

PROFESSOR MONICA J. CASPER
CRITICAL TRAUMA STUDIES
SPRING 2010

Recently, the study of trauma has become institutionalized into a loose and somewhat amorphous field of scholars, perspectives, journals, conferences, curricula, and publications. While there is little agreement regarding the boundaries, scope, and content of “trauma studies,” there is general consensus that it has been shaped by and encompasses twentieth-century catastrophes such as war, genocide, and forced migration as well as everyday experiences of violence, loss, and injury. At the conceptual heart of trauma studies is a set of tensions between the everyday and the extreme, between individual identity and collective experience, between history and the present, between experience and representation, between facts and memory, and between the “clinical” and the “cultural.” Historically, clinical and psychological perspectives have dominated trauma studies, for example in understandings of PTSD. However, new perspectives in sociology, political science, comparative studies, literary studies, gender and race studies, and history have broadened the scope of the field. This course offers an intensive, critical examination of trauma theory, trauma cultures, trauma interventions, and empirical studies of trauma, with particular attention to issues of gender, race, sexuality, citizenship status, and geography. The course is ideal for social scientists, humanists, and professional students in social work, religion, ethics, counseling, social justice and human rights, law, and health care.