

Trauma and Literature  
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Lecture - 01  
General Overview

Hello and welcome to this course, Trauma and Literature. I am Avishek Parui. I am the course instructor. I teach at IIT Madras. So, this is one of the first lectures for this course. We will talk about the overview, philosophy, theory of the course Trauma and Literature.

I think it is essential for us to know what we are getting at in terms of philosophy and theory when we look at a course like this. What is it meant to offer, or what does it aim to sort of generating in terms of discussion, theory, philosophy, takeaways, etc.

As the very title suggests, Trauma and Literature, we will look at the relationship between, the very psychological relationship between, an experience of trauma, and its representation in fiction and representation in literature. It could be poetry, prose, or drama. Different kinds of genres offer different kinds of platforms for these kinds of representations.

Now at the very outset, because this is one of the introductory lectures for this course, I would like to talk about, what trauma is, how to define trauma, and a working definition for trauma for this course. I think it is important for us to set the parameters in terms of the working definition.

If you would look at a concept like trauma, if you look at a concept like literature, if you look at a concept like narration or representation, it is very important for us to be conceptually clear about these terms, in the sense how you use it, or use these terms for a particular course, because you need to be consistent. So, I am sure you will agree in terms of the usage of these terms for our course.

Now the very name, the very title, Trauma and Literature, means we are looking at the representation of mental experiences, the representation of psychological experiences. Now trauma is a very special kind of psychological experience, which is very negative. It is a disruption of the normal psychic status, the normal psychic structure of a human being.

For this particular course, our working definition of trauma is that we look at trauma as a source of psychic interruption, a psychic stroke. It is a strike against normal psychological apparatus,

the normal functioning psychological apparatus. It is a strike against it. And that stroke, interrupts normal functioning, psychological status.

So, this whole idea of interruption becomes important. It becomes inconsistent, and it becomes interrupted. What it produces is a series of interrupted identities. So, in the place of holistic identity, seamless identities, we have instead interrupted identities. And I will keep coming back to this concept of interrupted identities as we move on in this course.

Now the whole idea of interruption obviously can be seen from different perspectives. There is a very micro neural psychological, cerebral quality of interruption where the brain is interrupted. The brain, the functioning brain becomes interrupted because of a shock, brain damage, trauma, blunt violence, whatever the reason might be, emotional trauma, emotional loss, etc.

And that interruption is strictly speaking, psychic in quality. So that kind of identity that we are talking about is a sort of medical identity, a medical condition, trauma as a medical condition. But it is also possible to look at trauma from a more collective perspective - the whole idea of generational trauma, intergenerational trauma, or collective trauma.

And often, you find these two orders of trauma are dialoguing with each other. So, it is an individual trauma. It is a person's suffering. It is the person's individual experience, which leads to trauma, and also in a way that connects to a broader experience of trauma which is shared and suffered by a community.

And the community could be marginalized, religious, or a sexual community, and different kinds of communities can be suffering trauma at different times.

So, this is something which we will be interested in this particular course where we look at literature. This constant interaction or the interstitial relationship between the collective and the private between the psychic and the macro cultural understanding of trauma is something which we are interested in.

Literature as a medium gives us this really important platform to look at this constant dialogue between the micro, psychic, individual, private orders of trauma. The collective, the macro, the cultural vectors of trauma, and this constant loop between the collective and the psychic, between the cultural and the psychological, is something literature does very well.

Fiction, poetry, any work of literature, any text of literature is a cultural product. So, it represents a particular culture, a particular cultural experience. So, we need to be careful about locating each text that we see, whether it is a partition, a holocaust, or an imperialism text.

We need to locate it very solidly and robustly in the historical materiality of its times. So, whether it is imperialism, German Nazism, India Pakistan Partition, the location of the text is very important. Unless we locate it, we would be unable to sort of gleam the complexity of the trauma and representation in that particular text.

So, it is very important for us to do that, at that very outset that we locate historically. Now once you locate the text historically in terms of its cultural metrics, in terms of its cultural vectors, then we can obviously look into it in terms of how the inwardness of character is represented, the inwardness of experience is represented, and the inwardness of psychological movements is represented.

