

Holocaust: History, Memory and Representation CJS 515

Instructor: Prof. Rachel F. Brenner

Days and Times: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 9.55-10.45

367 Van Hise

Office Hours: Friday, 3.15-4.15 or by appointment

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Course Description

Awareness of the Holocaust is worldwide. On the legal arena, the extermination of the Jewish people prompted the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of the Genocide. Quite recently, the UN General Assembly designated January 27, the day of the 1945 liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In the areas of education and culture the memory of the Holocaust refuses to fade. While the capacity to implement the idea of total extermination of an ethnic group, which questioned the viability of the humanistic values produced continuing deliberations about education and ethics, the personal experiences of the victim and the victimizer have been incessantly explored in literature and arts.

This intense preoccupation with the Holocaust reflects both the pervasive consciousness of the event, which reflects the overwhelming need for comprehension and at the same time its persisting elusiveness. Even though the historical facts of the Holocaust have been studied and documented, the unresolved ethical and psychological questions as well as the ongoing issues of the aesthetic of representation reflect the ultimate inaccessibility of the event to those who did not experience it. What made human beings capable of the execution of the Final Solution? How did the victims react to the racist decree which declared them subhuman and condemned them to death? What was the impact of the atrocity on the witnessing world? What do the post-Holocaust representations of the tragedy tell about the contemporary consciousness of the event? The merit of these questions does not lie in the search for definitive answers, but rather in the cognitive and emotional process that they produce. We will pursue this process throughout our study.

Although the story of the Jewish genocide will remain forever incomplete, fragments of the Holocaust experience reach us in the form of testimony. Diaries and photographs were found in ghettos, witnesses and rescuers left reports, liberated camps were filmed, survivors told and recorded their stories, and perpetrators revealed their actions at the Nazi trials. These testimonies have become a haunting presence producing multiple

reconstructions and transmissions of the story. The enormous number of Holocaust representations in literature, film, theater plays and television programs attests to the emotional depth of the reception, while the growing numbers of Holocaust courses at the high school and especially college level attest to the need to reexamine our emotional and ethical selves in the mirror of the Holocaust.

This interactive course is designed to explore Holocaust testimony, its cultural representations, and its educational significance. The first part of the course will focus on Holocaust testimonies. How do the survivors construct the narrative of their experience? What is their rationale for telling the story? What do their stories communicate about their perception of the experience and their world picture? What emotional issues characterized the reception of the testimony? How difficult is it for us, who have had no part in the reality of the Holocaust to approach a world whose dehumanizing practices called humanity, dignity, and respect into question?

The second part of the course will focus on the cultural representations of the event and their educational significance. We shall consider the aesthetic of the survivors' literary representations of the world of the Holocaust and the ethical message of these representations. We shall follow with an examination of the impact of the survivors' testimony and testimonial art on the artistic representations produced by non-survivors and consider the educational values of those representations. What do the works about the Holocaust by post-Holocaust writers and artists tell us about the emotional impact of the event? What do they teach us about human nature and role of education toward ethics? How has the consciousness of the Holocaust affected our sense of moral responsibility toward the world?

Throughout the course we shall refer to the universal implications of the Holocaust legacy, and the importance of teaching the Holocaust in view of the proliferation of genocides in today's world.

Requirements and Expectations

The class is based on students' active participation and discussions based on the materials assigned for each class. You are, therefore, expected to complete all the reading requirements for each class and submit a one paragraph (up to 5 sentences long) summary of the issues or problems that each of the assigned readings raises. You should be prepared to present your findings/conclusions in class. Our class discussions will be based on the students' careful and analytical readings of the texts.

You are required to make one oral presentation of about 5-8 minutes about an event or an experience that you feel connected or associated with the Holocaust, or other atrocities inflicted by human beings. It could be world news, materials studied in other courses, books or articles that you have read, films or programs that you have watched, works of art you have seen etc., The presentation should address the educational value of the connection. To what extent has your knowledge about the Holocaust helped you understand the ethical, aesthetic, ideological, political meanings of the event/experience?

What are the lessons that the associations of your subject with the Holocaust have taught you?

