



MSL 2307: Memory and Power
Winter 2025

Instructor: Prof. Joshua Arthurs

Meeting Time and Location: Tuesdays 3-6 PM, BL 728

Email: joshua.arthurs@utoronto.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-2 PM, BL 605

Course Description: This course explores the ways in which societies conserve, commemorate, and contest the past, and the roles played by communities, institutions, political actors, and other stakeholders in the development of public memory. Across a wide array of case studies, we will explore questions including, but not limited to: what is the relationship between memory and power? How do practices of commemoration both shape and reflect local, national, and transnational identities? How do mnemonic institutions like museums and archives relate to their political, social, and cultural milieux? How are memories encoded in material culture, and in physical spaces and places?

Important Note: Our course content will sometimes include topics, readings, language, and images that some students may find controversial, disturbing, offensive and/or traumatizing. Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas; I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity. If you are aware of course material that may be traumatizing to you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have with it before it comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to such material with the class or with me afterwards, I welcome such discussion as an appropriate part of our coursework.

Course Learning Objectives: By participating in this course, students will:

1. Develop an understanding of foundational epistemologies and critical perspectives on the study of memory.
2. Explore the historical development and contemporary roles of mnemonic institutions, professions, and practices.
3. Engage with research methodologies employed in the study of memory, such as oral histories/life stories, participant observation, and discourse analysis.
4. Explore affective and ethical dimensions of memory, such as trauma, reconciliation, and restitution.
5. Build awareness of memory politics, debates over contested heritage, and their impacts on memory institutions, professions, and practices.
6. Explore the role of grassroot and community organizations in promoting new memory narratives and challenging hegemonic memories.

These course-specific outcomes are designed to support the MMSSt program's outcomes

in relation to students possessing awareness and applied understanding of:

- The history of museums and its effect on museums' social and political roles in societies the centrality of representation within all facets of culture and heritage work.
- Ethical, legal and social issues shaping the work of cultural institutions, agencies, and professionals.
- Museological best practices and their continual evolution.

Readings: All readings and other materials will be posted in weekly modules in Quercus.

Assignments:

Research Project (40% total): In consultation with the instructor, students will research and present a case study, connected to their own interests, on memory and power. Guidelines and grading criteria are available on Quercus.

- Project proposal – 10% of overall grade [CLO 1-6]
- Research project – 30% of overall grade [CLO 1-6]. This may take the form of a formal research paper, or a creative project (e.g. video; display; etc.) with a reflective essay.

Quercus Discussion (30%): Every week, I will post discussion prompts related to the lectures and readings. By **noon every Monday**, students will post responses to discussion prompts on Quercus. These should engage critically and thoughtfully with key concepts from the texts and raise questions for further discussion. You may comment on your peers' posts for additional points toward that week's grade. Your two lowest marks (including zeroes if you opt not to post) will be dropped at the end of the semester. As these assignments are taken up in class, late posts will not be accepted after the meeting in which they are discussed. Guidelines and grading criteria are available on Quercus. [CLO 1-5]

Reading Roundtable (15%): Every class, a group of students will frame the week's readings and lead our collective discussions. Guidelines and grading criteria are available on Quercus. [CLO 1-5]

Participation (15%): Students are expected to attend all class meetings having completed the assigned readings, and with all materials and notes at hand. Be prepared to ask questions and contribute to our discussions. While there is no penalty for missing class, remember that frequent absences will prevent you from contributing and thus may affect your participation mark. Participation criteria is available on Quercus. [CLO 1-5]

Late/Missed Assignments: Late assignments will be deducted 2% for every 24 hours that they are late, beginning at the time at which they are due, and including weekends. They will be accepted up to a week after their original due date (with the exception of the Quercus discussion posts, which must be submitted by the start of the class in which they are discussed). If you know that you will be unable to submit an assignment on time, please request an extension prior to the due date.

Grading Policies: Please consult the Faculty of Information's resources that will form the basis for grading in the course.

1. [Grade Interpretation Guidelines \(PDF\)](#)
2. [University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy](#)
3. [Guidelines on the Use of Incomplete \(INC\), Standing Deferred \(SDF\), & Withdrawal \(WDR\)](#)

Grading scale: A+ 90+; A 85-89; A- 80-84; B+ 77-79; B 73-76; B- 70-72; FZ 0-69.

Course Policies:

Artificial Intelligence: Students may not copy or paraphrase from any generative artificial intelligence applications, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the

purpose of completing assignments in this course. This policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development.

