

Politics of Commemoration

GRMN 0017-301

Fall 2022

Professor Vance Byrd [*he/him*]

Office: Williams Hall 733

vbyrd@sas.upenn.edu

Course Hours: MW 3:30–4:59pm

Office hours: MW 12:30–1:30 PM and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

In this course, we will examine how commemorative traditions in Germany and the United States have been invented and contested since the nineteenth century. We will discuss why certain events in the past rather than others have been the object of commemoration; what these creations stood for originally; how their meanings have changed over the time; and the lessons, if any, these commemorative practices continue to teach us today. We also will examine the ways in which Europeans and Americans have protested, torn down old monuments, erected new ones, and turned to a wide variety of artistic forms to call into question stories about empire, fascism, communism, westward expansion and settler colonialism, enslavement, as well as military victory and loss. We will grapple with topics, such as racism, ethnic conflict, Antisemitism, settler colonialism, guilt and victimhood, cultural appropriation, as well as gender and sexuality. To do all these things, we will focus on literature, essays, art, films, podcasts, and public art and monuments found in Germany, on Penn's campus, in Philadelphia, and around the United States.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Tiya Miles, *All That She Carried: A Journey of Ashley's Sack, A Black Family Keepsake* (Random House, 2022). 416 pp. \$18.99 new paperback.

All other course readings will be available as downloadable PDFs on Canvas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Preparation and Participation = 15%

Short Essay = 15%

Research Proposal = 5%

Oral Presentations = 10%

Descriptive Essay = 10%

Research Essay = 10%

Position Paper = 10%

Draft Essay = 15%

Revised Essay = 10%

DEADLINES

All relevant due dates will be listed on the syllabus. I expect that all papers will be turned in on time on or before the day they are due. **Each student is entitled to ONE 48-hour extension** during the semester. You do not need to provide a reason for the requested extension.

PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION = 15%

Regular attendance, conscientious preparation, and active participation will help you do well in this course. Attendance will be recorded in this class. Please make sure to be in class on time. I will give you a warning if you have two or more unexcused absences. If your absence is excused for a religious holiday or an official college activity, please let me know in advance. In case of serious emergencies, including health emergencies, we'll work with the college to find alternatives for completing the required work for this course.

Remember, you must have the course materials with you during class. It is crucial that you be up-to-date on the readings for every class period. Most of the time outside of class will be spent doing the assigned readings, watching videos, listening to podcasts, and writing. Some days we will have more to do, some days less. Make sure to schedule enough time to do homework.

Participation is more than just being there. It means sustained engagement with the course's sources and questions. It requires asking relevant questions that contribute to the discussion of the topic and responding to other's opinions, as well as connecting your thoughts to evidence provided in the course materials or class examples. You should speak at least once per class period in order to be an A-level participant. Classroom behavior must reflect a spirit of generosity and respect. Please, refrain from subjective opinions unless relevant. We must accept different viewpoints. One can criticize other's ideas only when it's done respectfully.

You will receive questions to guide your reading, to prepare you for the class discussion, and to help you make connections between the texts. Your written responses will constitute the reading journal, which you will post to Canvas. You should complete any homework assignments *before* each class period.

SHORT ESSAY = 15%

I will circulate in advance a prompt for a 3-page essay on Tiya Miles's *All That She Carried*. I will evaluate your argumentative essay based on your understanding of Miles's book, use of textual evidence to support your claim, organization, coherence, clarity, and proofreading. You are responsible for citation according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

PRESENTATIONS AND ESSAYS ON A MONUMENT = 70%

You will work on this assignment the entire semester in presentations and in short essays. You will select a monument of your choice and tell its story. You will address the circumstances surrounding its creation and its position in public and private commemorative cultures over time, which includes debates on its relevance over time and your personal take on its meaning today. As you conduct research on your monument, you will ask some of the following questions:

- When was the monument created? Why? Who is the community building this monument? Who financed it?
- Who is the artist who created it? What were the steps involved in its production? Were other monuments made by this artist?
- Describe the monument in detail. What does it look like? Are there inscriptions? What do they mean?
- What is it supposed to commemorate? Are there more subversive ways to view the object?

