HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST    Fall 2007

History 3727 W Section 001/Jewish Studies 3521/Religious Studies 3521/
Dr. Stephen Feinstein, Director, Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

Hits 3727W/RelS 3521/JwSt 3521 sec 001  11:15-12:30PM  TTh
(01/17/2006 - 05/05/2006) , NichH 155

Note also that this course does **count toward fulfilling the historical perspectives requirement** of the Department of History, approved as such in February 2006. Consult with an advisor in the History Department for credit in the department.

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**Goals of the Course:**

Some considerations:

"*The Holocaust cannot be thought because it cannot be exhausted by historical narration. It remains elusive, uncontained, a putative mystery because the categories by which such immensities are grasped seem inadequate and trivial.*"  Arthur Cohen, *The Tremendum.*

"*I was there for about two years. Time there is not the same as it is on earth. Each moment there moves at its own speed. The inhabitants of this planet had no names. They did not dress as we dress here. They were not born here, nor did they give birth. They breathed by other laws of nature. I believe with all my heart that as in astrology, the stars influence our fate. So the ash-planet Auschwitz stands over this earth and influences it.*"

*Ka-Tzetnik  135633 on Auschwitz From “The 81st Blow,” film from Lochemai Hagetaot.*

Despite the introductory statements which indicate the difficulties in understanding the Holocaust, which refers to the extermination of 6 million Jews and 500,000 Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) during the rule of National Socialism (NAZI) in Germany, this course will attempt to document and analyze this event and what it represents--in particular, the background, development and systematic extermination of European Jews by the Nazis. Not only were Jews affected by Nazi policy, but others labeled "undesirable" or "subhuman" were also exterminated in this process--gypsies, political and religious opponents, homosexuals. The course will try to differentiate between victims who were defined “racially” or “biologically,” as opposed to victims for other causes. A common myth in the study of the Holocaust is that there were “11 million victims,” six million Jews and five million others. This “fact” is an invention. As many as 45 million civilians...
died in World War II, and this includes, depending on the accuracy of statistics of those killed on the territory of the former Soviet Union, as many as 28 million alone. The Holocaust, however, still stands with some singularity, despite attempts at comparison. This is perhaps reflected in Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to Cologne at the end of August 2005 and his strong statements about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

If one studies the history of the second World War, especially in a pre-college setting, one might come away believing that the extermination of the Jews was simply a footnote to history. Recent historical thought, however, has suggested that the very reason for the War might be directly linked to Hitler's plans for living space for the German people in the East, the extension of borders and the desire to kill Jews and Gypsies, who were non-European in origin, and to subvert all other “inferiors.” In this course, particular attention will be given to the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, in both its religious and secular forms, to the relationship between mass murder or genocide and the growth of bureaucracy and technology, and to the challenges posed by the Holocaust for religious and humanistic beliefs and values.

The Holocaust gave birth to the word “genocide,” coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, meaning the “killing of peoples.”

Because of recent events in the post-Cold War World, there is a certain potency to studying the Holocaust as an event, as it may now be said to foreshadow the destruction of human beings that has begun anew in the former Yugoslavia and famine and politically-linked killing in Africa and Asia. The events in Darfur, The Sudan, are the latest examples of such killings.

In this course, however, it is hoped to make a definitive definitional line between genocide and Holocaust, as the latter word is often misused. However, it may be said that the word "holocaust" has been so misused that it now has to be modified. At his trial in Milwaukee over ten years ago, serial killer Jeffrey Dalmer said, "I created a real Holocaust." Anti-abortion activists have used the phrase "holocaust of the unborn." A museum dedicated to the “African-American Holocaust” exists in Milwaukee. The word “genocide” is used more freely that it should be, probably because of the shortcomings of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide (1948). Whatever your views on the subject, it is important for each movement to create its own vocabulary and not to appropriate words and imagery from another movement. The word “holocaust” was in use well before World War II, as it means a “burnt offering,” having religious connotations. Popular use of the word before 1945 usually meant a terrible accident, as in a train crash. Now, using the word "Holocaust" for events other than the destruction of the Jews banalizes this and other events. The Roma/Sinti community (gypsies) has its own word to describe their fate in World War II—porrajmos. They are generally considered victims of the Holocaust. So, part of the course will implicitly deal with the changing vocabulary associated with genocidal events.
The course will depend on several techniques:

