

Memory in Social Life

SOC 332
Fall 2009

W 1:30-4:20

Room: Firestone Library 3-8-J

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Please note: The syllabus is subject to change to adapt to the course of our discussions. Updates will be posted on Blackboard. Please make sure you always use the latest version.

“People remember what they want to the way they want to, and call it history.”
(Christopher Dickey)

“The past is not dead. In fact, it’s not even past.” (William Faulkner)

Events of the past acquire meaning and social force through the ways in which they are remembered, and these ways in turn are affected by social institutions, from families to nations. The relationship between individual and collective memory is complex and hotly debated. It has become a prominent topic of public discussions over the past three decades, as historians have lost their monopoly over authentic descriptions of the past to pop culture, writers of fiction, and especially memoirists and eyewitnesses, creating problems such as the fake Holocaust survivor.

Memory is institutionalized through museums, monuments, films, and fiction. It contributes to nation-building and challenges to the state by national minorities. Internationally, there are struggles over the “right” way to remember transnational events such as the Holocaust or the world wars.

In this course, we will discuss different approaches to studying the role of institutionalized and non-institutionalized memory on all levels of social life. We will also look at concepts such as “frames of memory,” “collective memory,” and “collective trauma,” and think about the relationship between individual and collective memory.

The course will focus on large-scale events such as the world wars and the Holocaust, but also on cults of great leaders, such as Abraham Lincoln or the Founding Fathers. In addition to primary texts and secondary literature, it will use images, films, and music.

Requirements, grade percentages, and special topic:

- Mid-term exam 20%
- Oral presentation 10%
- Final paper bibliography 30% (4,000-5,000 words plus)
- Oral participation 25%
- Response papers/online discussion 15%

Please read the following guidelines carefully to ensure you know what is expected of you in this course. Their purpose is not to complicate matters or intimidate you, but to establish clear rules and avoid misunderstandings.

This is a 300-level course. Thus you are expected to be able to do independent research in libraries and databases, and to use services such as BorrowDirect or Interlibrary Loan. Each week, there will be a moderate volume of set readings (typically, 2-4 short articles or chapters, or 1-2 longer ones), *all of which you will find online on Blackboard or through e-reserve*¹. In addition, I expect each of you to **specialize in a particular aspect of our topic** over the course of the class, roughly at a rate of reading one additional paper per week, or 1-2 extra books over the course of the semester (but you may also choose to use other media, e.g. films). You will find pointers in the bibliography included in this syllabus, and are always welcome to consult with me, but you are ultimately responsible for finding the necessary literature. You may want to specialize in e.g. a *country* (e.g. Japan), a *period* or *theme* (e.g. the memory of World War I, or of slavery in North America), an *approach* to memory studies (e.g. “sites of memory”), or a *medium* (e.g. film). For a non-exhaustive (!) list of suggested topics, see the list and bibliography in this syllabus.

Choosing a topic and sticking with it—even if it looks daunting at times—is an important part of the exercise. Planning out and structuring your exploration of your special topic is equally important. If you do a moderate amount of reading regularly, you—and your classmates—will see how your understanding of your special topic improves over time. I do not expect you to be on top of your chosen topic by week 2 or 3, or indeed to become a leading specialist by the end of our class; but I do want to see you engage with the topic and advance your knowledge of it. Do not expect to get a very high grade in this course if you neglect this important requirement. Note, however, that there is no grade quota, and everybody should have the potential to get an “A” if they work hard enough.

My expectation is that your particular specialization will inform many of your class contributions—oral participation, response papers, final paper—and enrich everyone’s learning experience by enabling you to lead a dialog based on your special knowledge. For example, in a discussion of the memory of World War II, a student with special knowledge of China will obviously have a different perspective than someone who chose to specialize in France, and someone with a special interest in film will add different ideas than someone particularly interested in music, memorials, or museums.

¹ If you have trouble opening texts in e-reserve, try manually selecting Adobe Reader as the viewer.

How to choose a special topic

I strongly discourage you from choosing a topic that (you think) you are already familiar with. For example, do not specialize in the United States if you are American, or in museums if you are writing a JP or senior thesis about a museum. Bringing a fresh perspective to your topic and learning about it “from scratch” is an important part of the learning experience, and helps counter the inevitable biases we all have. However, working knowledge of a language other than English is an important asset and may be a factor in your choice of special topic.

