



Syllabus

WITNESSING, MEMORY, MEDIA

HU Credits:

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: communication & journalism

Academic year:

Semester:

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Amit Pinchevski

Coordinator Email: amitpi@mscc.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Tue 4-5

Teaching Staff:
Dr. AmitPinchevski

Course Description:

What does it mean to be a witness? What are the ethical stakes in witnessing? How can witnessing enhance ethical relation? Do media turn us into witnesses, and if so what might this mean? What are the social, political and cultural consequences of witnessing in our time? These are some of the questions to be taken up in this seminar. Witnessing is a term laden with historical legacies in religion, law and science—but also with recent relevance in philosophy, history and literature. The last century has seen the rise of the witness in the wake of unprecedented devastation, particularly that of the Holocaust, but also the development of technological media that redefine the scope and pertinence of what it means to be a witness. The seminar will locate the contemporary significance of witnessing between these two poles, bringing it to bear on key questions in communication and media studies. Witnessing is an act that involves a witness who bears witness to an event for the benefit of an audience that was absent from the event but nevertheless has to pass some judgment about it, be it legal, historical or moral. Thus witnessing constitutes a fundamental problem of communication, its hopes and perils. Through witnessing the past becomes approachable and addressable; and wrongdoing might acquire words and listeners. To bear witness will be presented as an act of responding and of responsibility. Especially in the wake of catastrophes and traumas, witnessing can be seen as a way of enhancing life fatally damaged by past events. The first part of the seminar will be devoted to foundational texts, followed by a series of cases and issues at the conjunction of media, memory and witnessing. Among them: Levinas's ethics as horizon of witnessing; testimony and the failure of language; the trauma testimony discourse; media and trauma: the case of the Eichmann trial; testimony and new archival formations; technologies of memory; witnessing through the media: the media witnessing discourse; distant suffering and moral action. Readings will include texts in communication and media studies, philosophy, literary critique, sociology, psychoanalysis, and history.

Attendance requirements (%):

80

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction:

reading; class discussion; reading reports; final paper

Course/Module Content:

1. Introduction

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Witness" in *Labyrinths* (Penguin, 1981), p. 279.

2. The Ethics of Witnessing

Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity* (Duquesne U Press, 1985), pp. 53-110.

Amit Pinchevski, "Emmanuel Levinas: Contact and Interruption," in *Philosophical Profiles in the Theory of Communication*, J. Hannan, ed. (New York: Peters Lang, 2012), pp. 343-366.

Zygmunt Bauman, "Effacing the Face: On the Social Management of Moral Proximity," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7:1 (1990): 5-38.

3. Testimony and the Failures of Language

Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Minnesota U Press, 1988), pp. 3-31.

Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (Zone Books, 2002). pp. 15-86.

Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (Vintage, 1989).

Adi Ophir, "Shifting the Ground of the Moral Domain in Lyotard's *Le Differend*," *Constellations* 4:2 (1997):189-204.

4. Testimony and Trauma

Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in History, Literature and Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 1992), pp. 57-92.

Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (U of Johns Hopkins Press, 2000), pp. 141-180.

Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma, Narrative and History* (U of Johns Hopkins Press, 1996), pp. 1-9; 57-72.

Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minnesota U Press, 2001), pp. 1-20; 85-106.

5. The Eichmann Trial I

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Penguin, 2006), pp. 3-20; 220-233.

Shoshana Felman, "Theaters of Justice: Arendt in Jerusalem, the Eichmann Trial, and the Redefinition of Legal Meaning in the Wake of the Holocaust," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 1:2 (2002): 1-43.

Amit Pinchevski, Tamar Liebes and Ora Herman, "Eichmann on the Air: Radio and the Making of an Historic Trial," *The Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television* 27: 1 (2007): 1-25.

Idit Zertal, "From the People's Hall to the Wailing Wall: A Study in Memory, War and Fear," *Representations* 69 (2000): 96-126.

Hannah Yablonka, *The State of Israel vs. Adolf Eichmann* (Schocken, 2004).

6. The Eichmann Trial II

Jeffrey Alexander, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (California U Press, 2004), pp. 1-30.

Amit Pinchevski and Tamar Liebes, "Severed Voices: Radio and the Mediation of Trauma in the Eichmann Trial," *Public Culture* 22:2 (2010): 265-291.

Amit Pinchevski and Roy Brand, "Holocaust Perversions: The Stalags Pulp Fiction and the Eichmann Trial" *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24:5 (2007): 387-407.

Shoshana Felman, "A Ghost in the House of Justice: Death and the Language of Law" in *The Judicial Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Harvard U Press, 2002), pp. 131-166.

Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Cornell U Press, 2006), pp. 56-95.

Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (Oxford U Press, 1999), pp. 83-132.

7. Archive and Testimony

Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago U Press, 1998). pp. 1-31.
Wolfgang Ernst, "The Archive as Metaphor," *Open* no.7: 46-53.

Amit Pinchevski, "The Audiovisual Unconscious: Media and Trauma in the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 39 no. 1 (2012): 142-166.

Tod Presner, "The Ethics of the Algorithm: Close and Distant Listening to the Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive," forthcoming in: *History Unlimited: Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2015).

8. Prosthetic Witnessing

Marian Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory" in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, pp. 215-246.

James E. Young, "The Holocaust as Vicarious Past: Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and the Afterimage of History," *Critical Inquiry* 24: 3 (1998): 666-699.

Michael Bernard-Donals, "Beyond the Question of Authenticity: Witness and Testimony in the Fragments Controversy," *PMLA* 116 (2001): 1302-1315.

Andreas Huyssen, "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia," *Public Culture* 12: 1 (2000): 21-38.

Alison Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory: Toward a Radical Politics of Empathy," *New German Critique* 71 (1997): 63-86.

9. Media Witnessing I

John Ellis. *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*. (Tauris, 2000), pp. 1-37; 74-89.

John Durham Peters, "Witnessing," in *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, eds. Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 23-41.

Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Harvard U Press, 2004), pp. 147-182.
John Ellis, "Mundane Witness," in *Media Witnessing*, pp. 73-88.

Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, "Introduction: Why Media Witnessing? Why Now?" in *Media Witnessing*, pp. 1-22.

10. Media Witnessing II

Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, "Crisis Readiness and Media Witnessing," *Communication Review* 12: 3 (2009): 295-304.

Tamar Ashuri and Amit Pinchevski, "Witnessing as a Field," in *Media Witnessing*, pp. 133-157.

Anna Reading, "Global Witnessing: Mobile Memories of Atrocity and Terror from London and Iran," in *Constructions of Conflict: Transmitting Memory of the Past in European*

Historiography, Literature and Culture, eds. K. N Jones and K. Hall (forthcoming Peter Lang)

Gunter Thomas, "Witness as a Cultural Form of Communication: Historical Roots, Structural Dynamics, and Current Appearances," in *Media Witnessing*, pp. 89-111.

11. Distant Suffering

Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (Verso, 2004), pp. 128-152.

Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), pp. 1-25.

Roger Silverstone, *Media and Morality* (Polity, 2006), pp. 106-135.

Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics* (Cambridge U Press, 1999) pp. 1-19, 114-130.

Amit Pinchevski, "Screen Trauma: Visual Media and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder," *Theory, Culture, and Society* (2015)

12. Conclusion

Students' presentations