**AMST 403/803:** American Ruins

Summer II

Mondays and Wednesdays, 6:30-9:30pm

Seabury Hall, Room 408

5 weeks

Office Hours: Mondays 3-5pm

**Course Description**

This class will explore the nexus between the multi-disciplinary literatures on contemporary ruins and critical heritage considering the social construction of heritage, how ruins become heritage, and the political and affective valences of ruined sites. We will navigate these literatures through a series of case studies including the rebuilding of New Orleans post-Katrina, and the ruins of the World Trade Center post 9/11. We will also look at a series of emerging heritage sites including the heritage of violent labor disputes in the early 20th century, and the materiality of undocumented migration in the U.S. southwest.

This course will involve both theoretical readings and case studies from the American experience and a range of historical eras, including the present. This will involve some reading of heritage regulations from the United States as well as the United Nations.

**Learning Objectives**

* You will come away from this course with a working understanding of the multi-faceted political and social dimensions of contemporary ruins through a series of theoretical readings and case studies. Within this topic, you will be introduced to the related topics of critical heritage studies, materiality, historical materialism, and Walter Benjamin and his theory of material history.
* This is a writing intensive course. Think of writing as an exercise, and as the semester progresses you should be writing more clearly—from summarizing to critically assessing complex information. Your writing assignments will likely become useful reference materials as you consider methods, approaches, and core texts. These skills have direct application both within and beyond the Academy.
* This is a reading intensive course. You will be expected to read quickly but with thorough comprehension, such that you can come to class prepared to exhaustively discuss multiple reading assignments that potentially span hundreds of pages with insights that go beyond the texts. You will be able to take these skills with you after completing course for use in both academic and real-world scenarios that require you to quickly and efficiently assess complex data.
* You will come away from this course with a working understanding of an array of social science and historiographic methodologies and a sense of how and where to apply them.
* Finally, an objective of this course is professionalization of students—including but not limited to refining public speaking, use of professional software, data analysis techniques, and writing.

**Required Texts** (in order of need)

* Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*
* Auge, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*
* Dawdy, *Patina: A Profane Archaeology*
* Smith, *Uses of Heritage*
* Garrett, *Explore Everything*
* Rathje and Murphy, *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*
* Freud, *The Uncanny*

**Course objectives and expected learning outcomes**

Students will be assigned between 300 and 400 pages of reading per week, and each class will be oriented as a seminar style discussion. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the readings’ themes and based on prompts distributed by the instructor. The instructor will guide discussions and may present a short lecture as applicable, but the sessions will otherwise be wholly based on student dialogue and participation.

In addition to class participation, students will be expected to write short papers ranging from 3 to 5 pages (double spaced, not including works cited or footnotes). You do not have to submit these papers in order, but there are assigned due dates throughout the semester for when one of each of the papers should be submitted.

Formatting Instructions*:*

Papers should have 1” margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, be double-spaced, and printed in black ink. You are not assigned a reference style, but you must be consistent to a chosen style throughout your papers.

The first page of each written assignment should contain (single-spaced): your name, the course and section number, my name, the date, and your email address. This will be followed by one space and an essay title. All essays must have titles. Sub-section headings that divide and map your argument are also encouraged, where appropriate.

*Convolutes Report and Class Presentation (All Students)*

Undergraduates will be expected to write one report on a Convolutes chapter, while graduate students must write two. For each such report, students will present their findings in class the day it is due, ~10 minutes. All students will be assigned to read all of the Convolute chapters assigned, due the day they are to be presented—this updated reading and presentation schedule will be distributed by Wednesday of the second week of class with the first assignments due in week 3.

By the second week of the semester, students will select their top three Convolutes of interest and the instructor will assign the chapters based on your preferences to ensure there is no repetition.

As we will discuss, the *Arcades Project* is an unfinished work consisting of “mosaics” on themes divided by Benjamin into “Convolutes” consisting of quotes, notes, and descriptions of images. Many of the chapters pertain to certain historical figures or events. The expectation is for you to read through your assigned Convolute, to conduct some associated research as necessary to contextualize certain figures or events, and to describe the overarching themes. Try to get into Benjamin’s mindset—this is a skill of historical analysis. Based on the chapter as well as the other readings assigned through the semester, deduce how the notes you read fit into Benjamin’s wider goals for the “Arcades Project.” How does the chapter inform your understanding of the class themes. Reference specific excerpts from the chapter and other readings (as applicable) to justify your conclusions.