Different topics have different advantages and disadvantages. My own area of specialization is in the memory and commemoration of the Second World War (including the Holocaust) in Europe and, in particular, in Germany, the former Soviet Union, and Central Europe. I am also interested in war museums and memorials as well as representations of the war in film and TV, and in the intersections of memory studies with the study of nationalism, anti-Semitism, racism, and anti-racism. On each of these topics, I will be able to provide more detailed guidance, and I will draw many examples in this course from them. However, you may also face higher expectations and find it harder to impress me with your knowledge.

If you choose a topic outside my own area of expertise (e.g. China, art, the American Revolutionary War, or intersections between the sociology of memory and cognitive or neuroscience), you will get fewer pointers from me but might find it easier to enrich the course.

Please choose a special topic by the second seminar. I also strongly suggest you decide on an alternative topic to avoid clashes. If you don't make a choice, I will assign a special topic to you.

Online response papers

Weekly response papers to specified readings (300-500 words) should be posted on Blackboard (Communication/Discussion Board) by 4pm at the latest on Tuesday. Each response should be posted as a new thread, with or without a title (your name will appear automatically). In your response papers, feel free to ask questions or state difficulties you may have encountered while reading the text, but do not limit yourself to what you “feel” about it—always question your immediate response and try to understand where it comes from. On Blackboard, you will find questions to guide you in your readings and response papers.

You must read *everyone's* papers for the next class and be able to comment on them. Be specific in your comments, always mentioning which passage in whose paper you are referring to. You are also strongly encouraged to participate in the discussion online by posting comments directly in the forum on Blackboard. Please be frank but respectful.

The *mid-term exam* will take 1h30. It will consist of a simple quote recognition exercise and/or a primary text to comment on, as well as an essay-length response to a question you will be able to pick from a list. For grading standards, see the very end of this syllabus.

Your *final paper* should be an exploration of a topic of your choice (approved by me), based on independent library research or fieldwork. In week six you will be able to present your idea for a final paper to everyone in the class to obtain feedback. Do not worry if your plans are half-baked at that moment, but you should have given the topic

some thought. You are not formally required to write an essay in your area of specialization, but you may find it much easier to do so. You may also find it helpful to formulate your essay title as a question.

The oral presentation should take 10 minutes. You are encouraged to propose your own topic, but it should (a) bear some relation to the week's central theme and (b) be approved by me. Your talk may be an analysis (but not a simple summary!) of a paper or book you read, or of a memorial artifact or practice such as a monument, park, statue, TV series, parade etc.

Throughout the course, *collaborative work* will be especially rewarded. For example, if you find interesting similarities with someone else's special topic, you are very welcome to propose a joint 20-minute presentation instead of the required 10-minute talk.

Seminar structure

Each seminar will start with an extensive discussion of the week's readings, followed by a lecture introducing new material and, in some cases, a discussion of primary texts or visual material (slides/films etc). After this, there will be a brief break, followed by more time for discussion.

Readings, week by week

Week 1: Introduction: the sociological perspective on memory

Week 2: Approaches to the study of memory

Readings:

1. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, "Setting the Analytical Parameters," in Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance*. New Brunswick; London: Transaction Publishers, 1994.
2. Maurice Halbwachs, "Collective and Historical Memory," in Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row: Colophon Books, 1980 (translated from the French by Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter).
3. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*," *Representations* 26 (1989) or in *Realms of Memory* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press), p. 1-20.
4. Jan Assmann: "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity" (translated from the German by John Czaplicka), *New German Critique*, No. 65 (1995), p. 125-133.

Please read the texts in this order.

Week 3: Frames of memory: the nation

Readings:

1. Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New Edition (2006). London: Verso. Chapters 2-3 and 10-11.
2. Eric Hobsbawm: "Introduction," in: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
3. Jeffrey K. Olick: "Introduction," in: Olick (ed.) *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*, p. 1-16.

Week 4: Frames of memory: internationalization

Readings:

1. Pierre Nora: "Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory," in: *Transit. Europäische Revue* no. 22 (2002).
2. Andreas Langenohl: "State Visits: Internationalized Commemoration of WWII in Russia and Germany," *eurozine*
3. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider: *The Holocaust and Memory in a Global Age*. Translated by Assenka Oksiloff. Chapters 2 and 7.

4. Donald Bloxham: *The Great Game of Genocide. Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 6 (“The Geopolitics of Memory”), p. 207-234.

Week 5: Frames of Memory: the family / generations

Readings:

Maurice Halbwachs, “The Collective Memory of the Family,” in Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited by Lewis A. Coser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 54-83.

Karl Mannheim: “The Problem of Generations,” in Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. Edited by Paul Kecskemeti. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952, p. 276-322.

Dorothee Wierling, “Generations and Generational Conflict in East and West Germany,” in Christoph Kleßmann (ed.), Oxford/New York: Berg, 2001, p. 69-90.