1. Lectures for basic introduction and explanations.
2. Class discussion—insofar as possible in a large class. If you have very particular and frequent questions, please hold them for discussion in office hours. In a large class, many students tend to object if one or two people ask frequent and repetitive questions.
3. Reading books on syllabus for paper writing and some analytical thought about the meaning of the Holocaust.
4. Utilization of films and video taped materials that will hopefully raise more questions and provide some graphic illustrations of the Holocaust's dimensions.
5. Utilization of guest speakers—in particular, a Holocaust survivor.

PLEASE NOTE: The work expected on the papers and the questions on the final exam are based upon the idea that students will attend class.

******If you cannot come to class on a regular basis, please do not take the class. Note also that you must adhere to the due dates for papers in order to be fair to all students in the class and to have an equal floor for grading.

Please note: this course has been designated as WRITING INTENSIVE. W-I in this class means the following:

Writing-intensive (W-I) courses integrate writing with course content and provide a variety of formal and informal occasions for students to write. In the course “The History of the Holocaust” special attention is paid to formal writing characteristic for the field of history. Students are asked to write papers in which they critically reflect on different aspects of the Holocaust discussed in class and the assigned books. In the papers students should make a topic-related statement which they follow consistently. Great attention is also paid to the organization, content, wording, and citation techniques of the paper.

What makes a course W-I? These are CLA Regulations:

- Writing is an integral part of the course. The CLE Council that governs writing intensive courses looks for evidence that writing assignments and grading criteria are tied to course objectives and content, and that writing is assigned and discussed throughout the term.
- Students must complete at least ten to 15 pages of polished writing, beyond informal writing and in class examinations and exclusive of charts and graphs. The page minimum applies to final drafts and cannot be broken into shorter assignments.
- For all students, no matter what the grade (even an A), at least one must be revised and “polished” after feedback by the instructor or Teaching Assistant. The paper should be revised and handed in before the final examination with revisions. The student may consult with the professor or TA to receive feedback on a paper that is being revised before submitting it for a final grade. Do not just correct the errors pointed out in the text from the first reading and grading. Read all comments and assess if there is some fundamental issue that needs to be corrected.
- Students must rewrite one paper only. See due date below.
- Hand in the original corrected copy with the revised copy.

- The course grade is directly tied to the quality of the student's writing and to knowledge of the course content. Note that the University of Minnesota grading system includes pluses and minuses.

**Why is this a W-I course? Students may expect:**
- Opportunities to get feedback on writing.
- Writing assignments that help you learn course material.
- Writing assignments that help you learn about the way scholars in various fields write and think.
- Improvement of critical thinking and writing.

**Note on form:** Papers should have cover, with your name, student ID and section number. Include email address in case any questions come up in grading.

**Note on Thesis Statements:** Papers should have strong thesis statements. If you are not certain about this, check the WEB CT for a sample thesis statement.

**Note on footnotes:** In any writing where you use a quote, you should place a footnote. There are two methods, either of which can be used:
  *Chicago-style (footnote at the bottom of the page)*
  see: [http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/history/footnotes.html](http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/history/footnotes.html)
  *MLA Style (Footnote in parenthesis next to quote and bibliography at end)*
  see: [http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities/english.html](http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities/english.html)

**Note on use of first person:** Generally papers should avoid first person, phrases like “I think…” and so forth. The conclusion of papers, however, may involve some personal reflections on the book, its content, style and emotional impact. However, the body of the text should be written in an objective fashion.

