

GER 496: The Holocaust in Postwar Literature and Public Media Spring 2014

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Friday 5-8 pm

Goals

The Holocaust is one of the most talked-about events in modern history: we know about Hitler's rise to power in 1933; we have all seen images of Germans marching in the streets and raising their arms in the Nazi salute; we know that millions of Jews and other victims were murdered in concentration camps. What is more difficult to grasp, for students and scholars alike, is the question of how the bonds between neighbors were severed in such radical ways that mass murder could occur. Examining postwar literature, autobiographies, essays, film, and memorials, we will focus on three main questions: 1. What made it possible for people to disregard their own humanity and marginalize, exclude, and finally annihilate their fellow-citizens? 2. Is the Holocaust a unique historical event -- the ultimate expression of evil -- or does the mass murder of the Jews share common traits with other forms of genocide and racism? 3. How can this atrocity be represented in language and images, if what happened in the camps is so utterly unimaginable? Throughout the semester, we will examine accounts by victims, perpetrators, witnesses, and bystanders to explore the profound ethical and historical implications of this man-made catastrophe. While examining these questions, students will develop the close reading skills necessary to explore different media and genres. You will also practice presenting personal reflections and critical analysis in shorter papers and a research essay.

Required Texts

- *Doris Bergen, *The Holocaust: a Concise History*
- *Elie Wiesel, *Night*
- *Ruth Klueger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood*
- *Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*
- *Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*
- * Course Reader

Course Requirements and Procedures

- **Attendance:** Regular class attendance is required. If you miss a class you are responsible for reviewing the material that was covered.
- **Participation:** Active participation is essential for your successful completion of this course. You will be asked to regularly contribute to class discussions and to share your written responses. In order to prepare for class discussions, do not just passively read through the texts but mark passages that you find interesting. If there is no specific writing assignment, take notes (i.e. write down comments,

create connections with texts/topics we previously discussed, or write down your response to the story/argument). Bring those notes to class. Sometimes I will also ask you to formulate discussion questions before class.

- **Writing Assignments and responses papers**

Throughout the semester you will be required to do short writing assignments and response papers. *For the short writing assignments you will be asked to address a specific question. The response paper is less formal. It should demonstrate that you have thought about the text you have read. For example, what is the story about? How does the writer present the main issue? How does the text relate to other material of the course? Is there a passage or an idea that strikes you in particular? Why? Don't just summarize the story. Write down your observations, reactions, questions, comments, or critique.* Take notes while reading the text, review and expand your notes when you prepare for class. The papers should be one page, if possible, typed double-spaced, (about 300 words). Since the short writing assignments and response papers serve mainly to facilitate class discussions, they will not be individually graded. You will receive, however, three points for each assignment (3=excellent, 2=good, 1=poor).

- **Papers: Writing is a process that takes practice.** There are **two** papers between 600 and 1,200 words each and a **final research paper**. No late papers will be accepted. Please plan ahead.

For your final research paper, you will select a paper topic in consultation with me. There will be a series of required steps in the writing process of the final paper (research appointment, thesis statement, bibliography, draft). These steps will culminate in a research paper of approx. 2,400 words, not including the bibliography. You need to use MLA citation style for footnotes and bibliography. **The final paper is due FRIDAY MAY 16.**

- **Presentation:** Once during the semester you will be asked to present on a particular reading assignment. In this presentation you will need to outline the main points of the argument, point to evidence, explore options for alternative arguments, link the text to the other material covered in class and pose at least two questions for discussion. In some cases I will give you specific topics for the presentation.

- **Grading:**

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|------------------------|--|
| Participation | 25% |
| Presentation | 10% |
| Writing Ass./Responses | 10% |
| Papers | 30% (1 st 10%, 2 nd 20%) |
| Final Paper | 25% |

- **Academic Integrity:**
Plagiarism is the submission of someone else's words or ideas as your own. Students found to have quoted or paraphrased from sources without giving due credit will fail the assignment and the class. If you have any questions about how to develop your papers and other writing assignments, or about the appropriateness of your sources, please come and talk to me.

Semester Overview*

How to Approach the Holocaust: History, Memory, Representation

Jan 24:

Recent newspaper articles

Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory* (r)

Ida Fink, "The Table" (r)

Modern European History and Antisemitism, the Rise of Nazism

Jan 31:

Doris Bergen, *Holocaust*, esp. 1-69

Raul Hilberg, "The Destruction of the European Jews" (in Bartov) (r)

Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will* (excerpt, film, 1935)

Inside the Third Reich

Feb 7th:

Anti-Jewish Legislations and Himmler's Posen Speech 1943 (in Dawidowicz) (r)

Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness* (r)

Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (r)++

Camps: History and Documentary

Feb 14th:

Doris Bergen, *Holocaust*, esp. 167-245

Hanus Burger *Death Mills* (excerpt, film, 1946)

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (r)

Memoirs of Survivors -1

Feb 21:

Elie Wiesel, *Night*

Elie Wiesel: First Person Singular (excerpt, film, 2002)

PAPER #1 DUE

Memoirs of Survivors -2

Feb 28:

Ruth Klüger, *Still Alive* (1-133)++

Mar 7th:

Ruth Klüger, *Still Alive* (134-end),

Ruth Klüger, “Forgiving and Remembering” (r)++

Julia Kristeva, “Forgiveness: an Interview” ++

Resistance and Complicity

Mar 14:

Alain Resnais, *Night and Fog* (excerpt, film, 1955)

Primo Levi, “The Gray Zone” (r)

Mahatma Gandhi, “On Love and Dictators” (r)

Mark Harris, *Into the Arms of Strangers* (excerpt, film, 2000) or

Michael Marrus, “Jewish Resistance and the Holocaust” (r)++

PAPER #2 DUE

Mar 21 no class [instead of Spring break]

Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders

Mar 28:

Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*, esp. 38-77, 159-189 ++

The Holocaust – How unique is it?

Apr 04:

“UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, 1948” (r)

“Is the Holocaust Simply another Example of Genocide?” (r) ++

Charles Green, “Genocide, Victimization, and American’s Inner Cities” (r) ++

Louis Michael Seidman, “Hyper-Incarceration and Strategies of Disruption: Is there a Way out?” (r) ++

RESEARCH APPOINTMENTS

April 11: film screening

The Trials – Witnessing and Testimony

Apr 18:

Peter Weiss, *The Investigation*

Verdict on Auschwitz (excerpt, film, 2007)

Memory and Postmemory

Apr 25:

Paul Celan, "Death Fugue" (r)

Art Spiegelman, *MAUS*

FINAL PAPER THESIS STATEMENT, BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Today: Monuments, Memorials, and Museums

May 2:

James Young, "The Texture of Memory," (r) ++

Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (excerpt, DVD)

FINAL PAPER DRAFT DUE

FINAL PAPER DUE Friday, MAY 16TH

*NOTE: changes might apply during the semester

++ student presentations