*Short Paper (All Students)*

Find a local (broadly construed) neglected site, neighborhood, or monument—a ruin of some sort—and using methods described by the authors we encounter, visual analysis (whether online or in person, if safe) and/or informal site survey, write about its history and potential heritage. Also write about the limitations you face in this endeavor, where sources end. How has this site endured?

*Final Paper (Different length requirements for graduates and undergraduates)*

In this course, you have been exposed to new historiographic and social science methodologies, one of which includes Benjamin’s style of note-taking in preparation for his wider project. You have also been exposed to expanded notions of ruins, heritage, politics, and their material reverberations. For this assignment, you will create “Convolutes” or mosaics of your own based on themes of your choice relevant to this course in consultation with the professor. Graduates must write two or more. Undergraduates will write one.

Within your studies, you will be called upon to do a great deal of structured writing. This is your chance to be experimental. Each Convolute should be a minimum of 5 pages, with full references, mimicking the style of Benjamin in your *Arcades Project* text. Preface each with one paragraph explaining why you chose the given theme and what kinds of works you cited. This final paper should also include a one to two page introduction describing broadly your idea and how the themes fit together and your conception of what other Convolutes might appear in your hypothetical envisioned project. Note that this exercise might usefully be applied towards ideas for a thesis.

You may include images as appendices, but these will not apply towards your page requirements.

*Discussion leading (All students)*

For each day of class, one student will be chosen as a discussion leader for two papers or the equivalent of two chapters of the assigned texts—you may choose the texts. The first week of class students will sign up for dates. That student must come prepared with questions and points of interest from the readings that will guide class discussion. If enrollment does not change, you can expect to lead two discussions in weeks 2 through 5.

**Teaching format and grading**

Grading will be based on class participation, fulfillment of the weekly writing assignments, and the two reports. Grading will be broken down as follows:

Undergraduates

Class participation: 35%

Convolute paper: 15%

Short paper: 15%

Final paper: 15%

Discussion leading 1: 10%

Discussion leading 2: 10%

Graduates

Class participation: 30%

Convolute paper 1: 12%

Convolute paper 2: 12%

Short paper: 12%

Final paper: 20%

Discussion leading 1: 7%

Discussion leading 2: 7%

**Course Content**

For a summer course meeting 7 hours per week (2 meetings per week at 3.5 hours each), undergraduates will have an average 24.5 hours per week of out-of-classroom engagement over 5 weeks. This is broken down as follows:

Assigned reading: 6 hours/class, or 12 hours/week

Response papers: 4 hours/week

Library research and writing for papers: Average 6 hours/week

Site research and ethnography for responses and final paper: Average 2.5 hour/week

Engagement for this course extends to students’ physical engagement with Hartford and its environs. Students will potentially meet with museum curators and heritage practitioners, they will engage with museum collections, and they will conduct ethnographic interviews outside the classroom.

To accommodate for undergraduate participation in this graduate level course, undergraduates will have fewer required writing obligations.

**STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Intellectual integrity is the cornerstone of good scholarship and good learning. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated or excused. There is no mitigating circumstance, ever, for plagiarism. Whenever you draw upon somebody else’s words or ideasto make a point, give them credit. Plagiarism is more often the result of haste or carelessness than it is the result of deliberate dishonesty. As such, make sure to clearly distinguish and attribute your thoughts from those of others, in your writing and your note taking. If you are ever unsure, it is better to err on the side of caution and provide a citation.

Students of Trinity College are held to the Student Integrity Contract. Students should be familiar with the principles outlined by the contract and must understand and respect the intellectual property of other people. Your work will be graded according to the rubric designed by your instructor. Cheating and plagiarizing will be dealt with according to university guidelines. A plagiarized essay will result in a failing grade for the course. Only original work, done by the student, should be submitted to the instructor. Plagiarism, cheating, or other incidents of academic dishonesty will be reviewed and reported as outlined by the Academic Affairs Committee. Their rules and procedures can be read here: <http://www.trincoll.edu/SiteCollectionDocuments/StudentHandbook.pdf>

**COMMITMENT TO A DIVERSE AND RESPECTFUL ACADEMIC COMMUNITY**

The topic of this course is a site of intense political controversy. The intention is to foster an engaged and diverse intellectual community on foundations of good faith and mutual respect. On the one hand, this course is oriented for us to engage very directly with controversy with the expectation that we will not always agree and that our disagreements are potentially sites of learning. Different experiences, educational backgrounds, and identities will inform our perspectives. As we confront controversy, I am obligated to state that I expect us to engage these issues as mature and intelligent adults committed to maintaining a respectful and focused intellectual environment. Personal attacks on any member of our community will not be tolerated. Bigotry in any form is unacceptable.