If you are inexperienced in writing essay papers, please consider spending some time at the writing laboratory. A short experience there may ease the burden of writing and help with performance on all levels of your university career. Concerning the content and organization of the paper visit with **writing tutors of the History Department** (Social Science Building, First Floor). If you need improvement of your writing ability, visit the **Student Writing Center in Lind Hall** ([http://swc.umn.edu/tutor.htm](http://swc.umn.edu/tutor.htm)) or line writing center at [http://www.owc.umn.edu/](http://www.owc.umn.edu/). **CLA Center for writing** is at: [http://writing.umn.edu/](http://writing.umn.edu/).

**OTHER ISSUES:**

Events and guest speakers involving the Holocaust will be announced. Check website for the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies for events and useful information, especially via links, on issues raised in this course: [www.chgs.umn.edu](http://www.chgs.umn.edu).
A Note on Holocaust Denial:
Please note that the policies of most universities and professors are not to “debate” whether the Holocaust took place or not. Deniers would enjoy this game. It is not a question of equal time, or free speech. The Turkish government denies the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and Serbs in the Former Yugoslavia deny mass rape as a weapon in Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s. The latter are real questions of concern, but not the Holocaust.

**Required texts:** Available from the bookstore for purchase. Used copies may be available at local bookstores. You can also order on line from Amazon.com and other providers


Books may be available cheaper and in used editions or faster via:
- Amazon.com
- ABEBOOKS.COM
- Second Hand Books—several Twin Cities locations
- Midway Books, Snelling and University, St. Paul

**Requirements for the Course:**
Students are expected to **attend class regularly** and to **read assigned material** ahead of time. The degree of preparation that you bring with you will have an obvious relationship to the quality of your participation in the class sessions. Despite a large class, there will be ample time for questions. The reading above may appear extensive, but several books are very short. In addition, as this is a 3-credit course, it is presumed that much of the learning is from reading and critical writing. In case you think you already know all that is to be known about the Holocaust, try to discard that view and search for new ideas and truths.

There are **three writing assignments** for this class, one involving a video research project that you should find interesting. There will be an **in-class midterm and final exam.** (Students in past courses have requested a mid-term). Students should read the weekly reading assignments in advance as it may add to your understanding of the material and also to the class discussion. We will have some discussions of the books in
class when they are due for reports. Participation in class discussion can have a positive impact of your grade.

Please read a copy of the University regulations regarding late assignments and missed examinations. **Late assignments will be graded down. For every week late, the paper will be downgraded one letter grade.** All assignments are expected to be handed in on time. Remember a late assignment is better than no assignment. **Incomplete**s are given only for bona fide illness or absence related to a University event. This is in fairness to other students in the course. If you have such a problem situation and need an “I,” please give me short note so I won’t forget about it. If you have difficulties with the assignment, please be in touch in person during office hours or by email. If you notice problems during your writing process, please consult your teaching assistant or the instructor in time.

**Note following:**
1st Note: In order to have a scale of fairness in grading, papers should be handed in when due. Lateness allowed only for illness or family-related matters of significance.
2nd Note: If you intend to not come to class, do not count on doing well. If you prefer to sleep in class, I hope it is not because of the lecture and discussion, *but better to sleep somewhere else.*
3rd Note: Graded papers are brought to class twice only to be returned. After that time, it is your obligation to pick them up. TA’s will hold papers. Do not leave papers for Professor Feinstein in the History office. His office is in Nolte Hall, East Bank, 315 Pillsbury Drive SE, Room 102.
4th note: Keep files of all papers until you have received graded papers back.
5th note: If you take an incomplete in the class for any reason, you cannot achieve a grade of “A.”

**Assignments:**

Please note that **updates may be given in class.** Therefore, the syllabus is a tentative guide and attending class is critical to correct fulfillment of the assignments.

Please understand that the proposed questions below are meant to stimulate your own critical thinking. You **do not** have to **answer all these questions** but should **focus on one or two larger topics** which are addressed in the assigned books.

Very important in all writing is to have a strong thesis statement.