Whether it is a stream of consciousness, whether it is a collapse of consciousness, whether it is a crisis of consciousness - different kinds of psychological situations, different kinds of psychological states can be represented in literature in different forms of narration. Now as I mentioned, what we would be interested in doing in this particular course, is to look at the loop between the historical location and cultural location of the particular text, in terms of the backdrop, whether it is partition or imperialism or Holocaust.

And then look at the inward interior location of the psychological situations in that text. So, let us say, one of the writers we have been looking at quite consistently in this course is someone called Saadat Hasan Manto. And Manto is obviously one of the famous, most famous writers writing out of Partition. His works, his fiction, short fiction, with which we will be spending time.

It is largely about Partition. So, we would be looking at several stories of Manto in terms of the location of individual minds, individual subjects, in the bigger backdrop of violence, the partition. Now if we take a look at Manto's stories, we find that his representation of politics is very interesting because of the way he narrates the story. The narrator in the story almost has a pseudo journalistic quality.

The pseudo journalistic quality is important. It is almost like a detached observer of the sufferings of human beings. But that detachment itself is quite clinical in quality and the clinical separation of the narrator and the human subjects becomes interesting in terms of how the suffering is accentuated by the distancing. So, we do not really see the voice.

We do not really get the voice of the person suffering directly. There is always a detached observer. That, as I said, is the pseudo journalistic position that Manto takes in his writings

where we have an omniscient narrator who was taking a look at only the bigger overview of suffering and trauma and the entire crisis of partition.

How it gets represented is almost like a newspaper report. That clinical detachment of narration becomes important for us to observe. So, we have a choice of narration in the case of Manto. That is something we will be interested in terms of looking at from the author's perspective, what is the choice of a narrative strategy, whether you are taking a detachment position, whether you are taking an attachment position, whether you are taking an insider position or an outsider position.

So, these are the positions of narration that we are interested in examining in this course in terms of looking at the prism through which the experiences are articulated and represented. In the case of Manto, the prisms of detachment are important because he is a detached observer, his narrator is a detached observer of the entire horror of partition as it were.

So, throughout his stories, whether it's 'Toba Tek Singh', whether it is 'Cold Meat', whether it is 'Mistake', or several other stories that we will do in this course we will look at how there is almost this cooled quality about his narration. It does not really get into human suffering. It is like a cold observer, a cold clinical distant observer of human suffering. But that itself makes it more clinical.

That itself makes the entire trauma, more sinister in quality. That there is this cool representation. It is a very hardcore journalistic representation of what is happening in the story without any interiority. There is no moving inside the character's mind. It is just a detached observer of events and a detached report, as I said, a pseudo journalistic report on events.

That is something which is, which marks Manto's style of narration. As I mentioned, that choice of narration, that choice of narrative strategy is something that we will examine in great detail when we look at Manto's works.

Now in terms of looking at the other texts in this course, a large part of trauma literature, we will deal with Holocaust unsurprisingly, because that is the one event in human history which generates several representational politics, whether it is cinema, there are endless films on Holocaust whether it is literature, there are endless novels on Holocaust.

Also, this is a constant debate, this constant tension between the human sufferer, and the bigger backdrop of the political crisis of the Second World War. So again, we will look at the Holocaust literature, whether it is Art Spiegelman's *Maus* or the other novels or texts we read in this course.

We will look at how the whole idea of suffering must be located in the political context of that particular position, the human position.

For example, if you take a look at Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, which is a novel that we will look at quite closely, we will read that as part of our main text in this course. It is written by Spiegelman of course. But we find that it is a completely opposite narrative strategy compared to Manto because Spiegelman features as a character inside the story. So, he is very much an insider.

But he is a second-generation Jew and he wants to get up the Holocaust story out of his father who suffered the Holocaust, who was a real sufferer, someone who actually was there in the Holocaust. He wants to get the story out. He wants to represent it. He is himself distanced from it in terms of temporality because you know he is second generation Jew. His memory is all about New York. His memory is all about America.

So, he does not have any firsthand experience of the Holocaust as such. He looks at his father, in terms of getting the story. And that decision of going back, you know in time to get the story out of his father, that makes it a very interesting combination of experiential trauma, psychological trauma, individual trauma, and also collective trauma, intergenerational trauma, because we are talking about two different generations away.