Week 6: mid-term exam and class discussion of final paper projects

Week 7: Public and private commemorations of veterans and fallen soldiers

Readings:

Robin Wagner-Pacifici & Barry Schwartz, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 97 (1991), 376–420.

Richard Lachmann, Mishel Filisha, Ian J. Sheinheit, “Death and the *Times*: Wartime Commemoration and Popular Opinion During the Vietnam and Iraq Wars” (forthcoming)

kultura no. 3/2006 (Liderman is optional, the other texts are required reading)

Week 8: Ghosts and dead bodies

Readings:

Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. (introduction and ch. 1)

Heonik Kwon, *Ghosts of War in Vietnam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008 (chs. 1 & 2)

Week 9: Founding Fathers

Readings:

Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. Ch. 7

Barry Schwartz and Howard Schuman. "History, Commemoration, and Belief: Abraham Lincoln in American Memory, 1945-2001." *American Sociological Review* 70(2)/2005:183-203.

Week 10: Heroes, victims, perpetrators, bystanders

Reading: Reemtsma

Week 11: Memory in Pop Culture

Reading:

Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007, chs. 1 and 4.

Week 12: Remembering & Forgetting: The Ethical Imperative

Reading: Ricoeur

Bibliography for further research

Useful resources:

1. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka's annotated bibliography (available on Blackboard). I suggest you start with this—it is brief enough to be manageable, yet also sufficiently broad.
2. John Sutton's bibliography on the interdisciplinary study of memory: www.phil.mq.edu.au/staff/jsutton/Memory.html. Has a wealth of material, including links to other online resources. See especially page 8 (Social Memory)
3. Harold Marcuse's web site also has a lot of useful links: www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/index.html
4. The journal *History & Memory*, available at the Firestone Library and (the more recent issues) online. It publishes relatively short articles, often dealing with individual countries or comparing a small set of countries. The Holocaust is a recurring theme.
5. *Memory Studies* is a new journal launched in 2008.

Non-exhaustive list of special topics:

- 1) Any country. Here are some on which literature is readily available in English, with one or more suggested readings each to start you off. Once again, the list is not exhaustive by any means. You are very welcome to specialize in a particular aspect of a country's memorial practices or a specific commemorated period or topic, e.g., for the United States, the Civil War, the civil rights movement, the Revolutionary War, etc. Olick's *States of Memory* and Lebow/Kansteiner/Fogu, *The Politics of Memory* are collections of essays on individual countries. For those who read German, Monika Flacke's three-volume *Mythen der Nationen* is an invaluable (and richly illustrated) compendium.
 - a. China
 - i. History & Memory special issue (Vol. 16 no. 2): *Traumatic Memory in Chinese History*, edited by Lynn A. Struve
 - b. France
 - i. Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, English edition edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998
 - ii. Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994
 - c. Germany
 - i. Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988
 - ii. Jeffrey S. Olick, "What Does It Mean to *Normalize the Past*? Official Memory in German Politics since 1989," in: Olick (ed.) *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003
 - d. Israel

- i. Israel Studies vol. 7 no. 2 (2002): *Rethinking Israeli Memory and Identity*
 - ii. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, translated by Assenka Oksiloff. Philadelphia: Temple University, 2006.
- e. Japan
 - i. Sven Saaler and Wolfgang Schwentker (eds.), *The Power of Memory in Modern Japan*. Folkestone, UK: Global Oriental.
 - ii. Naoko Shimazu, *Japanese Society at War: Death, Memory, and the Russo-Japanese War*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- f. Korea
 - i. Chunghee Sarah Soh: *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- g. Poland
 - i. Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, "New threads on an old loom: national memory and social identity in postwar and post-communist Poland," in Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (eds.), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
 - ii. Jan Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- h. Romania
 - i. Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. Ch. 2
- i. Russia
 - i. Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*. New York: Basic Books, 1995
 - ii. Frederick C. Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution*. Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2004
 - iii. Ilya Kukulkin, "The Regulation of Pain: The Great Patriotic War in Russian literature from the 1940s to the 1970s," NZ no. 40-41/2005: www.eurozine.com/articles/2005-05-06-kukulkin-en.html
 - iv. Lev Gudkov, "The Fetters of Victory: How the War Provides Russia with its Identity," NZ no. 40-41/2005: www.eurozine.com/articles/2005-05-03-gudkov-en.html
- j. Spain
 - i. History & Memory vol. 14, no. 1/2 (2002), special issue on Spain
- k. USA
 - i. Michael Schudson, *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past*.
- l. Vietnam
 - i. Heonik Kwon, *Ghosts of War in Vietnam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008
 - ii. Mai Lan Gustaffson, *War and Shadows: The Haunting of Vietnam*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009

For “non-country” topics, please browse the Irwin-Zarecka and Sutton bibliographies (see above). Here are some additional ideas:

- 2) Nostalgia
 - a. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001
 - b. Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York: Free Press, 1979.
- 3) Music
 - a. Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth Century Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009
- 4) Textbooks
 - a. Dana Lindaman and Kyle Ward (ed.), *History Lessons: How Textbooks from Around the World Portray U.S. History*. New York: New Press, 2006.