Sample opening paragraph is something like this:

“In their stories of life in Auschwitz, Charlotte Delbo and Primo Levi portray a diversity of experience under similar constraints. Although they are in separate camps, both experience cold, starvation, sickness, and constant death. Yet they deal with these circumstances in very different ways, mostly because of the formation of their communities. The communities that Delbo and Levi experienced differed because of their nationality,”
religion, and gender. Levi experienced a community built on words and barter, while Delbo's community was based on common background and manifested itself in both material and emotional support. Most importantly, however, community and relationships with others helped both Levi and Delbo to survive.”

a. **RE: Browning:** Write a 5-7 page paper on Browning's book about *Ordinary Men*. Some suggested investigative lines: **Ponder some of the following:** What does Browning’s work say about institutions and individuals we may take for granted, as well as human behavior? Who might become a perpetrator? How would you define heroism and resistance after reading this book? What does the book say about Nazism and "ordinary Germans?" What type of resistance to the mass murder took place among Police Battalion 101? How did it manifest itself? What issues are brought forth here that you understood already? What perspectives are new? Why is resistance a hard issue to deal with?

In addition to reading Browning, see the short reading about SS Commandant Rudolph Hoess of Auschwitz which can be downloaded from the web ct. This is a psychological report done on Hoess in 1945 at the time of the Nuremberg Trials. In your paper, try to figure out if he is an “ordinary” person as well, and if understanding him helps understand the actions of Police Battalion 101.

*In light of some recent news events, consider the issue of obedience to authority in various atrocity stories that may have appeared in the news. As we take this course, an event declared as a “Genocide” is occurring in the Darfur region of Sudan.*

**Personal reflections are welcome in your conclusions, where you may use first person.** However, the main essay should be objective and not written as “I think…”

**DUE: September 27, 2007 Thursday**

b. Midterm exam based on short evaluative questions in class: **Thursday, October 18.** Study guide for midterm will be on the web ct.

c. **RE: MEMOIRS:** Students are to write a 8-10 page report/analysis utilizing the works by **Levi and Delbo** bringing together the main ideas and arguments in a contrast arrangement. Levi speaks as an Italian Jew and male survivor who was in Auschwitz-Buna (Camp 3); Delbo speaks as a French non-Jew, a political prisoner because of arrest, deportation and survival also at Auschwitz. Focus on how the accounts are similar, and how they differ. What does each work teach about the Holocaust, about the camps, and about survival? How does gender affect the texture of the writing? How does each work contribute to our understanding of the Holocaust? If the study of the Holocaust produces knowledge, what kind of knowledge is it? How do memoirs relate to documentary history from original government sources? What does a memoir tell us that documents cannot? Is there a problem when memoirs are written many years after the event? Is there a potential problem of “memory?” Delbo speaks of “useless knowledge.” Also, Delbo raises the
question of a possibility of an “aftermath” from the title of the book—what does that mean? Can survival be represented when return is impossible? Is there an element of defiance in each book? Do these books help or confuse, or is confusion something normal to be expected when reading a Holocaust memoir? What does “us” mean as Delbo and Levi use the word? How do the books fit into the general framework of this course subject and perhaps in your general education, as well as the issue of making students transmitters of knowledge?

Note, in your conclusion, you may include some personal responses to these works in the text, and you may focus on several issues or questions that intrigue you. You need not summarize the book, but focus on some critical approaches. The bulk of the inquiry should not be written in the first person. DUE: Thursday November 1, 2007

d. Report using the SHOAH Project in the Wilson Library, also accessible through any computer on campus. See attachment about the SHOAH PROJECT, a collection of 52,000 interviews of survivors of the Holocaust now available through internet on campus. The assignment is to view one survivor interview of your choice and to write a 5-7 page report explaining the content and analyzing it in terms of how such research contributes to your knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust, victimization and survival. Due Thursday November 29, 2007

Advisory from Wilson Library on this Project:

There are 52,000 possible survivor testimonies you can find in the SHOAH project.

Students can search the database from any logon workstation. The only issue with searching is if they want a printed copy of the 31 page guide, and Reference can have extra copies on hand for them to use while searching.

