



Karl Blossfeldt - Nigella damascena (circa 1932)

## War & Forgetting (in the Americas)

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F a l l 2 0 1 9

Wednesday 5-7  
(11:45 am - 2:45 pm)  
CBD 0216

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Office Hours: Tues 1-3 pm / Thurs 1-3 pm  
(or by appointment)

*Everything depends on how you think about time...*

— Michel Serres

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*What fiction makes possible, in all its forms... is to forget oneself, to forget thinking of oneself under the sign of repetition.* — Marc Augé

**Summary:** This class asks how forgetting—understood both as an active and a reactive force—is integral to the ways former wars in the Americas affect the present-future dispositions of contemporary empirical worlds. ‘War’ is a word whose sense and reference are often taken for granted, but which upon scrutiny become more multiple and unstable than they might first appear. Though fundamentally designating that broad turn in social relations which renders killing licit, it is not always obvious when a war is ‘on’ or when it is ‘over,’ much less who actually has the right to declare or to decide. Likewise, the degree to which past armed conflicts insist in and even orient the present of national societies—whether one considers Colombia, Guatemala, the United States, or Peru—can be difficult to grasp, for they touch subsequent generations in ways often hidden. Thus, what should not be ignored is war’s intimate relation to political time. Indeed, how the temporal horizons of political societies come to be structured hinges in part upon the kinds of social legitimacy accorded to acts of destruction—even under cover of military rule, as in Brazil, Chile or Argentina—and to the atmospherics of threat such acts did and may still engender.

The aim of this class is to probe how central *oblivion* is—not only to the legitimation work of political societies but to its critical engagement in the Americas and beyond.

To establish some basic conceptual touchstones, we will begin by underscoring the tension *between time and history* through a discussion of the four paradoxes Henri Bergson sets forth in his monumental work *Matter and Memory*. Later we will assess the implications of those four propositions for thinking about time with the help of two novels that explore social effects of war: Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and César Calvo's *Three Halves of Ino Moxo*. The question of aftermaths and their material-temporal frontiers will oblige us to inquire further into the status of historical matter and sedimentations: how such materials intersect with, but can also be productively read from, the hard, if ever perspectival, distinction that Bergson makes between “present” and “past.” How does this categorical, if ostensibly ontological, difference bear upon the accumulation of ruins and ruinations, which billow from acts of destruction? How does it bear too upon the uncertainties facing survivors and later generations about what to archive, which have been a special focus of humanities and social science scholarship with respect to Latin America in particular? We approach this final question by tracing the potential repercussions of Marc Augé's claim that to reach distant pasts requires forgetting more recent ones, which will return us to the Bergsonian problem of the leap, to the empirical constraints such leaping faces and to the concerns they each create for ordinary life worlds, which appear to depend most of all upon the ever-passing present.

Throughout the semester we will draw upon an interdisciplinary mix of texts and representational genres (philosophy, psychoanalysis, history, literature, ethnography and film) with an aim towards weighing the rhetorical force of distinct modes of telling. These critical materials will enable us to (re)acquaint ourselves not only with theories of time and history but of affect and materiality, while increasing our sensitivity to how forgotten conflicts resonate in contemporary politics and even in the lives of those we know.

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**Overview of Requirements:** This class is run as a seminar with active participation in all discussions expected. Each student will be asked to prepare and present a seminar report on one or more of the assigned readings at least once during the semester. There will be a term paper, with a project abstract, and bibliography due by mid-semester.