There will be two short essays (2-3 pages). We have been fortunate to have been assigned Writing Fellows who will be working with you on the essays. For each WF essay you submit the **first version** of the essay. I collect these essays in class. The WF will read your essay carefully within a week, make comments, and have a conference with you the following week to discuss your writing and make suggestions for revision. You will revise the essay and submit within two weeks **both the first version and the revised version with a cover page explaining the revisions.**

The first version of the essay should be **typed, double-space, appropriately documented.** I purposely do not call the text you will be discussing with the WF “a draft,” because it should be the best possible **version** of an essay you could produce on your own. When you hand in the **final version**, you will write an explanation how you have rewritten the paper with the WF’s comments in mind. Please be sure to show respect for the help you are receiving and treat the meetings with the Fellow very seriously.

The final (4-5 pp.) essay should draw upon materials studied throughout the semester and your research. It should show ability to document bibliographical sources. You will make an oral presentation 5-8 minutes long focusing on the issue/problem/idea in the course that you have found of particular interest and intend to deal with in your final essay. The presentations will take place toward the end of the semester and the discussion that will follow your presentation will help you construct your essay.

Special events

You are required to attend the following events and write a report (1 p.) which will

1. Summarize the thesis of the event,
2. Explain the argument of the event
3. Present your evaluation of the event.

This is a course requirement, so make sure that you put the dates of the events in your calendars to avoid conflicts.

Tuesday, March 10,

5:30 early dinner

7:00 film: Broken Branches

Hillel Foundation for Jewish Student Life, 611 Langdon, Madison

Monday, April 20: Weinstein-Minkoff Lecture with Prof. Ami Pedahzur

4 pm, Memorial Union

Required Texts:

Available in the University Bookstore:

Robert Skloot, *If the Whole Body Dies: Raphael Lemkin and the Treaty against Genocide*

Art Spiegelman, *Maus* Part I.

Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl*.

The other course texts are on Electronic Reserve [R]

A course reader is available at Bob's Copy Shop at 208 North Charter

The students will watch two Holocaust movies:

--*Schindler's List*

--*Life is Beautiful*

--*Defiance*

The films will be discussed in class – see the syllabus

Please note

-- I reserve the right to modify the schedule of the **syllabus** and change the **evaluation** scale.

-- **Attendance and attitude:** You are expected to attend *all* classes. In case you must be absent, you need to let me know ahead of time. Unexcused absences will affect your grade. Your attitude is part of your grade. It includes being in class *on time*, deferring from using electronic devices during class time, except for taking notes, and concentration on the subject matter.

-- Late arrival to class or absence will be excused **only** due to illness or family emergency. Please make sure that you are **always** on time.

-- If you miss a class, it is **your responsibility** to complete the material and the work you have missed.

-- Any work that is in violation of the UW Code of Honor will be graded as 0 or Fail. For more information about how to avoid plagiarism and about proper paraphrasing and quoting, see <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

-- The use of your laptop should be limited to noting down the main points of the class. Your focus should be on the ongoing discussion and on participation which is a very important component of our study. No other electronic devices are allowed.

-- Extensions on papers, essays, and the exam will not be granted. No late work will be accepted.

-- Please let me know within the first two weeks of the semester about the dates on which you will need relief due to religious observance.

Grading

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|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Summaries | 15% |
| Class participation | 15% |
| Attitude | 5% |
| Class Presentation | 10% |
| Short essays | 20% |
| Lecture reports | 10% |
| Presentation of final essay topic | 5% |
| Final essay | 20% |

SYLLABUS

Students are expected to bring the assigned texts for every class

- Jan. 21** Explanation of Procedures and Requirements
- Jan. 23** **Introduction: The Historical Context of the Holocaust**
- I. The Significance of Bearing Witness the Holocaust**
- Jan. 26** Aharon Appelfeld, "Individualization." [R]
Annette Wieviorka, "On Testimony." [R]
- Jan. 28** Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening." [R]
- Jan. 30** First clip of Ruth Elias testimony and discussion
- II. The Witnesses' Perspectives of the Holocaust Experience**
- Feb. 2** Alvin Rosenfeld, "Jean Améry as Witness." [R]
- Feb. 4** Jean Améry, "Resentment." [R]
- Feb. 6** Lawrence Langer "Deep Memory: The Buried Self" [R]
Charlotte Delbo, "Days and Memory." [R]

- Feb. 9** Ruth Klüger, “The Camps.” [R]
- Feb. 11** Primo Levy, “Shame.” [R]
Primo Levy, “You Who Live Safe.” [R]
- Feb. 13** Eli Wiesel, “A Plea for the Dead.” [R]
Livia E. Bitton Jackson, “Coming of Age.”

