminar Paper 75%

READINGS

(1) Week 1, April 1  History, Memory, & Education

Scope, aims, and requirements of the seminar.

Sir Frederic Bartlett, “War of the Ghosts” handouts

(2) Week 2, April 6  MAKE UP CLASS (NOTE: this is a MONDAY!)

Distinctions: What is the Past?

[with mutual arrangement with Seminar participants, we will have a shortened make-up class Monday afternoon or early evening to compensate for the a missed class due to Passover—April 8—and AERA—April 15]

http://www.jstor.org/stable/3379138


http://psychology.concordia.ca/fac/deAlmeida/PSYC352/Pages/Loftus-1997-false-memories-.pdf


³ Less than six Response Papers, no credit. No late Response Papers are permitted.
(3) Week 3, April 15

NO CLASS

[AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE, San Diego]

(Start to read for week 4, as it is a long reading assignment!)

(4) Week 4, April 22

MEMORY IN HISTORY: HISTORIANS AND THE HISTORY OF MEMORIES

Freud, Sigmund (1914). Remember, repeating, and working-through. Screen memories
http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/201/articles/1914FreudRemembering.pdf

http://www.virginia.edu/sociology/publications/faculty%20articles/OlickArticles/cipheredtransits.pdf


http://dev.nybooks.com/articles/895

(5) Week 5, May 6

POSTMODERN MEMORY

Due in class: Idea Sketch & Annotated Bibliography

Spiegelman, Art (1993). Maus I & II: A survivor’s tale and Here my troubles began. New York: Pantheon. (make sure you have both I and II). Also listed as: “the Complete Maus.”

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0093-1896%28199821%2924%3C666%3ATHAVPA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-R

http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Baudrillard/Baudrillard_Simulacra.html

(6) Week 6, May 6

THE CULTURAL CURRICULUM: FILMMAKER AS HISTORY TEACHER


(7) Week 7, May 13  ‘Official Memory’: The State Writes History

Fitzgerald, Francis (1979). *America Revised* (excerpt)


Loewen, James. *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (excerpt)

Zinn, Howard. *A Peoples’ History of the United States* (excerpt)


Ravitch, Diane (2003). *The Language Police* (excerpt)

(8) Week 8, May 20  Official Knowledge in Places of Conflict

Pingel, Falk (2008). Can truth be negotiated? History textbook revision as a means to reconciliation. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, [http://ann.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/617/1/181](http://ann.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/617/1/181)


(9) Week 9, May 27

**The Cultural Curriculum, Part II: Street History**


(10) Week 10, June 3

**History as Lived/History as Re-enacted:**


Due: **June 8**, Final Papers, in my mailbox, Cubberley 1st Floor, by 3 pm.⁴

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⁴ In general, I am reluctant to accept papers by Fax or as email attachments without prior negotiation on or before our last class meeting on June 3.
Selected Bibliography


Beyl, Carl (1939). Written history as an act of faith. In Hans Meyerhoff (Ed.), *The Philosophy of History in Our Times* [2, Masters]

Berlin, Ira (19xx). *Slavery as memory and history* [3, Dis. Perspectives, History]


Engler, Mira (1993) Drive-thru history: Theme towns in Iowa Landscape, [space]

Fabre, Genevieve, & O'Meally, Robert (Eds.), History and memory in African-American culture, [history]


Friedlander, Saul (19xx). When Memory Comes [4]


Funkenstein, Amos Collective memory and historical consciousness, History and Memory, 1, 5-26. [2, theory]


Friedlander, Saul (19xx). Identity history is not enough. In On history. New York: Cambridge


Hambler, Brandon. Remembering to forget: Issues to consider when establishing structures for dealing with the past.


Todorov, T. Probing the extremities


Zelizer, Barbie (1999). From the image of record to the image of memory: Holocaust photography then and now. In Bonnie Brennen & Hanno Hardt (Eds.), Picturing the past: Media, history, & photography (pp. 98-121). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