**RESOURCES**

**Academic Accommodations:** Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act.  If you have approval for academic accommodations, please provide notification electronically using SARC Online during the first two weeks of the semester or a minimum of 10 days prior to utilizing your accommodations.  Following notification, students are required to meet with faculty to further discuss implementation of accommodations.  If you do not have approved accommodations, but have a disability requiring accommodations, or have questions about applying, please contact Lori Clapis, Coordinator of Accessibility Resources at[**Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu**](mailto:Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu),860-297-4025 or refer to the Student Accessibility Resources (SARC) website:[**https://www.trincoll.edu/StudentLife/StudentAccessibilityResources/students**](https://www.trincoll.edu/StudentLife/StudentAccessibilityResources/students)**.**

**The Writing Center:** You are encouraged to use the Writing Center, staffed by specially trained Writing Associates, to improve your writing—no matter your skill level. I suggest taking your writing projects to the Writing Center several times during the process of composing. To reserve an appointment via the online scheduling system use: <https://trincoll.mywconline.com/>.  The main Writing Center is in room 109 of the English House at 115 Vernon Street. For more information about hours and Writing Associates, please visit: [http://writingcenter.trincoll.edu](http://writingcenter.trincoll.edu/). Drop-ins are welcome.

**The Library and the Watkinson:** The Trinity College Library offers resources far greater than you might expect at a college of this size. Beyond a quiet place to study, **CTW** and **Interlibrary Loan** provide access to books from libraries in across Connecticut and around the world.

The Library is an especially hospitable place for researchers like you. The library’s **research guides** are a great place to start for any subject (<http://courseguides.trincoll.edu>). The **research librarians** are also kind and wonderful people who will help you with just about any assignment, from crafting historical questions to finding and evaluating research sources. **Jeff Liszka** (<http://courseguides.trincoll.edu/jeff>) is the librarian assigned to American Studies courses, but you can make appointments and visit with any of them.

The **Watkinson Library** maintains a renowned rare book, manuscript, and archival collection that has just about every kind of primary source material you can imagine. (<http://www.trincoll.edu/LITC/Watkinson/Pages/default.aspx>) The library is free and open to the public. If you choose to use the Watkinson, I recommend you go in person to speak with an archivist there, but the more specific your questions the more helpful they can be.

**Health and Mental Health: The Health Center (TCHC)**, located in Wheaton Hall, offers health care for all Trinity students enrolled in at least 2 classes. The center is licensed by the state of Connecticut as an Outpatient Clinic and is a primary care office, similar to your home physician's office. Urgent and emergent care is referred off campus to local providers.  They are affiliated with Connecticut Children's Medical Center and can coordinate subspecialists with home providers as needed. In case of emergency, call 911.

Phone: (860) 297-2018

You can find more information here: <http://www.trincoll.edu/StudentLife/HealthWellness/health/Pages/default.aspx>.

**The Trinity Counseling and Wellness Center** provides a full range of counseling and psychological services to all students who desire assistance in coping with personal and emotional difficulties and social relationships. All services offered by the center are free, and all contact with members of the staff is privileged and confidential as provided by law. The center is located at 135 Allen Place, accessible from the Campus Safety parking lot in the gray and white building near the handicapped ramp at the back of the lot. In case of emergency, call 911.

Phone: (860) 297-2415

You can find more information on the Counseling and Wellness Center here: <http://www.trincoll.edu/StudentLife/HealthWellness/counseling/Pages/default.aspx>.

**Instructor Office Hours:** Please come to my office hours as often as you would like. I encourage you to come with specific questions or issues to discuss. Feel free to email me to schedule a separate time if my office hours do not fit your schedule.

**Email:** I will attempt to answer all of your emails promptly and attentively. From Friday at 5:00 pm until Monday at 9:00 am I will be off-line and will not respond to emails. During the week at reasonable hours, feel free to email me with questions and concerns related to the class. Please attempt to keep some decorum when using email.

Please check and use your Trinity College email account. I will use that email address to distribute additional materials, handouts, make announcements, and schedule office visits.

**Course Moodle:** PDFs of readings will be available on our course Moodle. They will be uploaded to correlate with each week and will mirror the syllabus. Though I do not anticipate any changes to the syllabus, if this does occur it will be announced via email and reflected in the Moodle.

