

## Histories of Family and Self: Cultural Memory in Microcosm

This seminar will provide an introduction to the field of memory studies through readings and discussions of two bodies of texts: theoretical writings on the phenomenon of cultural memory, and literary texts that explore the interaction of past and present by relating family histories. The theoretical portion of the course will focus on exploring and understanding key texts in the field and tracing the trajectory of thinking about cultural memory since about 1900 (and especially in the last thirty-five years). In discussing the literary texts, we will consider not only how they position themselves with respect to contemporary discussions about social, political, and cultural history, but also how they employ narrative strategies and inherited narrative genres in this pursuit. For this project, we will read a variety of fictional and (auto)biographical texts from the last four decades.

Final text selections will depend on the interests and reading backgrounds of the students who enroll in the course. If students from outside the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures participate, I will ensure that all readings are available in English and will consider including texts from cultural contexts outside the German-speaking world.

Theory readings may include work by Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, Jan and Aleida Assmann, Paul Connerton, Marianne Hirsch, Valerie Smith, Astrid Erll and Klaudia Seibel

Literary readings may include:

- Peter Schneider, *Vati (Daddy)*
- Peter Henschel, *Die kleine Figur meines Vaters (Negatives of my Father)*
- Peter Handke, *Wunschloses Unglück (A Sorrow Beyond Dreams)*
- Ruth Klüger, *weiter leben (Still Alive)*
- Art Spiegelman, *Maus*
- Monika Maron, *Pawels Briefe (Pavel's Letters)*
- Günter Grass, *Im Krebsgang (Crabwalk)*
- W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*
- Uwe Tellkamp, *Der Turm (excerpt!) (The Tower)*
- Eugen Ruge, *In Zeiten des abnehmenden Lichts (In Times of Fading Light)*
- Julie Zeh, *Die Mittagsfrau or Rücken an Rücken (Blindness of the Heart or Back to Back)*
- Guntram Vesper, *Frohburg (excerpt!)*
- Katja Petrowskaja, *Vielleicht Esther (Maybe Esther)*
- Nellja Veremej, *Berlin liegt im Osten (Berlin is in the East)*

Prof. Katra Byram  
byram.4@osu.edu