

Histories of Loss
ETHN 289 – Spring 09
Fri 1:00-3:50
SSB 103

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Office hrs: Tues 1-3, Fri 4-5



**SHE SAW HIM DISAPPEAR BY THE RIVER,
THEY ASKED HER TO TELL WHAT HAPPENED,
ONLY TO DISCOUNT HER MEMORY.**

Lorna Simpson, "Waterbearer" (1986)

In our seminar, we consider the problems of legibility, recovery, and reckoning with respect to the histories of loss that are the conditions for U.S. modernity, yet often occluded by modernist notions of nation, history, text, author, and period. To read "against the grain" of the closure and triumphalism of national forms, some critics have elaborated "haunting" as a conceptual tool for understanding the unwritten aftermaths of war, conquest, coercion and slavery, while others develop "mourning," "memory," and "redress" as generative hermeneutic activities after the failures of emancipation, reform, and enfranchisement. Some mobilize figures of the "witness" and the "survivor" for ethical or political representations of historical destruction and dispossession. We review the psychoanalytic notion of trauma in literary and historical studies (S. Freud, C. Caruth), yet place alongside it, the work of W. Benjamin, G. Agamben, A. Gordon, J. Butler, and A. Mbembe as alternative theoretical models for conceiving the conditions and the aftermath of collective historical loss. Critical work on the aftermaths of war, investigations of the *femicidio* at the U.S.-Mexico border, and meditation on the Atlantic slave trade, offer situated engagements with the capacity and limits of "national" history and subjectivity. Chang-rae Lee's *A Gesture Life*, Lê Thị Diem Thúy's *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, films by Lourdes Portillo, Vicki Funari and Sergio de la Torre, visual art and media of Kara Walker, Lorna Simpson, Carrie Mae Weems, and Long Nguyen – provide cultural works for examining haunting, mourning and memory in the modern imagination.

Students are required to complete weekly reading and viewing assignments, to generate questions for discussion and to be prepared to participate in seminar meetings; you'll write four 1-2 page responses to the assigned materials. Students will also work in pairs for one class presentation, in which you engage the class by identifying the intervention made by the critical or expressive work(s) (rather than summarize the assigned readings or offer your opinion); i.e., into which historical moment and intellectual or political genealogy is the piece intervening; how, out of what materials, is the argument made or the vision of the work presented; why, and for what ends? You may discuss the relationships between, and divergences among, the critical concepts and approaches represented by different readings, or what they may provide for your own work or projects. Finally, all students will write a final paper, due in hard copy by June 12th, which may or may not be part of a larger ongoing project (for example, a thesis, dissertation, or project).

Discussion/Participation	25%
Presentations	25%
Final Paper	50%

REQUIRED BOOKS available for purchase at UCSD Bookstore (*on reserve at SSSL):

- *Chang-rae Lee, *A Gesture Life*. (Riverhead Books)
- *Lê Thi Diem Thúy, *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*. (Alfred Knopf)
- *Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar Strauss)
- *Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. (Vintage)
- *Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Johns Hopkins)
- *Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (U Minnesota)
- *Rosa-Linda Fregoso, *MeXicana Encounters: Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands* (U California)

REQUIRED ARTICLES available through SSSL Course Reserves website:

- Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," "The Sense of Symptoms," "Fixation to Trauma" from *Standard Ed of Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. XIV and XVI
- Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" from *Illuminations*
- Judith Butler, "Violence, Mourning, Politics" from *Precarious Life*
- J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, "Disavowal," "Trauma" from *Language of Psycho-Analysis*
- Raymond Williams, "Dominant, Residual, Emergent," "Structures of Feeling" from *Marxism and Literature*
- David Eng & David Kazanjian, "Mourning Remains" from *Loss*.
- Soyang Park, "Silence, Subaltern Speech, Intellectual in S. Korea: Politics of Emergent Speech in Case of Former Sexual Slaves," *Journal for Cultural Research* 9:2 (2005)
- Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening" from *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*
- T. Fujitani, "Right to Kill, Right to Make Live," *Representations* 99 (2007): 13-39
- Lisa Yoneyama, "Traveling Memories, Contagious Justice," *JAAS* (Feb 2003): 57-93
- T. Fujitani, et al., "Introduction" *Perilous Memories: The Asia Pacific War(s)*
- Lisa Yoneyama, "Transformative Knowledge," *Perilous Memories: The Asia Pacific War(s)*