**Required Texts:**

Augé, Marc. *Oblivion* (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2004)  
Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory* (Zone Books, 1990)  
Calvo, César. *Three Halves of Ino Moxo* (Inner Teachings International, 1995)  
Serres, Michel. *Rome: the first book of foundations* (Bloomsbury, 2015)  
Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony* (Penguin Books, 2006)  
Weld, Kirsten. *Paper Cadavers* (Duke University Press, 2014)

**Recommended texts:**

Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (Columbia Univ. Press, 2006)  
Deleuze, Gilles. *Bergsonism* (Zone Books, 1991)  
Ricoeur, Paul. *Memory, History, Forgetting* (University of Chicago Press, 2009)

**The above titles (some of them as e-books) have been placed on reserve at Library West. All remaining assigned, recommended, or supplementary readings may be downloaded from the Canvas course page.**

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**Attendance:** Please arrive punctually and remain until the end of class. An attendance sign-up sheet will be circulated each session. If you must miss class, please inform me ahead of time (or as soon as possible) and provide appropriate documentation. Don't forget to contact a classmate and obtain notes on materials covered while away.

Absences for reasons of religious holiday, illness, and official university business are excused; however, proper notification must still be provided. **Please note:** *More than one unexcused* absence will undermine performance in the course.

**For official UF Policy on attendance and absences please consult:**

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

**Evaluations** – Final course grades are calculated according to a combination of three criteria:

**Participation (35%):** A grade for participation will be assessed at the end of the semester based on the degree to which you have played an active, informed role in class discussions, and in so doing contributed to the course's overall success. So please be prepared at each session to share your impressions, questions and interpretations of all assigned materials. I also encouraged you to come to office hours two or three times during the semester to talk about progress in the course and your on-going work on the final project.

**Seminar Report/Presentation (25%):** You are responsible for the preparation and presentation of one seminar report (length: 5-6 double spaced pages) on the topic of your assigned week. That report should not merely summarize but offer a well-crafted, spirited interpretation, which situates the required readings within the ideas and concepts of the course. It should outline specific concerns as well as hone questions. Student(s) in charge of the presentation must circulate *via Canvas* a list of discussion points and questions *at least 24 hours* prior to class (in other words: *no later than 11:45am Tuesday*).

**Term project essay (40%):** The final paper should be an original, persuasive and creative engagement with one or more of the class concepts. Of approximately 5500-7000 words in length, it should contribute directly towards the development of a conference paper, journal article or dissertation chapter. A concise 250-word abstract, outlining the objectives of the project, and a bibliography are due mid-semester.

**The term project essay must be handed in no later than the last day of class.**

*All assignments must be submitted via Canvas.* Papers should be typed in a common 12pt font and double-spaced with one-inch margins and pages numbered.

**Assignment Deadlines:**

- *seminar paper* - TBA
- *final project abstract & bibliography* - October 16
- *final paper* - December 4

**Late policy:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class of the calendar deadline. Seminar reports handed in late but still within one week of the original due date will be docked the equivalent of a full letter grade. After that they will no longer be accepted. No extensions will be granted for the final term paper.

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses. All work submitted for a grade must be free from unauthorized assistance or deliberate misrepresentations of one's own efforts. The penalty for plagiarism or cheating is a grade of zero points on the assignment in question. In such cases an incident form will also be sent to the Office of the Dean of Students.

If you have questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please consult the UF Honor Code as well as the UF Policies on Academic Honesty, Student Rights and Responsibilities. See:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>  
also <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/quick-links/academic-integrity/>

**ADA Statement:** "Students with disabilities, who need reasonable modifications to complete assignments successfully and otherwise satisfy course criteria, are encouraged to meet with the instructor as early in the course as possible to identify and plan specific accommodations. Students will be asked to supply a letter from the Disability Resource Center to assist in planning accommodations."

**Grading:** The following scale will be used for grades on all assignments and exams: 94-100=A; 90-93=A-; 87-89=B+; 84-86=B; 80-83=B-; 77-79=C+; 74-76=C; 70-73=C-; 67-69=D+; 64-66=D; 60-63=D-; 59 and below=E (failing).

You may consult current UF policy on how grade point averages are calculated at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx#calculating>.

