

# Memory and Political Responsibility

Sponsored by the UCLA Working Group in Memory Studies

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Keynote Speaker: Professor Ann Rigney, Comparative Literature, Utrecht University

The field of memory studies has increasingly taken an interest in activism and political responsibility, as demonstrated by works such as Ann Rigney's exploration of the "memory-activism nexus" (2018) and Michael Rothberg's analysis of the "implicated subject" (2019). This new focus has allowed memory studies scholars to put pressure on the field's long-held assumptions—by re-orienting toward the future, moving away from a sole focus on traumatic memory, and destabilizing the victim-perpetrator binary. In light of these recent developments, UCLA's Working Group in Memory Studies invites papers that consider the connections between memory, activism, and political responsibility from a variety of angles.

As Rigney states: "Remembering the past, shaping the future remembrance of the present, and struggles for a better future feed into each other in ways that still need unpacking along with the distinctive cultural forms and practices that are used in the transmission of civic commitment." (2018). This conference seeks to "unpack" the complex relationship between past, present, and future and further illuminate the connections between memory and activism by considering the role of political responsibility. Rothberg's figure of the "implicated subject" offers one way to think about this relationship by expanding the "conceptual vocabulary with which scholars and activists (and scholar-activists) approach injustice and historical and political responsibility" (2019). Other topics that explore memory, activism, and political responsibility might include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Is there a difference between pre- and post-2016 memory-activism and/or popular conceptions of political responsibility?
- How do we conceive of different kinds of political responsibility? For example, how do we manage "synchronic" and "diachronic implication" differently (Rothberg 2019)?
- How do we conceptualize responsibility for forms of "slow violence" (Nixon 2011)? For example, what does mobilization around climate crisis look like?
- How does an exploration of the memory-activism nexus allow for productive communication between memory scholars and activists/practitioners?
- What new cultural forms emerge as objects of study when memory studies turns its attention toward activism and political responsibility? What roles do protests, marches, manifestos, social media, visual art, and other public forms play in this new memory landscape? What role does literature play in this nexus?
- How does scholarship on memory, activism, and political responsibility intersect with other, related fields, such as literature and human rights, postcolonial studies, trauma studies, environmental humanities, and others?

We welcome submissions from faculty and graduate students across the humanities and social sciences. Please email abstracts of no more than 300 words by **November 15** to [uclamemorystudies@gmail.com](mailto:uclamemorystudies@gmail.com). Please include presenter name, email, paper title, academic affiliation, and a brief (100-150 words) biography.

## References

Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard UP, 2011.

Rigney, Ann. "Remembering Hope: Transnational activism beyond the traumatic." *Memory Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2018, p. 368-380.

Rothberg, Michael. *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*. Stanford UP, 2019.