If I have reason to believe that an assignment was produced using AI, I will require an in-person meeting with the student to determine the originality of the work. If there is sufficient reason to believe that AI was used, or if the student does not attend the meeting, penalties will range from zero for an assignment to an F in the course.

Health and Wellness: The Faculty of Information has a Wellness Counsellor & Coordinator available to its students. Appointments are available Monday-Friday during the academic year. Contact Health & Wellness, 416-978-8030 ext. 5, to book an appointment with a Wellness Counsellor or for questions about the counselling service. Students can request that they would like to meet with the “iSchool Counsellor” to access counselling on campus.

Students can also choose to see a counsellor during the academic year and over the summer at the Health & Wellness Centre, located at 700 Bay St., during its [hours of operation](#).

Numerous additional health, wellness and counselling services are offered through the University of Toronto’s Health and Wellness Centre.

You can access free mental health and wellbeing services at [Health & Wellness](#) such as [same day counselling](#), brief counselling, medical care, [skill-building workshops](#) and [drop-in peer support](#). You can also meet with a Wellness Navigation Advisor who can connect you with other campus and community services and support. Call the mental health clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 5 to book an appointment or learn more at uoft.me/mentalhealthcare.

The Health & Wellness Centre’s Medical Services Clinic provides a wide range of medical services for U of T students. These services include routine health care services, such as [sexual and reproductive health counselling](#), [allergy care](#), [nutrition consultation](#), and support with many other health concerns. Call the medical services clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 2 to schedule an appointment or [explore services online](#).

Accommodations: Students with diverse learning styles and/or accessibility needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me, student services and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. Students who believe they require accommodations and are unsure where to begin can speak to an academic advisor in student services for guidance and referrals.

Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals to supportive services and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. Once you have obtained an accommodation plan from Accessibility Services, please share your accommodation letter with your instructor and student services.

Students who have already obtained accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office are encouraged to share their letter with their instructor and with student services in the first week of class. Students should discuss potential accommodations in consultation with their Accessibility Advisor and instructor to understand what may be possible and how the instructor wishes to be informed when an accommodation needs to be actioned. It is the student’s responsibility to discuss any extension requests, where possible, in advance of course deadlines.

To book an appointment with an Accessibility Advisor, please connect with the Accessibility Services front desk via email at accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or call (416) 978-8060. Consultation appointments are available to discuss any questions about the Accessibility Services registration

process and/or potential accommodation support. The on-location Accessibility Advisor at the Faculty of Information is Michael Mercer.

Weekly drop-in appointments are available with Michael for registered students. For more information, visit [Accessibility Services](#) and find his name under the Contacts section.

Academic integrity: Please consult the University's site on [Academic Integrity](#). The Faculty of Information has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I.1.(d) of the [University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters \(PDF\)](#). You should acquaint yourself with the Code. Please review the material in Cite it Right and if you require further clarification, consult the resource [How Not to Plagiarize \(PDF\)](#). Cite it Right covers relevant parts of the U of T [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters \(1995\)](#). It is expected that all Faculty of Information students complete the [Cite it Right module and the online quiz](#) prior to the second week of classes of their first term.

Writing Support: As stated in the Faculty of Information's Grade Interpretation Guidelines, "work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be considered eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects." With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the [SGS Graduate Centre for Academic Communication](#). The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers and all programs are free. Please consult the current [SGS Workshops Schedule](#) for more information.

Declaring an Absence in ACORN: Students who miss an academic obligation and wish to seek academic consideration in a course may declare an absence using the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool. Students who declare an absence in ACORN should expect to receive reasonable academic consideration from their instructor without the need to present additional supporting documentation. Students can only use the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool once per academic term (e.g., the fall term) for a maximum period of 7 consecutive calendar days.

The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool requires students to select the course(s) they wish to have academic consideration granted, as well as provide the email address(es) to whom their course syllabus identifies as the contact (e.g., instructor, advisor). A record of the absence is sent to the self-provided email(s) at the time of submission, and a receipt of the absence declaration is also sent to the student's University of Toronto email address.

Submitting an absence declaration does not initiate the process of academic consideration. It is the student's responsibility to arrange for academic consideration by contacting the course instructor using the contact information provided in the syllabus. Students who have already used one absence declaration in a term will be restricted from declaring any further absences using the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool. Students are required to arrange any further academic consideration directly with their instructor and / or student services advisor. Students may be asked to provide supporting documentation as evidence of their absences such as the University approved verification of illness form (VOI).

Academic Dates & Deadlines: [Academic Dates & Deadlines](#). Conflicts with religious observances should be brought to the attention of the course instructor and the Office of the Registrar and Student Services no later than the second week of classes. For more information, please see the [Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances](#).

