CULS5201: “Viral Memory” (Special Topics in Intercultural Studies)
The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)
2nd Term 2019-2020

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Esther Lee Building (ELB) 302
Thursday, 6:45-9:30pm
Medium of instruction: English

History is something we ordinarily encounter through school textbooks, period
films, and nostalgia blogs. However, instead of being completely objective and
unimpeachable from its validation by established institutions and scholars, history is a
malleable narrative, which can assume multiple iterations through its creation,
creation, consumption, and dissemination. This course seeks to uncover how the
memory of the past acts as a cultural resource and a political mechanism that could be
harnessed in varied ways for the sake of producing, reinforcing, or transforming
collective identity and agency.

The course will start by exploring the epistemological entanglements of history
and memory, which have divergent, overlapping modalities of truth and representation.
Seeing the archive as a physical and virtual repository of the past where recollections
are stored, managed, and silenced, it will examine how it conventionally records the
perspectives of elite institutions, officials, and scholars. Uncovering how the official
narrative of history is promulgated through public monuments and museum exhibitions,
the course will look at efforts from Subaltern Studies to excavate the voices of the
marginalized. Lastly, it will analyze how memory takes on affective modes of nostalgia
or trauma in confronting the failed aspirations of violent repressions, which offer
nascent, unimagined possibilities for agency and transformation.

Aiming to acquaint students with the tools of historical knowledge production, the
final output of the course will be a multimodal proposal for a museum exhibition.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: From History to Memory (Jan 9)
Required:
  and “The Mythologized Past,” in History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event,
  Experience, and Myth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 3-13,
  59-68, and 211-222
Recommended:

**Week 2: Subaltern Studies & History from Below (Jan 16)**

Required:

Recommended:

**Week 3: Imagining Historical Memory (Jan 23)**

Required:

Recommended:
- Jill Godmilow with Ann-Louise Shapiro, “How Real is the Reality in Documentary Film?”, pp. 80-101

Film viewing:
- *The Missing Picture* (Rithy Panh, 2013)

**Week 4: Lunar New Year Holiday (Jan 30)**

**Week 5: Museum and Monument Space (Feb 6)**

Required:

Recommended:

**Week 6: Contingencies in the Archive (Feb 13)**

Required:

Recommended:
Week 7: Mythifications of Narrative Genre (Feb 20)
Required:

Recommended:

Week 8: Commercial and Cult Reenactments (Feb 27)
Required:

Recommended:
- Stewart Home, *Re-Enter the Dragon: Genre Theory, Brucesploitation & the Sleazy Joys of Lowbrow Cinema* (Melbourne: Ledatope Organization, 2018), extracts

Guest lecture: Stewart Home

Week 9: Nostalgia for Lost Futures (Mar 5)
Required:

Recommended:

Week 10: Violence and the Ethics of Trauma (Mar 12)
Required:

Recommended:

Week 11: Built Environment as Memory (Mar 21)
Field trip: The Mills, Tsuen Wan
Week 12: Spreadable Digital Reproductions (Mar 26)

Required:
- Lev Manovich, “Database as Symbolic Form”, in Database Aesthetics: Art in the Age of Information Overflow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. 39-60

Recommended:
- Nadav Hochman and Lev Manovich, “Zooming into an Instagram City: Reading the Local through Social Media,” First Monday 18, no. 7 (2013)

Submission of individual critical reflection on Blackboard (Mar 28)

Submission of summary of final project on Blackboard (Mar 30)

Week 13: Consultations on final project (Apr 2)

Week 14: Presentation of final project (Apr 9)

Week 15: Submission of final project (Apr 18)

ASSESSMENT

Class participation – 15%
You are expected to participate actively during lectures, presentations, and discussions by asking salient questions and sharing relevant insights. Please make sure you have thoroughly read the required reading so that you can participate actively in the discussion. In every class session, different students will be called to share their thoughts or raise questions. Your responses to the presentations of your classmates will also be assessed.

