

Instructor: Mari Ruti

Course number: ENG415S

Course title: Signifying Trauma: Injury, Memory, Narration

Course Description: This advanced seminar theorizes the concept of trauma both as an individual and social phenomenon. One could argue that the various ways in which human beings can be traumatized (psychologically or physically injured, wounded, or damaged) is a large part of what renders each of them unique or singular. At the same time, collective structures of power distribute trauma unevenly across social groups, causing some individuals to be more vulnerable to trauma than others. This seminar focuses on the complexities of trying (and frequently failing) to signify trauma. We will consider what it means to strive to represent experiences that in principle reside beyond representation; the challenges of witnessing and accounting for trauma endured by others; the ethics of the self-other relationship; the possibilities and limits of self-narration; as well as questions of memory, forgetting, forgiveness, and working through.

Required Reading: Authors considered include: Nietzsche, Freud, Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Eric Santner, Judith Butler, Wendy Brown, Dori Laub, Kelly Oliver, and Cathy Caruth.

First Three Texts/Authors to be Studied: Nietzsche, Freud, Foucault

Method of Instruction: Seminar discussion

Method of Evaluation: Two 5-7 page papers (40% each); seminar participation (20%)