**Course feedback:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/>. Evaluations are typically open during the

last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

### **Additional UF Resources:**

#### Health & Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352 392- 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student
- University Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road (392-1575)  
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>
- University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
- Student Health Care Center (392-1161) <http://shcc.ufl.edu/>

#### Academic

- Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.  
<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>
- The Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall (864-1138)  
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/for-students/>
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union (392-1601) <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>
- Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

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**Please note:** I may make minor adjustments to class readings or assignment requirements during the course of the semester. Any and all modifications will be announced ahead of time.

## Course Schedule

**week 1**      **introductions: on four paradoxes of time**

8/21      **film:** *Okay, bye-bye* (Rebecca Baron)

Benjamin, “Excavation & Memory”

Bergson, *Matter & Memory*, Introduction

Augé, “Memory & Oblivion”

Freud, “A Note upon the ‘Mystic Writing Pad’”

**recommended:** Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*: Part I, Chapter 1

**week 2**      **pathology gathers..., is collective (somehow)**

8/28      **photo essay:** “Bittersweet Forest” (Juan Orrantia)

Bergson, *Matter & Memory*, Chapter I

Anderson, “Memory & Forgetting” (*Imagined Communities*, Chapter 11)

Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (excerpt)

**supplemental:**

Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*:

- “Representative or Commemorative Rites”
- Conclusion – section IV

**week 3**      **loss in nation, generation, kin**

9/4      **film:** *Cabeza de Vaca* (Nicolás Echeverría)

Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat* (selected chapters)

Bergson, *Matter & Memory*, Chapter II

Loraux, “War in the Family”

**supplemental:** Freud, “Screen Memories”

**week 4**            **sense, value, history**

9/11                **film:** *Our Music* (Jean-Luc Godard)

Uribe, “Memory in Times of War”

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Essay II

Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*:  
Chapter I, sections 1-3; Chapter II, sections 1-4

Kernaghan, “Esparza”

**supplemental:** Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico*: Chapter 1

**week 5**            **tellings**

9/18                Silko, *Ceremony*

**recommended:** Benjamin, “The Storyteller”

**week 6**            **does forgetting have an image?**

9/25                Sontag, “Looking at War”

Johnson, “‘You Should Give them Blacks to Eat’: Waging Inter-American Wars of Torture and Terror”

Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, Chapter III - “On the Survival of Images”

Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*: Part III, Chapter 3

**week 7**            **aftermaths**

10/2                Calvo, *The Three Halves of Ino Moxo*

**photo essay:** *Álbum de fotografías – viaje de la comisión consular al Río Putumayo y Afluyentes*

**week 8**            **four paradoxes return**

10/9                Borges, “The Garden of Branching Paths”

Bergson, *Matter & Memory*, Chapter IV

Deleuze, “Memory as Virtual Coexistence,” *Bergsonism*, Chapter III

**week 9            the archival impulse**

10/16            Bergson, *Matter & Memory*, Conclusion

                  Junger, “War & Photography”

                  Weld, Paper Cadavers (excerpts)

                  Hyppolite, “Various Aspects of Memory in Bergson”

**project abstract due**

**week 10          wounds and their animation**

10/23            Orrantia, “Where the air feels heavy”

                  Nietzsche, “On the Utility and Liability of History for Life”

                  Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*: Chapter IV

**supplemental:** Freud, “The Unconscious”

**week 11          contracting, contemplating...**

10/30            Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*: Chapter 2

                  Kernaghan, “Oblivious Title: on the political time of land tenure in postwar Peru”

**week 12          prescriptions (and that which cannot turn back)**

11/6             Serres, *Rome: The First Book of Foundations*, Part I, Chapter I

                  Livy, *The History of Rome*, Book I

**week 13          upstream of origins**

11/13            Serres, *Rome: The First Book of Foundations*, Part I, Chapter II

                  Serres & Latour – “A Different Theory of Time”

                  Virilio, *Bunker Archeology*, Preface

**week 14**      **final project workshop**

11/20      research presentations

**week 15**      **closing remarks**

12/4      research presentations

**term paper due**