Group-led discussion of recommended reading (30 mins.) – 25%
For Weeks 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 12 groups of students will be assigned to lead the discussion of the recommended reading. For your presentation, your group should 1) present a summary of your assigned reading’s key terms and arguments concerning historical memory. It should 2) explore their links with those of the required reading for the week. Your group should 3) explain how these ideas might be applicable to examples of audiovisual representations. Lastly, it should provide salient questions for further discussion.
This requirement will be marked based on the depth and clarity of your understanding of the assigned readings, which the members of your group will demonstrate during the presentation. The organization and coherence of the presentation will be taken as evidence of your group’s effort and preparedness. Part of your grade will also come from the quality of your discussion questions and examples. **By 4pm of your presentation date, you should email to me your group slideshow and individual notes for grading.**

**Multimodal critical reflection (3 images & 400-600 words) – 20%**

Working **alone or in pairs**, students will produce a multimodal critical reflection that documents their experience of modernity in the city during the field trip in week 6. The critical reflection will combine digital photos with written text. During the field trip, students will take **three photos of different important sights or spaces that illustrate concepts about history and memory** discussed in class. The accompanying written text of 400-600 words should provide an **analysis** in narrative or expository form.

This requirement will be marked based on the depth and clarity of the understanding it demonstrates in its explanation of its ideas and their application. The suitability of the chosen concepts for the articulations of modernity captured in the photos will factor into the grade.

**Group project/paper (3000-4000 words total) – 35%**

**Group presentation of final project (10 mins.) – 5%**

As your final requirement for the course, you will work in groups to create a proposal for a **museum exhibition** that **presents the constructed-ness and iterability of historical memory**. The paper should explain how a selection of **key ideas from at least three different class sessions** is being applied in the conceptualization of this proposal in terms of its themes, objects, and methods. The proposal should be accompanied by a collection of **five sample images of sites, materials, and interfaces** that would simulate the implementation of the campaign.

This requirement will be graded based on the depth and clarity of the understanding it demonstrates in its explanation of its conceptual ideas and their analytical application. Credit will be given to the suitability and uniqueness of the chosen ideas and images. Lastly, the presentation of the project will be marked for its organization and coherence.

At the start of week 11, each group should submit a summary of the proposed project of 400-500 words in bullet-point format, which concisely describes its plans for the project and the ideas to be applied. In week 12, your group will give a presentation in class about your public relations or social media campaign, which will be your last opportunity to receive feedback before submitting the final version. Your presentation should feature a few of the sample images that will included in the campaign proposal.
GRADING RUBRIC

A (Exceptional) – The paper or project greatly exceeds the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented not only about the chosen example but also about the concepts used. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of the chosen example and the concepts used that goes beyond the scope of the class discussion. The language used to explain the concept and its application is complex yet lucid. The writing is grammatically correct and coherently organized. The chosen example is unique for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

A- (Outstanding) – The paper or project exceeds the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented about the chosen example. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of either the chosen example or the theory used that goes beyond the scope of the class discussion. The language used to explain the theory and its application is complex yet lucid. The writing is grammatically correct and coherently organized. The chosen example is unique for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B+ (Very Good) – The paper or project more than meets the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented about the chosen example. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is lucid. The writing is moderately coherent. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B (Good) – The paper or project more than meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example could have been developed further. The paper or project displays a sufficient understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is lucid. The writing is moderately coherent. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B- (More than Satisfactory) – The paper or project meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used lack elaboration or development. The paper or project displays a sufficient understanding of either the chosen example or the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is understandable. The writing is moderately coherent. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

C+ (Satisfactory) – The paper or project meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used lack elaboration or development. The paper or project displays a basic understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is understandable. The writing is slightly coherent. The chosen example may not be suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

C, C- (Fair) – The paper or project barely meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used are vaguely elaborated. The paper or project fails to display a sufficient understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and
its application is virtually understandable. The writing is incoherent. The chosen example may not be suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

**D+, D (Pass)** – The paper or project does not meet the expectations for this requirement. No additional insights are presented about the chosen example or the theory used on top of what was discussed in class. The language used to explain the theory and its application are almost incomprehensible. The writing is incoherent. The chosen example is irrelevant. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

**F (Fail)** – The paper or project does not meet the expectations for this requirement. The language and writing are poor. The chosen example is irrelevant. The theory used was not covered in class. The paper or project may have been submitted long past the deadline.

**ACADEMIC ETHICS**

You are expected to abide by the university’s principles and regulations on academic honesty. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the information on the following webpage: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

Violations such as plagiarized papers or multiple submissions will not be tolerated in any form. These will be subject to disciplinary action. Remember that all words, phrases, or ideas taken from sources other than your own submitted assignment must be properly cited. When in doubt about an assignment with a possible violation, please feel free to consult me.

All written assignments must be accompanied by a VeriGuide receipt, a signed declaration acknowledging your awareness of and subscription to the university’s policies and regulations on academic integrity. Written assignments submitted without a VeriGuide receipt will not be accepted and graded.