Attendance and classroom rules

Attendance is mandatory. Let me know ahead of time if you cannot come to class and/or will be late or leave early for health reasons or due to a *bona fide* emergency. *Two* unexcused absences will make your overall grade drop by a full point (e.g. from B to C).

Food and drink are prohibited in the library. You can use the water fountain during the break.

Laptop use. Our classroom discussions require your full attention. Making hand-written notes when needed and transferring them to a computer after class is an excellent mnemonic technique. Nevertheless, you are allowed to use a laptop for class-related purposes. However, any other uses (such as e-mailing) are strictly prohibited, and if you violate that rule your laptop may be banned from the classroom for the rest of the course.

Communication

If there is a problem, talk about it. If you are having trouble understanding the material, talk to your classmates and try to do some additional research on your own. If that does not solve your problem, or if you are having more general difficulties with your work, please do not hesitate to talk to me.

I will do my best to answer all course-related e-mail enquiries within two working days, and to respond promptly to requests for a meeting. However, if you have a question about the readings or assignments, please make an honest effort to do your research *before* contacting me with your questions.

Please discuss your final paper with me well ahead of the submission deadline. You should have an initial idea of the topic and the argument you wish to make by the end of October. Everyone will briefly present their ideas in class, and the others in the group will have a chance to comment. Do not worry if you think your ideas are “half-baked”: presenting and discussing work in progress is an important part of the writing process. Feel free to discuss your ideas with me before presenting them in class.

Princeton has fantastic resources available to help you with almost any imaginable problem. Talk to your college advisers, the Writing Center, and Firestone’s specialist librarians. They are there to assist you.

Do not let academic work depress or frustrate you. If it does, come see me and I will give you a list of more important things to worry about.

Grading standards: written work

Princeton's grading standards reserve the "A" grade for "work that is exceptional (A+), outstanding (A), or excellent (A-). Grades in the B range signify work that is very good (B+), good (B), or more than adequate (B-). Grades in the C range signify work that is acceptable in varying degrees."

A

"A" work is compelling, complex, sophisticated, original, and to the point. It displays confident grasp of the topic and the materials read as well as class discussions, and marshals ideas and evidence to argue persuasively in favor of the author's own central idea. It takes a complex approach to the question answered, and shows awareness of a range of intellectual implications of the ideas, authors, or questions discussed, as well as a profound understanding of social and historical context. It shows that the author has done enough research on the question to gain a firm understanding of the debate on it, and has developed an original position based on analysis, not whim. It clearly addresses the most persuasive counter-arguments to its own position, and presents the strongest possible case against them.

An "A" paper presents a clear and well-argued conclusion which plainly follows from the main body of the essay. In reading every line, the reader should be able to understand its function in the essay's overall architecture.

"A" work is clearly structured, accurate in its choice of words, and sophisticated in its style. ("Sophisticated" is not the same as "complicated.") In sum, it shows that the author has engaged with the question asked, the material used, and the paper's intended audience on multiple levels.

B

A "B" paper meets an assignment's expectations completely. It is clear and well-argued, but lacks the compelling approach, close organization, or complexity of analysis displayed in "A" work. It demonstrates the author's ability to respond intelligently to the question asked, to present an unambiguous thesis, to structure and focus his or her arguments clearly, to synthesize the material read while remaining aware of the central question asked, to choose words accurately, and to offer illuminating insights into the topic under consideration. The paper focuses on the question addressed and displays an awareness of its relevance to the topic of the course. It has no substantial flaws with regard to selection and analysis of sources, organization, or presentation.

C

"C" work is entirely adequate but not more. It does not stray from the question asked, has a structure that conveys the author's intent, presents enough analysis and relevant examples to make its central thesis appear plausible, and does so in a way that is easy to understand, even though the thesis may be weak or fuzzy. Its sentences are usually well-

crafted, and its paragraphs usually coherent. Nevertheless, C work lacks the sharp focus, the full and purposeful development, or the analytical depth necessary for a higher grade. It may remain very general, relying more on summary and repetition than analysis. It may use straw man arguments instead of refuting opposing views.