And we have Vladek who is the father figure in the story who suffered the Holocaust quite personally. He experienced it at a very personal level. And we have Artie, who is Art Spiegelman, his son in the story, who is also a character by the way. It gets really interesting. Unlike Manto, who is a detached observer of the partition or the horror of partition, Spiegelman over here is very much an insider into it.

He is very much a character into it. And that again, that insertion of the speaker or the narrator, or the author as a character, always lends a different kind of perspective to the entire politics of representation. So again, we are looking at the narrative stories. We are looking at the choice of narration, the strategy of narration. So where do you locate yourself? Do you locate yourself as an insider?

Or do you locate yourself as an outsider? And that decision is obviously a narrative decision. However, it also becomes a political decision. What that brings us to is the relationship between narration and politics. So, we are looking at the politics of narration. Also, a narration of politics and that is something very symbiotic structure we are looking at throughout this course. The politics of narration and the narration of politics.

There is a constant dialogue, the constant interface, we will be examining throughout this course. So these are different perspectives. I am just trying to give you a flavor of what we are going to do in this course as we move on. Now, there are different kinds of trauma that we can look at. There is like I mentioned there is a partition trauma. There is political trauma.

There is trauma done on civilians. There is trauma done on innocent human beings, who never went to war, who do not know what, who do not know what war is. Suddenly, the war dawns on them as it were and they do not know how to deal with it. We will also look at poetry as a very important medium of trauma in terms of representational trauma.

One poem we will be looking at is Dunya Mikhail's 'Iraqi Nights'. The 'Iraqi Nights' as the poem is interesting, because it is a combination of what we just discussed, a combination of detached narration as well as inserted narration. We just looked at how Manto and Spiegelman take very different perspectives in narration. So, we have Manto who is pretending to be a detached observer.

Someone who is away from the entire crisis of the partition, although ironically, he was very much part of the narration, part of the partition politics. He was very much there historically, biologically when partition was happening. And yet his decision to detach himself becomes important. Whereas in the case of Spiegelman it is just the opposite thing.

He was obviously a second-generation Jew, born in America. So, there is no way he could have suffered the Holocaust. And yet, he is making efforts to insert himself in real-time, the original time of the trauma, which is the Holocaust. So, we have completely different perspectives. What happens in 'Iraqi Nights' is just the combination of these two perspectives.

We have, for example, the speaker in the poem 'Iraqi Nights' is a mythic character, Ishtar who was this goddess of love, fertility, creation, of all the Mesopotamian God. Now that is the speaker who is identified in this poem, we immediately see a detachment. The speaker being a mythic speaker, an epic speaker, gets temporarily detach from the current political condition of Iraq.

So, there was a detachment already. However, what makes it interesting is how, despite being temporarily detached in terms of time, there is an effort to insert the speaker into the politics of representation, into the politics of war, the current war in Iraq. Whether that was the war of Saddam, whether that was the war of America, whether that was the war of Iran versus Iraq. There are also references to Genghis Khan.

Different kinds of wars, different kinds of historical wars were represented. But the point is, the trauma in that particular poem becomes quite complicated because it is not a trauma about violence. It is not a trauma about, losing life or seeing your loved ones die. It is a trauma about numbness and that becomes a very important character.

It is a trauma by which a human subject becomes numbed or you know unfeeling. There is a complete loss of feeling, there is a complete loss of empathy, imagination, feeling. That makes it traumatic in this particular context. Again, we look here different ontologies of trauma as it were, different kinds of trauma.

The direct trauma of violence, where you know, you become mentally ill, mentally unstable, mentally violent, perhaps as a reaction to the violence, which happens a lot in Manto's fiction. There is the trauma of bodily remembrance, which happens in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. There is also the trauma of numbness where you can't react, you can't respond to a certain situation emotionally.

This constant loss of emotion or the emotionlessness as it were emerges in itself a traumatic condition. The trauma of numbness becomes important for us to understand. Again, we are looking at different politics of trauma, different ontologies of trauma, and different experiences of trauma as it were. That is something which we will see get represented as different forms of narration like we mentioned.