Schedule

Week I (Jan. 7): Introduction

Week II (Jan 14): What is memory and what does it have to do with power?

- Maurice Halbwachs, “From ‘*The Collective Memory*.’” In *The Collective Memory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy, 139-149. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire.” *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.
- David Blight, “The Memory Boom: Why and Why Now?” In *Memory in Mind and Culture*, edited by Pascal Boyer and James V. Wertsch, 238–51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Wolf Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies.” *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 179–97.

Week III (Jan 21): National and colonial memories

- Richard Harvey and Beth Davis-Brown. “The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness.” *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 4 (1998): 17–32.
- Durba Ghosh, “National Narratives and the Politics of Miscegenation.” In *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, edited by Antoinette M Burton, 27–44. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Nadia Abu El-Haj, “Translating Truths: The Practice of Archaeology, and the Remaking of Past and Present in Contemporary Jerusalem.” *American Ethnologist* 25, no. 2 (1998): 166–88.

Week IV (Jan. 28): Silence and oblivion

- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995, 31-69.
- Paul Connerton, “Seven Types of Forgetting.” *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 59–70.
- Lilia Topouzova, “On Silence and History.” *The American Historical Review* 126, no. 2 (2021): 685–99.

Week V (Feb.4): Overcoming silences

- May Chazan and Jenn Cole, “Making Memory Sovereign/Making Sovereign Memory.” *Memory Studies* 15, no. 5 (2022): 963–78.
- Laura Doan, “Queer History Queer Memory: The Case of Alan Turing.” *GLQ* 23, no. 1 (2017): 113–36.
- Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts.” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

Week VI (Feb. 11): Individual research meetings with instructor

READING WEEK – FEB 10-21

Week VII (Feb. 25): Debating genocide

- Aleida Assmann, “The Holocaust — a Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community.” In *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, edited by Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad, 97–117. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010.

- A. Dirk Moses, “The Canadian Museum for Human Rights: The ‘Uniqueness of the Holocaust’ and the Question of Genocide.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 2 (2012): 215–38.
- Michael Rothberg, “From Gaza to Warsaw: Mapping Multidirectional Memory.” *Criticism* 53, no. 4 (2011): 523–48.

Week VIII (Mar. 4): Memory wars

- Anna Cento Bull and Hans Lauge Hansen. “On Agonistic Memory.” *Memory Studies* 9, no. 4 (2016): 390–404.
- Sarah Gensburger and Jenny Wüstenberg. “Making Sense of De-Commemoration.” In *De-Commemoration: Removing Statues and Renaming Places*, edited by Sarah Gensburger and Jenny Wüstenberg, 95–105. New York: Berghahn Books, 2023.
- Joshua Arthurs, “The Anatomy of Controversy, from Charlottesville to Rome.” *Modern Italy* 24, no. 2 (2019): 123–38.
- **Project proposal due by midnight on Friday, Feb. 28**

Week IX (Mar. 11): Apology, truth and reconciliation

- Alexander Karn, “Museums and Memorials as Sites of Dialogue: Historical Narratives, Mass Violence, and Atrocity Prevention.” In *Historical Dialogue and the Prevention of Mass Atrocities*, edited by Elazar Barkan, Constantin Goeschler, and James E. Waller, 179–206. New York: Routledge, 2020.
- Alfred L. Brophy, “The Tulsa Race Riot Commission, Apology, and Reparation: Understanding the Functions and Limitations of a Historical Truth Commission.” In *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*, edited by Elazar Barkan and Alexander Karn, 234–58. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.
- Andrew Stuart Bergerson, “In the Shadow of the Towers: An Ethnography of a German-Israeli Student Exchange Program.” *New German Critique*, no. 71 (1997): 141–76.

Week X (Mar. 18): Memory in the digital age

- Andrew Hoskins, “Memory of the Multitude: The End of Collective Memory.” In *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, edited by Andrew Hoskins, 85–109. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Yvonne Liebermann, “Born Digital: The Black Lives Matter Movement and Memory after the Digital Turn.” *Memory Studies* 14, no. 4 (2021): 713–32.
- Glenn Tiffert, “Peering Down the Memory Hole: Censorship, Digitization, and the Fragility of Our Knowledge Base.” *The American Historical Review* 124, no. 2 (2019): 550–68.

Week XI (Mar. 25): Optional research meetings with instructor/independent research

Week XII (Apr. 1): Concluding discussion

FINAL PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT ON TUESDAY, APRIL 15