

**Code: FLMD-322E.33**

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**Course title: Film Theory Seminar: Trauma and film (writing about documentary)**

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**Course convenors:** Beja Margitházi

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**Class time and place:** Tuesday 14:15-15:45, Múzeum krt. 6-8., lower level, room -137 -

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**Course type:** seminar  
**only for students in Film MA in Film Theory Specialisation, max. 5 p**

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**Course content:** This seminar is organised partly in cooperation with *Verzio International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival* (Budapest, November 6-11, 2018) which is the only festival of its kind in Hungary, organized on an annual basis since 2004. *Verzio's* mission is "to promote open society, democratic values, rule-of-law, freedom of expression, political and cultural pluralism, and to expose abuse and global human rights violations through creative, quality documentaries." By raising sensibility to different forms of social injustice, personal and collective traumas, the seminar plans to provide students with some basic theoretical and critical tools to think, talk and write about documentaries made about these conflictual, sensitive topics. Classes will cover three main activities:

- (1) introduction to theories of cultural trauma and documentary film by reading and interpreting some key theoretical texts
- (2) discussing some contemporary documentary films on historical, ecological and domestic trauma (general reference), and also some movies from *Verzio's* actual program; and finally
- (3) working with texts written by every student on the selected film

**Please note: this class requires fluency in written English.**

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**Requirements:**

1. **Class participation:** Continuous attendance and active in-class participation in discussion is required. Every student should read the texts and watch the selected film for the respective class.
2. **Presentations:** During the semester each participant has to do two in-class presentations related to the texts and movies under discussion. The type and method of these presentations will be specified together with the instructor.
3. **Writing:** A shorter written essay should be completed during the semester (midterm paper), and a longer one until the end of the semester.

**Four or more absences result in an incomplete for the course.**

Students arriving more than 10 minutes after the class starts will be marked as not presents. No student will receive a final grade without in-class presentations and written essay. First class on the first week!

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**Indicative Reading:**

- \* Caruth, Cathy. 1995. Trauma and Experience. in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1996. 3-12.
- \* Bennett, Jill. 2003. The Aesthetics of Sense-memory: Theorizing Trauma through the Visual Arts. In *Memory Cultures: Memory, Subjectivity and Recognition*, edited by Radstone, Susannah, and Katharine Hodgkin. Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 27–39.
- \* Bessel A. van der Kolk – Onno van der Hart. 1995. The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 158-182.
- \* Daniels-Yeomans, Finn. 2017. Trauma, affect and the documentary image: towards a nonrepresentational approach. *Studies in Documentary Film* 11.2: 85-103.
- \* Elsaesser, Thomas. 2001. Postmodernism as a Mourning Work. *Screen* 42: 193–201.
- \* Hirsch, Marianne. 2001. Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory. *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14: 5–37.
- \* Kaplan, Ann E. 2005. Vicarious Trauma and 'Empty' Empathy: Media Images

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of Rwanda and the Iraq War. In *Trauma Culture*, 87-100.

\* Leys, Ruth. 2000. Freud and Trauma. In *Trauma: A genealogy*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 27-40.

\* Meek, Allen. 2010. *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories and Images*. New York: Routledge, 1–46.

\* Morag, Raya. 2012. Perpetrator trauma and current Israeli documentary cinema. *Camera Obscura* 27.2 (80): 93-133.

\* Nichols, Bill. 2010. How Can We Describe the Observational, Participatory, Reflexive, and Performative Modes of Documentary Film? How Can We Write Effectively About Documentary? In: *Introduction to Documentary*, Indiana University Press, 172–211. 253–270.

\* Plantinga, Carl. 2005. What a documentary is, after all. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63.2: 105-117.

\* Turim, Maureen. 2001. The trauma of history: flashbacks upon flashbacks. *Screen* 42 2 Summer, 205-210.

\* Walker, Janet. 2001. Trauma cinema: false memories and true experience. *Screen* 42 2 Summer, 211–216.

\* Walker, Janet. 1997. The Traumatic Paradox: Documentary Films, Historical Fictions, and Cataclysmic Past Events, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 22, no. 4. 803-825.

\* Williams, Linda. "Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary." *Film Quarterly* 46.3 (Spring 1993): 9– 21.

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