

Philosophy 396-02
Topics in Theory of Knowledge: Memory
Xavier University, Fall 2014
MWF 11:00-11:50, Hailstones 7

Prof. Richard Polt
office: Hinkle 238
office hours: M-F 1-2 and by appointment
office phone and voice mail: 745-3274
e-mail: polt@xavier.edu

What does it mean to remember? What are the varieties of recollection and oblivion? How are both memory and forgetting important to our lives, both individually and collectively? How should we relate to our past? We will explore these questions through some classic and contemporary philosophical and scientific texts, as well as through depictions of extreme memory and amnesia in both fact and fiction.

Required texts

Jonathan K. Foster, *Memory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford)
Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Indiana)
Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones* (Grove)
Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Hackett)
Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age* (Princeton)

Other texts will be distributed by the professor.

Course requirements

Oral presentation #1: 10%
Paper #1: 20%
Paper #2: 20%
Oral presentation #2: 10%
Final exam: 20%
Class participation: 20%

The *first oral presentation* will discuss the reading for a day and raise questions about it. This will be a collaborative presentation.

The *first paper* will apply concepts from Casey to an experience of your own.

The *second paper* will defend a thesis about Nietzsche and the value of remembering.

The *second oral presentation* will discuss some way in which our readings relate to your use of digital technology.

The *final exam* will be a cumulative, open-text, short-essay test.

The *class participation* grade is a judgment I make at the end of the semester about the quality of your effort and your contributions to the class as a whole, based on your participation in discussions and small-group work and your communication with me outside class.

Extra writing, such as a rewritten paper or informal thoughts on class material, can add *extra credit* up to a maximum of 0.3 grade points to your course grade, at my discretion.

Calculating your grade

I give each element a letter grade, then convert it to a number on a 4-point scale (like the scale for your GPA), with pluses and minuses counting as 0.33 point. I multiply this number by the percentage the element is worth, and add all the results to get your raw grade. This raw grade is adjusted to account for absences and extra credit, and then rounded to the nearest letter grade to yield the course grade.

For example:

Oral presentation #1	C	$2.00 \times 10\% = 0.2$
Paper #1	B-	$2.67 \times 20\% = 0.534$
Paper #2	B+	$3.33 \times 20\% = 0.666$
Oral presentation #2	A	$4.00 \times 10\% = 0.4$
Final	C+	$2.33 \times 20\% = 0.466$
Participation	A-	$3.67 \times 20\% = 0.734$
Raw grade		3.0
2 missed days with no makeup work		-0.2
10 pages of extra writing		0.3
Course grade		3.1 = B

Policies

Absence policy: I do not usually take roll, but I will usually notice if you are absent. You may miss a class for any reason, but you are expected to turn in a one-page summary of the reading or film as makeup work soon after you return, so that I can see whether you are keeping up. Getting someone else's class notes is a good idea, but copying them and turning them in as makeup work is unacceptable; your work has to show that you thought about the assigned material yourself. If you do not turn in makeup work promptly, I may subtract 0.1 grade point from your course grade for each day you missed. If we were watching a film on the day you missed, it is your responsibility to find a way to see it (but I may be able to help). Anyone who misses more than 6 classes may fail the course, even if makeup work is turned in.

Late assignments will be penalized by up to one letter grade for each day they are late.

Good English policy: I reserve the right to reject an assignment that has extensive flaws in spelling or grammar. Such an assignment must be corrected before it receives a grade, and it will be counted as late.

Rewrites: a rewrite will not change your grade on an assignment, but it may count as extra credit if it is significant. If you rewrite an assignment, turn in the new version along with the original and my original comments, so I can see what changes you've made. Rewrites may be turned in, at the latest, at the time of the final exam.

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas, either as originally stated or rephrased, without giving credit to the source (such as a website, book, article, or another student's writing). Plagiarism is dishonest and unacceptable. Whenever you use any sources other than the assigned texts, you must cite them. To learn more about plagiarism and methods of citation, visit www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism.