There is a detached narration, there is an inserted narration, there is a detached and inserted narration put together. 'Iraqi Nights' offers that example very well. Then, of course, we have an example of war trauma. A direct example of war trauma. Now war trauma becomes interesting, because it is that trauma, which is suffered throughout, and there is a detachment as well as an attachment.

Because the very idea of war trauma is to be a survivor to suffer a war trauma. So, you have come back from the war and you want to get integrated back into civilian life, but you cannot. Thus, we are looking at Virginia Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway* where we have a war veteran Septimus Smith, who comes back. And he is a classic case of PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder.

We see how the medical politics around Septimus becomes interesting because the cure methods prescribed to him as a method of confinement, the method of a healthy cure is confined to a house and he is meant to eat a lot of food, and he is meant to exercise, meant to work, and play games, collective games, whereas we find him suffering from the trauma.

Again, this is a combination of numbness, which you see in 'Iraqi Nights', as well as violent recall, something which you see in Spiegelman's *Maus*. You have Septimus Smith, who is having these vivid recalls of traumatic moments, which also paradoxically makes him numb, makes him feel less, makes him emotionless.

Again, we are looking at numbness as a site of trauma, as an order of trauma, as an experience of trauma, as well as a violent recall. This whole vivid recall of something a traumatic event can be recalled due to a trigger. So, trigger trauma becomes important in *Mrs. Dalloway*, as well as numbness. Again, we are looking at a combination of different perspectives.

And there is that omniscient narrator in *Mrs. Dalloway*, but unlike Manto's narrator, the omniscient narrator is not detached. The omniscient narrator very much attaches themselves to the characters. We have Septimus' inward narration or psychological condition very graphically and very vividly described to us.

And that great graphic vivid description of Septimus' trauma through an omniscient narrator becomes interesting because we seem to have a very direct glimpse, very direct access to his psychological state in terms of what he suffers, and what he cannot express. Again, what we are looking at in *Mrs. Dalloway*, is a constant combination of suffering and narration. He is not able to say what is bothering him.

He is not able to feel. He is not able to narrate. And we are looking at two different kinds of memory at work. We are looking at traumatic memory and narrative memory. That is something which we will talk about in more detail later. But suffice it to say, traumatic memory is that order of memory that is so traumatic, so original, so fresh, so raw, so wounded that does not lend itself to narration or narrative politics.

We cannot narrate a traumatic memory because it is so fresh in our minds. You do not have that temporal detachment, it will have that spatial detachment or the spatial-temporal detachment, which you require in order to narrate. So that detachment is not available to you. What that means is that we need to have a certain degree of detachment in order to narrate.

Thus, the narration will only occur or emerge out of a detachment. We can only narrate because we detach from an event. If you are still suffering that event you cannot narrate it. Now in the case of Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway*, we find that it becomes suffering in the process. He becomes a process of suffering. He becomes an experience of suffering. He becomes an event of suffering as it were.



And that event, that experience, that process of suffering, it does not lend itself to the narration or the possibility of narration is unavailable to Septimus because he cannot narrate. Because it is very much inserted into the mode of suffering. And we also look at how the city of London becomes interesting. That's something which we will look at very closely in all the texts which we will see, the space around the sufferer, the space around the human subject.

To what extent does the space become dialoguing with the suffering? And to what extent does it become alien to the sufferer? In the case of Septimus, we find the city of London, which is very anxious to move on from the First World War, very anxious to look happy, very anxious to look ecstatic, very anxious to look consumerist despite having millions of people who died in the war.

We have a line in the novel, which says almost everyone has someone who was killed in the war. So, it is a city of mourners, actually. However, we see the city advertising itself with toffee advertisements. The skywriting airplanes advertising different kinds of commodities. So, it is trying very hard to look happy. It is trying very hard to move on; so that makes it more alien.

That makes it more disintegrated for Septimus who cannot integrate himself into the post-war space because he retains his original trauma. There is no way he can integrate himself into that space again. The integration and disintegration politics become interesting. Again, we are looking at detachment, attachment, through different kinds of narration.

In the case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the narration is omniscient, as it has an omniscient narrator. But that omniscient narrator happens to do almost everything that happens in the mind of the character. So, it becomes very interiorized in some sense. It becomes very psychological - those streams of consciousness, the character suffering crisis and consciousness or interrupted consciousness.