When students want to view the testimonies they will need headphones. Wilson library has a pair or two on hand. They may well want privacy, which is why we've set up for access at the Wilson Reference consultation station, which is secluded. The main disadvantage is that the reference staff must log the person on to the workstation first, so it's only available when the desk is open. We have one or two pair of quality headphones and a printed copy of the guide.

If students aren't concerned about privacy, they can use their own headphones at any logon workstation, if the sound is working. We had an issue with that before - so we'd need to check with the Library’s IT staff. But the thing is, students may not realize how much they would prefer privacy until they start viewing a testimony.

Students are to write a 5-7 page critical report on the survivor testimony they view. It should include the basic information:

1. Name of survivor
2. Country of Origin
3. Summary of survival story
4. Most significant aspects
5. Analysis of how the story helps understand the Holocaust and how it relates to other things you have read or seen about survival.

Discussion sections will afford students to talk about issues in writing the papers as well as more extended discussions of elements in the class.

Grading proportions:

Each paper is 20% plus 15% for the midterm and 25% for the final examination=100%.

Students may gain extra credit that can add a plus (+) to a final grade by attending three (3) campus speakers or events dealing with mass violence, genocide or the Holocaust and turning in a one page summary and evaluation of the talk. Give this directly to Professor Feinstein within one week of the event.

TENTATIVE SESSIONS: Reading chapters indicated below would keep you ahead of the lectures. Note some topics may go longer, some shorter. Take special note of maps and images in Bauer.

TOPICS ARE FOR THE WEEK OF: (two sessions per week)

Week 1: September 4 and 7
Introduction and assignments. Some discussion about the Holocaust and genocide, and how the Holocaust fits and compares with other genocides. Beginning of discussion of background, who is a Jew? various types of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism through the ages. Bergen, Chapter 1 Preconditions and “Who are the Jews?” Other groups that have been victims of prejudice.

Week 2: September 11 and 13

September 13 is the First day of Rosh Hashanah. A film will be shown and students who miss class for observance of the holiday may see it at the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Week 3: September 18 and 20

Week 4: September 25 and 27: The structure of Nazism, consolidation of power, leadership and bureaucracy, formation of the Jewish question in German history and


Week 7: October 16 and 18: Analysis of sections of Claude Lanzmann's film, "Shoah." Class participation and response is essential. Escape routes and the world's reaction. Bergen, MIDTERM EXAM October 18


Week 9: October 30 and November 1: Concentration camps and death camps. Discussion of Primo Levi and Charlotte Delbo. Students should think about questions relating to: representation of the camps; memory; how memory is formed; forgetting; styles of writing and approaching the Holocaust; gendered memoirs; Jews and non-Jews in the camps; other questions. Bergen Chapter 7. Paper Number 2 due November 1.

Week 10: November 6. Testimony of a survivor. Class visit by Henry Oertelt, born in Berlin, deported to Theresienstadt, Auschwitz and liberated by the American 3rd Army at Flossenburg in 1945. Oertelt is the author of An Unbroken Chain: My Journey Through the Nazi Holocaust (Lerner Publications) and will have copies available for purchase.

and 8: Case studies in occupation and rescue: Vichy France and the rescue in Le Chambon sur Lignon. Denmark and the rescue of the Jews as a study of resistance disguised as collaboration, plus a “good Nazi.” Perpetrators and their actions. What the world knew and how it responded. Films: "Weapons of the Spirit,” and “Living with the Enemy.”

Week 11: November 13 and 15: Rescue issues and Bystanders. Was “rescue” possible once the war started? Selling Jews: The case of Slovakia. See materials on webct.

Week 12: November 20 Resistance in the ghettos and camps, the role of the Judenrat, problems of survival after the end of the War. Bergen Chapter 7.
Thanksgiving November 22, no class

**Week 13 November 27 and 29:** Jewish complicity or inaction during the Holocaust?
Other victims of Nazism: Gypsies, question of victimization of the Poles. Homosexuals, Communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Priests. Bergen Chapter 7, 8, 9.