Any plagiarism will result in an F for the assignment or course at my discretion, and your dean will be notified of the incident. "It was an accident" or "I didn't mean to" are not valid excuses; plagiarism is defined by the *fact* that your work uses someone else's work without giving credit. You are responsible for the work that you turn in.

All course requirements must be completed in order to pass the course.

Schedule

Jan. 13	M	Introduction to the course
What is Memory?		
Jan. 15	W	Extreme amnesia: read Oliver Sacks, "The Abyss"
Jan. 17	F	Plato on recollection: excerpts from <i>Meno</i> , <i>Phaedo</i> , and <i>Republic</i>
Jan. 20	M	No class—Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan. 22	W	Plato on writing: excerpt from <i>Phaedrus</i> Sign up for oral presentation #1 today (to be presented Jan. 29 - Feb. 28)
Jan. 24	F	Plato on models of memory: excerpts from <i>Theaetetus</i>
Jan. 27	M	Foster, <i>Memory</i> , Chapters 1-2
Jan. 29	W	Foster, Chapters 3-5
Jan. 31	F	Foster, Chapters 6-7
Feb. 3	M	The philosophical history of memory: Casey, <i>Remembering</i> , Preface to first edition and Introduction (pp. xix-xxii, 1-18)
Feb. 5	W	First forays: Casey, Chapter I
Feb. 7	F	Eidetic features: Casey, Chapter II
Feb. 10	M	Act phase: Casey, Chapter III Handout: first paper assignment
Feb. 12	W	Object phase: Casey, Chapter IV
Feb. 14	F	Reminding: Casey, Prologue to Part Two and Chapter V
Feb. 17	M	Reminiscing: Casey, Chapter VI
Feb. 19	W	Recognizing: Casey, Chapter VII
Feb. 21	F	Body memory: Casey, Prologue to Part Three and Chap. VIII
Feb. 24	M	Place memory: Casey, Chap. IX First paper due.
Feb. 26	W	Commemoration: Casey, Chap. X and Coda
Feb. 28	F	The autonomy of memory: Casey, Chap. XI
March 3-7		No class—Spring break

The Value of Remembering and Forgetting

March 10	M	Freedom in remembering: Casey, Chapter XII
March 12	W	Hypermnnesia: Borges, "Funes, the Memorious," in <i>Ficciones</i> ; excerpts from Jill Price, <i>The Woman Who Can't Forget</i>
March 14	F	Life as unhistorical: Nietzsche, <i>On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life</i> , Preface and §1 (pp. 7-14)
March 17	M	Monumental, antiquarian, and critical history: Nietzsche, §§2-3
March 19	W	The surfeit of history: Nietzsche, §§4-5
March 21	F	Historical "objectivity": Nietzsche, §6 Handout: second paper assignment
March 24	M	Ironical existence: Nietzsche, §§7-8
March 26	W	The goals of culture: Nietzsche, §9
March 28	F	History and education: Nietzsche, §10
March 31	M	"Memento," Part 1
April 2	W	"Memento," Part 2
April 4	F	"Memento," Part 3 Second paper due.

Remembering in the Digital Age

April 7	M	Excerpts from Gordon Bell and Jim Gemmell, <i>Total Recall</i>
April 9	W	Mayer-Schönberger, <i>Delete</i> , Chapters I-II
April 11	F	<i>Delete</i> , Chapter III
April 14	M	<i>Delete</i> , Chapter IV
April 16	W	<i>Delete</i> , Chapter V
April 18, 21		No class—Easter holiday
April 23	W	<i>Delete</i> , Chapters VI-VII and Afterword to the Paperback Edition
April 25	F	Excerpt from Nicholas Carr, <i>The Shallows</i>
April 28	M	Excerpts from Dave Eggers, <i>The Circle</i>
April 30	W	Oral presentations #2
May 2	F	Review and course evaluations
May 9	F	Final exam, 10:00-11:50