D

“D” papers are clearly inadequate in at least one way. Although D work may demonstrate competence in other facets, its strengths will be outweighed by one or two pervasive weaknesses: failure to engage meaningfully with an important aspect of the question or to maintain a focus; skimpy or illogical development; significant errors in writing; no discernible thesis or argument; no analysis of the materials.

Grading standards: participation

A high grade for participation is not a reward for talking a lot and voicing any thought that happens to pop into your head. Someone who talks only two or three times during a class session may well get an “A” if her contributions are exceptionally intelligent and relevant and help move the discussion in a fruitful and rewarding direction.

Note. *Feminine personal pronouns are used to make this text easier to read, not to discriminate against male students.*

A

An “A” student will have studied all the materials assigned and engaged with them on more than one level, using additional study tools such as reference works to clarify opaque points ahead of class meetings. She will schedule her work to allow time for going through her notes carefully, rethinking the texts and putting them into context before writing the position paper and posting it on time.

Her position paper will display knowledge of all the texts read, showing how they are relevant to the specific argument the student chooses to make about a particular author or problem. It will not rely on summary, and devote just enough space to reiterating the texts read to make it clear which arguments and portion of the text it is addressing. It will discuss the readings with reference to the central topic of the course, explain its choice of perspective on them, and present a well-argued opinion or intelligent question on the aspect of the materials that the student decides to address.

She will come to class with a clear idea of how the assigned texts relate to the topic of the course. She will actively use class discussions to argue and clarify her stance on the week’s topic. During discussions, an “A” student will engage with the other participants’ positions, displaying independence of thought and supporting her arguments with relevant evidence from the materials read, rather than anecdotes or reference to authority or “simple common sense.” An “A” student will have noted relevant passages from the texts assigned for use in class discussions.

An “A” student will always keep her contributions relevant to the central topic under consideration, trying to steer class discussions back to the main theme if she feels they are moving in a wrong direction.

In his or her oral presentation, an “A” student will provide a contextualized and analytical summary of the additional texts read, choosing examples and distributing emphasis judiciously to give the audience a clear idea of the topic presented, its relevance to the course, and the presenter’s own perspective on it.

B

A “B” student will display most of the qualities of an “A” student with regard to class participation. She will have read all the texts and engaged with them, submitted the position paper on time and presented a well-argued, analytical point of view rather than pure summary. However, her analysis of the texts will be less complex than an “A” student’s, and she may not have done much to try and clarify any opaque points prior to class discussions.

A “B” student will regularly make relevant contributions to class discussions and stick to the central themes of the course, though she may frequently omit to respond to others’ points of view. She will support her arguments with evidence from the texts read, although she may be unspecific about the passages referred to. The points she makes will be solidly argued, although she may display less independence of thought than an “A” student vis-à-vis arguments of an author she “sides” with (or the professor).

A “B” student’s oral presentation will provide a good overview of its topic and convey a sense of its relevance to the other students, although there may be minor factual inaccuracies or a somewhat unbalanced choice of quotes and examples.

C

A “C” student will have read all the texts assigned. However, her position paper and her class contributions may reveal that she read some of the relevant material so cursorily as to be unable to grasp its central points. Her position papers may be worded carelessly. They rely heavily on summarizing, fail to convey her main thesis or question clearly, or stray far from the topic of the course. Her response to the texts, as displayed in both the position papers and class discussions, may constitute a simple gut reaction rather than an attempt to grapple with the authors’ ideas and take into account alternative interpretations.

Her contributions to class discussions may be frequent and interesting, but tend to be fuzzy. She may be unspecific in her references to authors, texts, and ideas from the readings. She may frequently stray from the central topic of the class, or fail to give consideration to other participants’ points of view.

Her talk will give an adequate presentation of the topic discussed, but may be inaccurate, strongly unbalanced, or overly descriptive.

D

A “D” student frequently skips some of the readings assigned and merely reacts to what she has read without trying to insert the texts into a broader picture or forming an original and grounded judgment on them.

He or she submits the position paper over two hours after the 4pm deadline more than twice in the semester. Her position papers may be written so sloppily that the points made are difficult to grasp, or may present striking misinterpretations of the texts. They rely heavily on summarizing, do not explain the choice of aspects focused on, and present only whimsical judgments rather than well-argued opinions on the texts.

A “D” student is clearly uninterested in many class discussions.

While he or she may occasionally contribute interesting ideas to discussions, her participation will be erratic and her input often beside the point.

Her oral presentation is ill-prepared and does not convey a clear idea of the topic or its relevance to the course.