**WEEKLY THEMES**

**WEEK 1**

**Monday, 7/8: Benjamin’s Angel of History**

Short exercise

Read Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History” in class

Read encyclopedia entries on: “Historical Materialism” and “Dialectical Materialism” in class

**Wednesday, 7/10: The Context and Contribution of Walter Benjamin**

Benjamin, *Illuminations,* Introduction by Hannah Arendt, pp. 1-59 [Moodle]

Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* The Arcades of Paris by Benjamin, pp. 873-884

Dialectics at a Standstill by Rolf Tiedemann, pp. 929-945

The Story of Old Benjamin by Lisa Fitko, pp. 946-954

Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing,* Ch. 6 [Moodle]

**WEEK 2**

**Monday. 7/15: The contemporary and political context of ruins**

Augé, *Non-Places* [ALL]

Hobsbawm, Introduction, *The Age of Extremes* [Moodle]

Gonzalez-Ruibal, Time to Destroy(\*do not read comments) [Moodle]

Stoler, *Imperial Debris,* Introduction [Moodle]

Shackel, *American Labor and the Working Classes,* Ch. 6 [Moodle]

**Wednesday: Ruins, Materiality, Modernity**

Dawdy, *Patina,* Chs. 1, 2, 3, 6

DeSilvey and Edensor, Reckoning with Ruins [Moodle]

Gonzalez-Ruibal, Embracing Destruction [Moodle]

Miller, *Stuff,* Ch 2. Theories of Things, pp. 42-78 [Moodle]

Meyer, *The Atlantic,* How Gothic Architecture Took Over the American College Campus [Moodle]

\*\*Watch Documentary, *Objects and Memory,* in class\*\*

**WEEK 3**

**Monday: Uses of heritage/Whose Heritage?**

Smith, *Uses of Heritage,* Chs. Introduction, 1-4

United States National Historic Preservation Act (\*Skim) [Moodle]

NPS, A guide for preserving Native American Cultural Resources [Moodle]

UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage [Moodle]

**Wednesday: continued**

Smith, *Uses of Heritage,* Chs. 5-8, Conclusion

Harrison, R. *World Heritage and the Ontological Turn,* On Heritage Ontologies: Rethinking the Material Worlds of Heritage, Pp. 1365-1383 [Moodle]

Harrison, S. War mementoes and the souls of missing soldiers, Pp. 774-790 [Moodle]

Wikipedia entry, “Disney’s America” [Moodle]

**WEEK 4**

**Monday: The Right to Ruins**

Garret, *Explore Everything*, Chs. 1-3, 6

Vergara, *American Ruins,* Energies of the Outmoded, Pp. 8-25 [Moodle]

Harvey, *Rebel Cities,* Preface, Ch. 1 [Moodle]

De Certeau, *Practices of Everyday Life,* Walking in the City [Moodle]

Schofield and Kiddey, “Embrace the Margins: Adventures in Archaeology and Homelessness,” Pp. 4–22 [Moodle]

**Wednesday: Anthropocene’s Ruins**

Rathje and Murphy, *Rubbish!,* [ALL]

Pétursdóttir, Anticipated Futures? Knowing the heritage of drift matter, Pp. 2-17 [Moodle]

Dawdy, The Taphonomy of Disaster and the (Re)Formation of New Orleans, Pp. 719–30 [Moodle]

DeSilvey, Making sense of transience: An anticipatory history [Moodle]

**WEEK 5**

**Monday: Uncanny Ruins**

Freud, *The Uncanny* [ALL]

Pétursdóttir and Olsen, *Ruin Memories,* An Archaeology of Ruins, pp. 3-29 [Moodle]

Navaro-Yashin, Y. 2009. “Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects: Ruination and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge,” Pp. 1–18 [Moodle]

Bergland, *The National Uncanny,* Ch. 1 [Moodle]

Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution Taboo*, Ch. 1 [Moodle]

**Wednesday: Resisting with ruins**

Muehlmann, *When I wear my alligator boots,* Ch. 3 A narco without a corrido doesn’t exist [Moodle]

Mirzoeff, *The appearance of Black Lives Matter* [ALL, Moodle]

Soto, “Object Afterlives and the Burden of History: Between ‘Trash’ and ‘Heritage’ in the Footsteps of Migrants,” Pp. 460–73 [Moodle]

Bowley, *New York Times,* In an era of strife museums collect history as it happens [Moodle]

Nodjimbadem, *Smithsonian.com,* How the African American History Museum is Curating Black Lives Matter [Moodle]