FIRST VERSION OF ESSAY # 1 DUE

Set appointment with WF

- Feb. 16** Prof. Teryl Dobbs guest lecture

III. In the Camps: Women’s Perspective

- Feb. 18** Joan Ringelheim, “The Unethical and the Unspeakable: Women and the Holocaust.” [R]
- Feb. 20** Charlotte Delbo, “Lulu.” [R]
Video interviews and discussion
- Feb. 23** Gisella Perl, “A Doctor in Auschwitz.” [R]
- Feb. 25** Second and third clips of Ruth Elias interview
- Feb. 27** Discussion of the videos

FINAL VERSION OF THE ESSAY DUE

IV. Testimonies by Non-Jews: The Witness’s Perspective

- March 2** Jan Karski, “The Ghetto.” [R]
Claude Lanzmann’s excerpt from *Shoah*
- March 4** Tadeusz Borowski, “Introduction,”
“This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen.” [R]
- March 6** Borowski (cont.)
Czesław Miłosz, “A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto.”
- March 9** Barbara Rylko-Bauer, “Slave Doctor.”

March 10 HILLEL EVENT

March 11 Discussion of the Film *Broken Branches*

FIRST VERSION OF ESSAY #2 DUE

Set appointments with WF

V. Representation of the Holocaust in Art and Literature

March 13 Paul Celan, "Deathfugue."

March 16 Ida Fink, "A Scrap of Time." [R]

March 18 Ida Fink, "The Table." [R]
Class reenactment

March 20 Poems by Abraham Sutzkever, Dan Pagis, and Nelly Sachs

March 23 Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl* Part I

March 25 Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl* Part II

March 27 Ozick (continued)

FINAL VERSION OF ESSAY #2 DUE

SPRING RECESS

April 6 Discussion of *Schindler's List*

April 8 Discussion of *Life Is Beautiful*

April 10 Discussion of *Defiance*

April 13 **Summary and Review**

April 15 **Prof. Robert Skloot's guest lecture**

April 17 Robert Skloot, "Introduction," *The Theatre of Genocide*

April 20 Robert Skloot, *If the Whole Body Dies: Raphael Lemkin and the Treaty against Genocide*

LECTURE (Memorial Union)

- April 22** Skloot (continued)
- April 24** *Maus*
- April 27** *Maus*
- April 29** **Summary and Review**
- May 1, 4, 6, 8** presentations of essay outlines

Bibliography

Works used in the course

Hartman, Geoffrey H. *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

Karski, Jan. *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World*. London: Penguin Classics, 2011 [1944].

Levi Neil and Michael Rothberg, *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003.

Langer, Lawrence. *Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Ozick, Cynthia. *The Shawl*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Rittner Carol and John K. Roth, *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust*. New York: Paragon House, 1993.

Shapiro, Robert Moses. *Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*. Hoboken: Ktav, 1999.

Skloot, Robert. *The Theatre of the Genocide: Four Plays about Mass Murder in Rwanda, Bosnia, Cambodia, and Armenia*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.

Rober Skloot, *If the Whole Body Dies: Raphael Lemkin and the Treaty against Genocide*. Madison: Parallel Press, 2006.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.

Selected Bibliography - Works pertinent to our study

Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and Archive*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books, 2002.

Berger, L. Alan. *Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witness to the Holocaust*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.

Bernard-Donals, Michael and Richard Glejzer, Eds. *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representations and the Holocaust*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.

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---- “Teaching the Holocaust in the Academic Setting: Educational Mission(s) and Pedagogical Approaches.” *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, vol. 8, n. 9 (Autumn 1999): 1-27.

---“The Second Generation and the Post-Holocaust Culture: The Fear of the Story and Its Legacy of Historical Responsibility,” *Dapim: Studies on the Shoah* (2012) [English and Hebrew] vol. 26, 125-151 [English and Hebrew]

Card, Claudia. *Confronting Evils: Terrorism, Torture, Genocide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Eaglestone, Robert and Barry Langford, eds. *Teaching Holocaust Literature and Film* (London: Palgrave, 2008)

Garbarini, Alexandra. *Diaries and the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Friedlander, Saul. *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution.”* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

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Hirsch, Marianne and Irene Kacandes, eds. *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2004.

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Mosse, George. *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

---- *German Jews beyond Judaism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Novick, Peter. *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*. London: Bloomsbury, 1999.

Ofer Dalia and Leonore J. Weitzman, eds. *Women in the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

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Schweber, S. & Findling, D. (in press). *Teaching the Holocaust*. Denver, CO: Alternatives in Religious Education.

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