



Photo By: Kyle Wilkinson

Cultural Memory

FRENCH / ROMST / HISTORY 715

Prof. Helen Solterer
Fall 2015

This seminar investigates the critical issues of the invention, reconfiguration, and use of literary fictions over time. How are works made by different authors -- beyond those who first create them? To whom do fictions belong: an original writer, actor, artist or trans historical community; individuals or symbolic groups? Do fictions cease to exist?

Questions: our investigation proceeds by fundamental one of aesthetics; and we'll consider them in historical context, in relation to a variety of temporal circumstances. Our starting point: fiction has a cultural memory.

Debates: our study will engage with major thinkers and arguments : Jan Assman on cultural memory; Jacques Rancière on 'anachrony'; Maurice Halbwachs & Jacques LeGoff on History and Memory; Aby Warburg on Mnemosyne; Émile Benveniste on the deep structures of play; François Bon on media and transmission; Judith Schlanger on the presence of forgotten works.

Materials: our repertory first around key pre-modern fictions in French vernaculars. To test our starting point, we'll read them together with others that experiment creatively with their memory over many periods: the poetry of Villon with Édouard Glissant; utopian allegories of Christine de Pizan with Monique Wittig; popular theatre, the Adam Plays, with Jean-Paul Sartre; historical chronicle with Michelet, and filmmaker Dreyer's Joan of Arc; troubadour song with Louis Aragon, Amin Maalouf and Kaija Saariaho; pictorial narrative, the Bayeux tapestry, with Jean Lurçat. Readings are designed to give a cross-section of genres and media from a range of periods.

Media: As part of the FDH Digital Humanities project, this seminar will collaborate with researchers in France and Europe; in the second half of the semester, we'll pursue our work in tandem with the seminar of Prof. Deborah McGrady, University of Virginia. Digital surrogates. newly available. are key to our work.