Yen Le Espiritu, "The We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose Syndrome" *AQ* 58:2 (2006)
 Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo, "Forking Paths: How Do We Mourn?" *Amerasia* 31:2 (2005): 157-175.
 Alicia Schmidt Camacho, "Ciudadana X," *New Centennial Review* 5:1 (Spring 2005)
 Saidiya Hartman, "Redressing Pained Body," "Burdened Individuality," from *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making*
 Anne Cheng, Ch. 1 from *The Melancholy of Race*
 Fred Moten, "Black Mo'nin'" from *Loss*
 Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15:1 (2003): 11-40
 Giorgio Agamben, "Sacred Life," Part 3, from *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power Bare Life*
 Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, "The Rememory of Slavery" from *Seeing the Unspeakable*
 Selections from Long Nguyen, *Tales of Yellow Skin: The Art of Long Nguyen*.
 Selections from *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*
 Selections from Beryl Wright & Saidiya Hartman, *Lorna Simpson: For the Sake of Viewer*
 Selections from Andrea Kirsch & Susan Sterling, *Carrie Mae Weems*

FILMS on reserve in Arts Library SSSL:

Rea Tajiri, "History and Memory"

Lourdes Portillo, "Señorita Extraviada"

Sergio de la Torre and Vicki Funari, "Maquilapolis"



Long Nguyen, "Tales of Yellow Skin #2" (1991)

Schedule

Week 1

April 3: Introduction

Week 2

April 10: Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia"; Freud, "Fixation to Traumas"; Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"; Butler, "Violence, Mourning, Politics"; Eng & Kazanjian, "Introduction: Mourning Remains" to *Loss*; Gordon, "foreward," "her shape and his hand," "distractions," from *Ghostly Matters*

Week 3

April 17: Laplanche and Pontalis, selections from *Language of Psychoanalysis*; Caruth, "Introduction" from *Unclaimed Experience*; Park, "Silence, Subaltern Speech"; Fujitani, "Right to Die, Right to Make Live: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans During WW II"; Yoneyama, "Traveling Memories, Contagious Justice: Americanization of Japanese War Crimes"
Lee, *A Gesture Life*

Week 4

Rescheduled (to April 27?): Fujitani, et al., "Introduction" from *Perilous Memories*; Williams, "Dominant, Residual, Emergent," "Structure of Feeling"; Freud, "The Sense of Symptoms"; Caruth, Chapter 5 from *Unclaimed Experience*; Laub, "Bearing Witness"; Lisa Yoneyama, "For Transformative Knowledge"
Rea Tajiri, *History and Memory*

Week 5

May 1: Agamben, "Sacred Life," "Politicization of Life," "Biopolitics" from *Homo Sacer*; Min, "Remains to be Seen" in *Loss*; Nguyen-Vo, "Forking Paths"; Espiritu, "We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose"
Lê, *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*
Selections from Nguyen, "Tales of Yellow Skin"

Week 6

May 8: Fregoso, *MeXicana Encounters: Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands*
Schmidt Camacho, "Ciudadana X"
Portillo, "Señorita Extraviada"
de la Torre & Funari, "Maquilapolis"

Week 7

May 15: Canceled

Week 8

May 22: Agamben, "Life That Does Not Deserve to Live," "Politics, or Giving Form to Life," "VP," "Politicizing Death," "Camp as 'Nomos'" from *Homo Sacer*; Mbembe, "Necropolitics"

Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*

Week 9

May 29: Moten, "Black Mo'nin'" in *Loss*; Hartman, "Redressing," "Burdened Individuality," from *Scenes of Subjection*; Cheng, "The Melancholy of Race"; Gordon, "not only the footprints, but the water," from *Ghostly Matters*

Morrison, *Beloved*

Week 10

June 5: Wright, "Back Talk: Recoding the Body" from *For the Sake of the Viewer*

Hartman, "Excisions of the Flesh" from *For the Sake of the Viewer*

Shaw, "The Rememory of Slavery" from *Seeing the Unspeakable*

Selections from Kara Walker, Lorna Simpson, Carrie Mae Weems

Final papers and projects due June 12th