Memory is the most powerful yet fragile of human faculties. Around its mysteries, we weave our deepest sense of self and community, making it, as Cicero wrote, the “treasury and guardian of all things.” We fill our private spaces and public squares with its icons: photographs and monuments, locks of hair and historical markers, dried flowers and weed-wracked cemeteries. We know, however, that memory can be flawed, that it’s fashioned not just by fact, but by trauma and triumph, by emotion and prejudice, and most often, by the need to fashion a compelling story about ourselves. Salman Rushdie describes it as a “way of telling you what’s important to you,” an individual archive, or what Oscar Wilde calls “the diary that we all carry about with us.” Unlike obdurate facts, objects, and events, memory is fundamentally human.

Like all human things, it is full of contradictions that bedevil and beguile us. We fear losing our memory, and yet forgetting can be a strange virtue—a relief from the sometimes irresolvable conflicts of the past. Still, we work hard to recover that which has been forgotten. Truth and reconciliation committees both here in Tulsa and around the world have sought to preserve the memory of trauma, even while attempting to constrain the damage it might do. “Never forget,” we intone, though Rita Mae Brown has argued that “one of the keys to happiness is a bad memory.” How do we strike this balance between remembering and forgetting? What happens when memories fail to align with one another or when they’re built around acts of violence? What do we owe to the past—and what does it owe to us? What role do monuments and other kinds of commemoration play in the creation and dislocation of community? How has technology changed our understanding of memory and what happens when memory appears to fail, either through the effects of age or disease or when confronted by some stubborn fact that contradicts it? These are just some of the questions the Oklahoma Center for the Humanities will attempt to address throughout the 2018-19 academic year by focusing on the theme of memory.

In order to support this work, the OCH invites applications from TU faculty across all the colleges to join the Interdisciplinary Humanities Seminar focused on the topic of Memory. The seminar will convene once a week through the fall 2018 semester and will build on the expertise of each participant to launch an intensive investigation of memory, assisted by visiting speakers, artists, and performers. In the spring, participants will share their work with the larger community through an array of public events. The Center encourages interdisciplinary work and welcomes a broad interpretation of the theme that will carry our investigations across intellectual, critical, experimental, and aesthetic domains. All TU faculty are eligible to apply.
Faculty Application for 2018-2019 Humanities Research Seminar

Description: The Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Seminar sponsored by the Oklahoma Center for the Humanities at the University of Tulsa is intended to promote interdisciplinary discussion on topics of current public and intellectual interest. This year, a group of approximately eight participants will be chosen to collaborate on a series of weekly seminar discussions. It is hoped that these discussions will then lead into further projects, undertaken collectively or individually. Such projects could include scholarly papers, courses designed around the theme in question, creative works, or efforts designed to spur civic action and participation. TU faculty members, students, and members of the wider Tulsa community are all eligible to apply. Participating faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences may receive a one-course release in the fall semester; students can receive a three-hour course credit. The Center’s advisory board will judge applications based on assessment of the proposal’s interdisciplinary appeal and its potential for sparking dialogue among the participants.

Theme: The theme for the 2018-2019 seminar will be Memory. The seminar seeks to explore this topic from a broad set of disciplinary angles, and we welcome applications from across TU’s colleges. You are encouraged to interpret this topic broadly and in ways that are appropriate to your own field of expertise.

Application: Applications for participation in the seminar should include the following.

- A current CV, including contact information.
- Full responses to the three application questions listed below.

Applications should be sent by electronic attachment to humanities@utulsa.edu.

Application Deadline: January 30, 2018

Application Questions (no more than 1,500 words total):

1. What is it about the concept of memory that most interests you? What are the questions that you would like to see addressed during the course of the seminar?
2. How will participation in the seminar contribute to your teaching, writing, creative, and/or other kinds of work? What kinds of projects do you envisage arising out of your participation in the seminar?
3. Provide a short list of works (books, images, performances, films, articles, etc.) that you have found important or provocative in relation to the seminar’s theme.

If you have questions about the application process, the seminar, or the Center, please contact Sean Latham (sean-latham@utulsa.edu // x2857 // @seanplatham).