- Are there other or similar monuments supported by the people who advocated for its creation?
- Have there been controversies or protest movements surrounding this monument? What has been contested?
- How does it occupy public space? Was this monument part of a larger architectural or sculptural ensemble? Were changes made to its physical structure of the monument, built environment, or landscape around it? When were they made? By whom?
- Are there official and popular websites for the monument? Has this monument and controversies surrounding it been found in social media?
- Are there other artistic, musical, or creative works that respond to this monument?
- Has knowledge of this monument spread beyond the geographical location of its placement?
- What do you think of this monument?

Although I have suggested some prominent monuments and memorials below, you may choose any national or local figurative, architectural, or abstract monument. Here are some examples:

Thomas Ball: *Freedmen's Memorial to Abraham Lincoln* (1876)
 John Quincy Adams Ward: *The Freedman* (1863)
 Eero Saarinen: *Gateway Arch* (1967)
 Gettysburg National Military Park
 Kenzō Tange: *Hiroshima Victims Memorial Cenotaph* (1952)
 Frank Gaylord and Louis Nelson: *Korean War Veterans Memorial* (1995)
 Manzanar National Historic Site (1945)
 Lei Yixin: *Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial* (2011)
 Peter Eisenman: *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* (2005)
 Henry Shradie and Leo Lentelli: *Monument to Robert E. Lee* (1924)
 Gutzon Borglum and Lincoln Borglum: *Mount Rushmore* (1927)
 MASS Design Group: *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice* (2018)
 Michael Arad, Daniel Libeskind, Peter Walker: *National September 11 Memorial and Museum* (2011)
 Henry Bacon and Daniel Chester French: *Lincoln Memorial* (1914–1922)
 Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument
 Sam Durant: *Scaffold* (2012, 2014, 2017)
 Louise Bourgeois and Peter Zumthor: *Steilneset Memorial to the Victims of Witch Trails* (2011)
 Tamir Rice Gazebo
 Trail of Tears National Historic Trail
 Alfred Preis: *USS Arizona Memorial* (1962)
 Thomas Brock: *Victoria Monument* in London (1911)
 Heinrich Strack: Berlin Victory Column (*Siegestsäule*) (1864)
 Maya Lin: *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982)

Depending on the circumstances of your particular monument, some or all of these questions might be relevant. If you do not know the answers to some of these questions, it might still be appropriate to raise them in writing assignments for this project or in the presentations you'll give this term. The strongest presentations often convey an argument about the monument with commentary that reveals to us about its place in public life and debates on commemorative practices.

5%

250-word written **proposal** on a monument you would like to know more about

5%

5-minute **oral presentation** on the monument you would like to research

10%

2-page **descriptive essay** of the monument

10%

2-page **research essay on the history** of the monument

10%

3-page **position paper** in which you make a claim about the monument

5%

5-minute **oral presentation** in which you test your claim

15%

6-page **draft essay** on the monument in which you integrate your previous research

10%

5-page **revised essay** on the monument in which you sharpen, condense your argument, and polish your writing

COMMUNICATION WITH THE INSTRUCTOR

I am available for consultation. I encourage you to contact me if you have questions or if you would like to learn more about the themes covered in this course. You may contact me by email. If it is an urgent matter, it is important that you leave a realistic amount of time for me to respond. I may not be able to respond to your email immediately, but I will try. If you send me an email the night before an assignment is due, you may not receive a response in time for it to be helpful for you.

I will hold office hours Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:30–1:30pm. You can always schedule an appointment with me at another time.

You might be required to attend some mandatory office hours this semester. You will have the opportunity to talk about the transition to Penn, advising, and course matters. If you cannot attend a scheduled appointment, it is your responsibility to notify me beforehand so we can reschedule.

ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom. I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. In particular, I encourage students with disabilities to have a conversation with me and disclose how our classroom or course activities could impact the disability and what accommodations would be essential to you. You should register with Disability Services, Weingarten Center (220 South 40th St., Suite 260).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

According to the Policies and Procedures Handbook of the University of Pennsylvania, using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific and proper acknowledgement constitutes plagiarism. If you are at all unsure about the appropriate form of acknowledgement in a particular situation, it is your responsibility, as stated in Penn's Code of Academic Integrity, <http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/>, to consult with the instructor to clarify any ambiguities. Plagiarism in any assignment will result in a failing grade for that assignment, and may result in further disciplinary action, which may include receiving a failing grade for the course. The use of any translation programs and/or websites is also considered plagiarism.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax. Taking care of yourself will actually help you achieve your academic goals more than spending too much time studying. All of us benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available on campus. An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Take the time to learn about all that's available and take advantage of it. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or difficult feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty, or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help.