**Week 14: December 4 and 6:** Nuremberg trials and hunting war criminals, some of the issues that affect life in the 1990s and beyond. The DP camps, post-war refugee questions, and establishment of the State of Israel. Ongoing questions of German responsibility and reparations. **Materials will be on webct.**

**Week 15: LAST CLASS DAY, December 11:** Post-Holocaust Theology: The theological and philosophical implications of the Holocaust on modern Christian and Jewish thinking. Issues of "death of God" and "reasons for God's silence. **Readings from Christian sources may be handed out.**

Revised paper for WI Requirement due by: December 6

**FINAL EXAM IS SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY DECEMBER 15 4-6PM. We may have to change this by common consent.**

If possible, please take the exam with the entire class. You have a right to move the exam if more than two exams are scheduled on the same day.

**STUDENTS IN DISCUSSION SECTION SHOULD SEND TO THE INSTRUCTOR BY EMAIL TWO QUESTIONS BEFORE EACH SESSION.**
**THERE IS ALSO A WEB CT SITE FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION**
Finals schedule can be found at:
http://onestop.umn.edu/registrar/calendars/fall_finals.html
See study sheet on Web CT.

**OPTIONAL DISCUSSION (TRAILER) SECTION:** Because of student requests from past semesters, there is an optional 1 credit discussion section available and has just been added.

**WEB CT:**
You are automatically registered with class web, and will be shown what classes you are eligible to access, which is this case is either JWST 3521W RELST 3521W or HISTORY 3727W. If you have problems accessing the site, please call 624-HELP (624-4357). The site will have class outlines, downloadable assignments, calendar of events and other items of interest.
* TO ACCESS YOUR SECTION, TWO OPTIONS:

OPTION 1: VIA THE MYU PORTAL MY TOOLKIT PAGE:

1. GO TO HTTP://MYU.UMN.EDU
2. CLICK THE CLICK HERE TO SIGN-IN LINK AT THE UPPER LEFT
3. LOG IN WITH YOUR UMN INTERNET ID AND PASSWORD (IF YOU
   DON'T KNOW THIS INFORMATION, CALL THE TECHNOLOGY HELPLINE
   ON YOUR CAMPUS (TWIN CITIES: (612) 301-4357
4. CLICK MY TOOLKIT
5. IN THE TO DO LIST, CLICK THE LINK TO YOUR SECTION

NOTE: IF YOU HAVE NOT LOGGED IN TO MYU.UMN.EDU BEFORE, YOU
WILL NOT SEE YOUR SECTION IMMEDIATELY. WAIT 24 HOURS AND
LOG IN AGAIN, AND IT WILL BE THERE.

OPTION 2: DIRECTLY:

1. GO TO HTTP://VISTA.UMN.EDU
2. CLICK THE LOG IN LINK
3. LOG IN WITH YOUR UMN INTERNET ID AND PASSWORD
4. YOU WILL SEE THE LINK TO THE NEW SECTION IN YOUR MY WEBCT
   HOME AREA

EXTRA CREDIT: STUDENTS MAY WISH TO CONSIDER THE
OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE THEIR GRADE BY HALF A LETTER (SUCH AS
C+ TO B-) BY ATTENDING THREE OUTSIDE EVENTS AND WRITING ON
ONE PAGE (ONE PAGE ONLY) SUMMARY, AND HANDED IN.

Dr. Feinstein's telephone: Office: 626-2235. EMAIL: feins001@umn.edu. Feel free to
ask questions or make appointments via email. Don’t bother calling if you are doing so to
inform me you are missing class. Office Hours: On Class days from 1:30-3PM or by
appointment. I am in my office every day of the week, usually between 10AM and 4PM.
Mail box 100 Nolte West Entrance Papers may be delivered only into the letter drop
there.

Note: for any late papers, do not drop them off in the History Department. Deliver
to Nolte Hall, 102, East Bank.