

English 4001: Honors Seminar
Memphis and the Languages of Place
Fall 2018

Course Description:

Through the investigation of fiction, film, sociology, music journalism, cultural geography, tourist guides, web and print promotional material, and tourist sites, we will explore the ways in which places are constructed by the languages used to describe them. In particular, we will examine how different discourses—of the academy, of the tourist industry, of popular fiction and film, of journalism, of music—produce the idea of “Memphis.” In exploring the many languages of Memphis, we will pay particular attention to how the history of the South, racial tensions, and remarkable developments in popular music make Memphis into a distinct place. Through our investigations, we will try to describe how the “collective memory” of Memphis is formed through both conscious efforts and involuntary associations, and we will examine how visual and verbal languages are used to construct local and regional identity in the face of globalizing forces.

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- understand the idea of “place” as it is constructed in contemporary theoretical texts
- comprehend the multiple discourses through which particular cultures develop “collective memory”
- interpret a wide range of texts, including fiction, film, tourist sites, journalism, and social-scientific writing
- discuss, both orally and in writing, the imaginative development of Memphis
- apply the ideas learned in the course to a greater understanding of cultural memory and community belonging

Texts:

- William Faulkner, *The Reivers* (1962) (Vintage: 978-0679741923)
- Arthur Flowers, *Another Good Loving Blues* (1994) (Ballantine: 978-0345381033)
- Ann Patchett, *Taft* (1994) (Mariner: 978-0547521893)
- Wanda Rushing, *Memphis and the Paradox of Place* (2009) (UNC Press: 978-0807859520)
- Courtney Miller Santo, *Three Story House* (2014) (William Morrow: 978-0062130549)
- Stephen Schottenfeld, *Bluff City Pawn* (2014) (Bloomsbury: 978-1620406359)
- Jim Jarmusch, *Mystery Train* (1989)
- Craig Brewer, *Hustle and Flow* (2005)
- online course packet including readings from Jon Anderson, Svetlana Boym, Al Green, Robert Gordon, Maurice Halbwachs, Greil Marcus, Karal Ann Marling, Dean McCannell, Peter Taylor, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Richard Wright