So again, interruption becomes important. Septimus becomes in a way an interrupted identity. His identity is not integrated into the metropolis. So, in that sense, he is interrupted. That interruption becomes a key thing. It becomes a medical thing of course because it is sort of medicalized by the doctors. It is almost hyper-medicalized as one might say.

Also, it is quite political in context because he is someone who comes back after the First World War, but he cannot see himself being accepted. So instead of being a war hero, he becomes a liability. He becomes a problem for this particular metropolis. Again, we are looking at different kinds of political conditions. So that is something which we are very keen on to look.

We are looking at trauma, the bio-political condition of trauma. We won't look at trauma strictly as a medical condition, because that is certainly reductionist. There are two kinds of ways in which we will look at trauma or traumatic cognition.

The embedded, which is a neural, the psychological, the experiential, the visceral, but also the extended, the social trauma, the whole idea of being alienated, the whole idea of being disintegrated from the social surroundings. The apparatus around you, the discursive apparatus, the political apparatus, they are alienating you. That becomes a political formation of trauma to a certain extent.

This bio-political combination is something that we will be examining quite closely throughout this course. The bio-politics of trauma, trauma as a biological phenomenon, and trauma as a political phenomenon, and how these two orders of phenomena are constantly connected with each other - that is something which we are very keen on to look at.

Now moving on to other literary texts, we have a very interesting case of trauma called pseudo trauma. Let us call it pseudo trauma, or unreal trauma, which is performed, but never quite experienced. So, we have a short story by Katherine Mansfield called 'The Fly', where we have a character who is a bit of a traumatophile.

Traumatophile is someone who enjoys being traumatic or someone who does not want to let go of the trauma and wants to hold on to the original order of trauma as some kind of marker of prestige. Interestingly in that story, trauma becomes a marker of prestige. You are prestigious because you are traumatized because you can hold on to your trauma as that gives a sense of entitlement as it were.

That very perverse relationship between trauma and entitlement or trauma and prestige becomes something which you see in that story, 'The Fly'. We see how the entire idea of trauma becomes pseudo performance. It becomes very performative in quality. It is not something that is experienced. It is less of an experience and more of a performance.

That proclivity towards performance becomes interesting because when we see that the type collapse of the character happens because it cannot perform a trauma anymore. Again, we are looking at a very interesting take on trauma because here trauma is not so much an original event. It is not so much an original experience. It is not so much an authentic experience.

It is a very inauthentic experience and the inauthenticity of trauma becomes important because what it does is that it makes trauma as I mentioned into a performative category, also as a spurious category, it is a pseudo drama. It is something that is falsely performed. Because, as I

mentioned, there was a very perverse connection, it's a very perverse equation between trauma and privilege.

It is like saying, I am so privileged because I can consume trauma all the time. And hence, we have the question of traumatophilia. When we look at that story we will look at some of the very important and slightly old categories such as trauma tourism. We will look at how the tourism industry boomed after the First World War because people were flying and going to different places to see the graves of their beloved ones who lost their lives in the war.

Trauma also lends itself to commodification. Trauma also lends itself to fetish formation. We would look at it when we will deal with that story in due course. We will look at the fetish of trauma, trauma as a commodity, trauma as some kind of a privilege. It is a sense of ownership that you have on trauma. It is my trauma, it is my commodity.

We can see the commodification of trauma, happening at both levels. At an interior level, when we have the character trying to consume trauma, trying to be traumatophile again, trying to perform trauma in a very consumerist kind of a way. And we have equally the extended consumption of trauma through trauma tourism, when we have people traveling, staying in hotels, paying for jam, walking, and taking tours across the graveyard.

We have extended trauma tourism, which is again, trauma consumerism. Thus, different kinds of consumption are at play. It is a very dark take on trauma interestingly. By dark I mean, it undercuts the authenticity of trauma. It undercuts the original experience of trauma, the psychological impact of trauma in terms of how it psychologically would not look.

