Memento Assignment

**Your Assignment**: In your outline this week, you are to: 1) highlight the terms/concepts below, 2) define the terms in your own language or in context, and 3) use the movie to explain the application of the term thoroughly. Explain it in a way that someone who does not understand the term, but has seen the movie would get it.

**Terms/Concepts**

Stage Model of Memory relearning method sensory memory

working/short-term memory long-term memory episodic memory

encoding semantic memory anterograde amnesia

retrograde amnesia retrieval cues Levels of Processing Model

Decay Theory procedural memory Interference Theory (2)

Reconstruction Theory motivated forgetting hippocampus

misinformation effect effortful processing rehearsal

**Remember while viewing:** This is a complex story to tell because the color scenes are told in reverse chronological order while the black and white scenes are done in chronological order. Both the color and black and white scenes are alternately interspersed throughout the movie in a set pattern. This is done to put the viewer in the shoes of Memento's protagonist Leonard Shelby (Guy Pearce) and experience what he is going through.

**Memento is presented here in chronological order for simplification:** Leonard Shelby wakes up in an motel room puzzled why he is there. The phone rings and he begins to have a conversation with an unknown caller. He starts telling the story of one Sammy Jankis (Stephen Tobolowsky). Shelby says Jankis was a man who claimed to suffer from short-term memory loss or anterograde amnesia. Any new memories and experiences are forgotten within a few minutes.

Leonard was a former insurance investigator assigned to determine if Jankis' condition would be covered under his insurance policy. After testing, Leonard concluded that Jankis' condition was psychological and his claim was denied. Sammy's wife (Harriet Sansom Harris) is a diabetic who was convinced by Leonard (in trying to placate her), that Sammy could indeed make new memories. Afterwards, she tested Sammy to see if he could remember. But he repeatedly gave her insulin injections and she lapsed into a coma and died from overdose. It was a form of suicide because she could not deal with his condition anymore. Poor Sammy was confined to a mental institution not even able to remember his wife's death.

Next, Leonard recounts how his wife Catherine Shelby (Jorja Fox) died. One night, two men broke into their home and raped and murdered Catherine. Leonard shot one intruder dead but a second man ambushed him from behind and forced his head into a mirror. It was with such great force that Leonard developed anterograde amnesia. His last permanent memory was seeing his wife dying on the bathroom floor. Lenny wants revenge for Catherine's death and becomes determined to find and kill the second intruder.

He develops a system to help compensate for his condition. This involves getting important facts and messages tattooed on his body, taking Polaroid photographs, and writing notes to himself. Avenging his wife's death becomes the prime directive in his life whenever he wakes up or forgets what he is going to do. Apparently one can condition themselves to cope with the memory loss by repetition and thus be able to function in daily routines. Lenny has "remember Sammy Jankis" tatooed on his hand to remind him of his condition. There are also tatooed clues to the second intruder's identity such as "drug dealer," "male," "white", his name is "John or James G\_\_\_\_\_\_\_."

We find out later it is Teddy (Joe Pantoliano) who is the mysterious caller. He tells Lenny that the murderer is a drug dealer, and that he can be found at an abandoned warehouse. Lenny goes to the rundown building and kills a man named Jimmy Grants (Larry Holden).

A few minutes later, Teddy arrives at the building, and Lenny discovers he has been tricked. Jimmy Grants was indeed a drug dealer but did not have anything to do with his wife's killing. Teddy reveals that Leonard's wife survived the robbers' attack, but she died from an insulin overdose administered by Leonard.

According to Teddy, Sammy Jankis was a fraud who was not even married. Teddy claims to be police officer John Gammel. He says he took pity on Leonard and helped him track down and kill the real John G. more than a year ago. Teddy thought that killing the second man would regain Leonard's memory back. However, Leonard forgot this happened and began searching for John G. again. Teddy finally admits to manipulating Leonard to kill Jimmy for the $200,000 in the drug dealer's car. He had set Jimmy up to bring money by falsely claiming to have drugs.

Before Lenny can forget Teddy's revelations, he sets himself up to kill Teddy. He records Teddy's license plate number as John G's, leaving himself a note reminding him to have the car's license number "SG137IU" tattooed. Leonard takes Jimmy's clothing and Jaguar car and drives to a tattoo parlor. He ditches Teddy by throwing his car keys into some tall weeds. At the parlor, Leonard finds a note in his pocket from Jimmy's girlfriend Natalie (Carrie-Anne Moss).

Forgetting that he is wearing Jimmy's clothes, he thinks the note is for him and goes to the bar where Natalie works. After meeting her, he tells her about his condition. Natalie offers to help Leonard, but she later tricks him into going after a man named Dodd (Callum Keith Rennie), who has been harassing Natalie for the money from Jimmy's prior drug deals. After confronting Dodd, Lenny forces him to leave town.

After getting rid of Dodd for Natalie, she in return has John G's license plate traced. She gives Leonard a copy of John Edward Gammel's driver's license, and he matches it to his photo of Teddy. He concludes Teddy is the "John G" who he has been looking for and is the man who raped and killed his wife. All the other John or James Gs Lenny has killed have been forgotten. He takes Teddy to the abandoned building where Jimmy Grants was killed a few days before, and shoots him in the head.