Teaching Circle Final Report 2012-13
Critically Thinking about Public Memory

Group Members: Carlos Herrera (Museum Studies), Mark Huddle (History); Joshua Kitchens (Archivist, Special Collections); Stephanie McClure (Sociology); Katie Simon (English); Mark Vail (Rhetoric)

Progress Report

This group successfully mobilized to meet all of our goals, which included the creation of a new GC1Y course in Public and Collective Memory, and a development, from the ground up, of various permeations of the course in a number of disciplines. To this end, we began meeting in the Fall 2012 to exchange bibliographies and readings for our proposed course, eventually creating a group bibliography compiled from our individual offerings. At this initial meeting, as well, we began speaking about the challenges of working in such a deeply interdisciplinary way, and we spent some time explaining our respective texts and their possible contributions to such a course to one another, as many of the offerings would be unfamiliar to us given our respective specializations. We all also grasped the incredible opportunity being provided, as each of us was able to receive a wealth of materials outside our own discipline that no doubt we will then be able to incorporate into such a course.

We had a number of meetings and email exchanges throughout Spring 2013 focused on issues such as: different thematic and discipline-specific approaches to the broad general topic; great first-day exercises for such a course; how to cull appropriate readings for undergrads from theoretical academic scholarly material; how to incorporate a site-specific research project into the GC1Y class; resources to assist with local outside-the-classroom projects; the creation of library research web-pages for our respective proposed classes; and multi-media materials to incorporate. Our sessions were hands-on and collaborative, and produced tangible products that we can take away when we teach the course ourselves.

One of our most significant accomplishments was the creation of the course itself, including the proposal, catalogue description, and discipline-specific permeations of it. GC1Y: Public and Collective Memory was approved by the senate committee in the Spring, and is now available to be offered from within the respective departments of the group members. We spent one intense work session collectively drafting the course proposal, including projected student learning outcomes and goals for the course. We spent another session creating the language for a catalogue description of the course. We are gratified that our proposal was approved without recommendations for revision, and we will most likely begin offering sections of it in the Fall of 2014. We believe this course will be a significant contribution to the Core Curriculum, and are excited to begin offering our respective versions of the course.
Another key accomplishment of this group was the establishment of a Drop Box to be used by our members as we move forward and create and refine syllabi, project descriptions, and lesson plans. We envision this as an on-going resource. We have deposited in this Drop Box our collective bibliographies and reading lists, along with drafts of documents individual members submitted for feedback and critique (sample syllabi and lesson plans). We are also using this as an archive for the Course Proposal and Catalogue description. In this way, we hope the Circle will continue informally as a collective, and we anticipate this Drop Box coming into use once we begin teaching our respective sections of the course.

Beyond the immediate tangible accomplishments of this group outlined above, we would like to mention a possible outcome of the Public Memory Teaching Circle to inspire and produce other colleagues in a similar endeavor. We believe that the collective, interdisciplinary model we have initiated here—in which a single thematic concept is explored from a number of different disciplinary perspectives—might be of use to the GCSU community more generally, particularly in the area of course development within the Core. Indeed, at the heart of the GC1Y Critical Thinking course is the fundamental idea of exploring a single topic through a variety of academic lenses and critical approaches. Collectively developing courses around thematic clusters across the disciplines thus feels like a natural process to help achieve the goals of the course itself. It also could be a way not only to bring more unity and consistency to the course across the various sections (from the student’s perspective), but also to provide faculty with resources (one another!) to help develop such courses. Our particular faculty group came together around a shared interest in the idea of Public and Collective Memory in our various disciplinary approaches, but perhaps other faculty might propose thematic clusters that would inspire them to use their own scholarly interests to connect with others beyond their respective departments.

**Expenditures:**

We were very frugal this year, and spent no money!