Rather the focus over here is how you perform it in a very shallow, superficial level, and in a very consumerist way as well. We will look at that story, 'The Fly' in great detail. We will take a look at these different orders of experience. Now moving on, there are other texts we will look at. I am not going to talk about all the text together in this lecture. What I am trying to get at is the philosophy or the different kinds of philosophies we are looking at in this course.

Now it is important for us to ground this course in a very solid theoretical framework. Not only are we looking at trauma from a medical perspective, (that is something which we are taking into account,) but also from a narrative perspective. How do you represent trauma, the politics of representation when it comes to trauma.

Two key figures that we will look at in trauma, in terms of trauma theorists are Cathy Caruth who talks about experience or unclaimed experience of either trauma as an unclaimed experience, something you do not want to claim, something you do not want to take ownership

on, but it is still there as part of your system. Besides that, we have Catherine Malabou who looks at trauma, from a very poststructuralist kind of perspective.

Trauma as a collapse of representation, trauma as a complication of representation, trauma as performative representation - as just mentioned in the case of 'The Fly' by Katherine Mansfield. So, Cathy Caruth and Catherine Malabou are the two key figures for us, in terms of trauma in terms of how trauma connects to fiction, in terms of how trauma can be seen as not just as an effective medical category, but also as a representational category, and as a cognitive category.

What we will be looking at in this course is the relationship between cognition and narration. Trauma as a cognitive category, trauma as an effective category is what you experience and then narrate it. What are the wrinkles as it were between the experience of trauma and the representation of it? Is there a wrinkle at all? Is there refraction at all? Is there any shift in the medium at all? Is there a shift in signifiers at all?

That is what we look at, not just as the direct, because there is no direct transmission from experience to the narration. There is always a shift from the experience to the narration. There is always a distraction, there is always a wrinkle, there is always refraction from the experience of trauma to the narration of trauma. We will look at these two philosophers Cathy Caruth and Catherine Malabou in great detail, in terms of how we can locate trauma theoretically as well as philosophically.

Now as I mentioned some of the key cultural-historical backdrops of trauma would be the partition, would be the Holocaust, would be imperialism, would be the First World War, and also the Iraq collapse. We have seen already how something like 'Iraqi Nights' by Dunya Mikhail, which is a story about the Iraq war and how that takes a toll on normal civilian's life becomes important for us in terms of understanding.

The war becomes a very important event in trauma studies. War can also be seen as an interruption to normalcy, normal cognitive experience, and normal cognitive mapping - your cognitive mapping of the world. What do you mean by cognitive mapping? Cognitive mapping is the way you ascribe meanings to whatever you see around you.

You map meanings in terms of your learned words. You learn a word, and then you attach the word to things around you. That is called cognitive mapping. You see something, you attach meaning to it, you attach words with and thus cognitive mapping is also linguistic mapping to a certain level.

Now what happens with war, trauma is that this normal, seamless cognitive mapping becomes interrupted, because you do not know what something is. Something can be very quickly transformed into something else. That is what war does. The whole event of the war, the whole event of trauma can also be seen in the very perverse form of transformation.

It is a very perverse transformation in the sense that it transforms something into something else very quickly, abruptly, accidentally, and violently. For example, we will look at one of Catherine Malabou's books, *The Ontology of the Accident* where she talks about what is an accident, how do you define an accident philosophically, and what is the philosophy of an accident.

In that book, she discusses how the accident can be seen as a transformative event since it transforms you. Obviously negatively, but also cognitively. You understand your cognitive mapping of the world changes and abruptly comes to an end. It either comes to an end, it either suffers a closure, or it is de-familiarized to such an extent that it cannot connect back to your past.

So, what that means is, it is a very interesting relationship, a very cognitive relationship between trauma and memory. We will look at memory very closely in this particular course as well in terms of what trauma does to memory. We have already talked about two different kinds of memory, traumatic memory and narrative memory.

We will draw on memory studies, which is something I do at IIT Madras and we have had a series of events around it that I will refer to those events as well. We will look at how we can look at memory studies as a sub-component of trauma studies, especially if we look at trauma and literature, and the relationship with trauma, and narration. How does memory come into being? It is because memory too can be seen as a form of narration, as a narration of the brain to the self.

Memory can be seen as a story that the brain tells to the self. So, memory towards narration, memory towards narrative and quality - there is a sequence to memory. There is a sequence of events in memory. There are markers in memory. There are cognitive mappings in memory and all these make the memory very close to the narration.

If we look at trauma, it can be seen as an interruption in narration as well as an interruption of memory because we have, for example, when we look at 'Toba Tek Singh' by Saadat Hasan Manto, it is a partition short story where we have an example of a mad man who cannot remember things which happened immediately before he became mad, although he remembers things which happened way back in the past.

And that is an example of something which we call retrograde amnesia. So retrograde amnesia is an example of a phenomenon, a situation or a condition, where things that happened to you in the immediate past just before you became medically ill that disappears from your mind, that becomes a blank state, whereas things that happened a long time ago, you manage to remember those as even then.

So, what we see is a collapse of short-term memory. So short-term memory does not become long-term memory anymore, because of traumatic experiences. Whereas the old long-term memories which happened before you became medically ill, stay in your mind. So, we will look at the medical politics of memory, but also memory as a political phenomenon.

Memory is a cultural phenomenon and there is a very complex relationship between trauma and memory because a large part of memory studies is about forgetting. We will look at how you know, the whole idea of forgetting becomes a very important component of trauma in terms of what you choose not to remember, what you choose to remember.

So, these decisions of remembering, not remembering become very important decisions cognitively as well as we can say culturally and politically. In a nutshell, just to wind up what we discussed so far, this particular course will draw on philosophy, will draw on psychology, especially cognitive psychology, and also to a certain extent on clinical psychology, philosophy of mind, critical theory, and of course literary studies.

We have this very interesting, interdisciplinary combination, which will hopefully give you an interesting flavor of this course. We will look at the relationship between trauma and literature, trauma and fiction. The prisms through which we will look at these things will be through philosophy, through psychology, through cognition, through memory studies, through trauma studies.

We will look at the constant confluence of medical and political orders and how literature as a medium becomes a vessel, becomes a platform where these two orders connect and converse as it were. The critique of the medical, the critique of the political can take place focalized through fiction and this focalization becomes important.

It is a very important category in fiction to identify what is the focal point of your narration, through which perspective are you telling the narration, are you enacting the narration or not. It appears there are four or five different characters in the story but you choose a particular character through whose mind the narration happens or the narration takes place. For example, in the case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, a large part, a large chunk of the narration takes place through Septimus Smith's mind.

The mind becomes important as the focal point, the focal field as it were. Whose cognition are we talking about? That cognitive field becomes important because that cognitive mapping becomes part of the narrative mapping in that particular story. Again, we are looking at the relationship between narration and cognition because the moment you choose a particular cognitive field, you are also choosing by default, a particular narrative field because then you are looking at the narration of that particular person, subject, and suffering subject.

The suffering subject becomes important because that is the subject through whose mind you enter or you produce the order of narration. That becomes complicated as well as complex. Now of course, as I mentioned, a large chunk of this course will be about cognition, memory, trauma, and also about narration. All these categories will constantly mix with each other; cognition, memory, forgetting, amnesia, oblivion, and narration.

We will be looking at how these categories mix and merge all the time and how the deliberately chosen texts we have, like Spiegelman's *Maus*, the partition short stories of Saadat Hasan Manto, the poem by Dunya Mikhail on the Iraq war, 'The Fly' by Katherine Mansfield or *Mrs. Dalloway* or the other texts that we would look at in this particular course in due course.

We have this constant convergence of these very different frames, which will come in and become and make this course very interdisciplinary in quality. This interdisciplinarity is something which we will take very seriously because something that I want to offer in this course, as I have mentioned already, is to give you some research ideas, not just in terms of how to study the text but also how to connect text.

How to connect different philosophical frames, in terms of designing a research idea which you can potentially pursue, whether it is an M. Phil, whether it is a Ph.D. The idea of something which can be pursued through a very interdisciplinary frame and is something which we will look at as we move on in this particular course. I end this lecture at this particular point.

I hope you get a hang of the philosophy in terms of what we try to do in this course, what are the frames of looking in this particular course, and I hope this will be an interesting course for you. I look forward to interacting more with you. I will start with the texts in the sessions to come. Thank you for your attention.