Holocaust: History, Memory and Representation
Jewish Studies 202
Thursdays, 1-3:30 pm
Teacher Education Building, Room 267
Fall 2011

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 12-2 pm
(Sign-up sheets on my office door)

Course Overview:

- Why do some liken the Israeli bombings of Gaza to the Holocaust?
- Why did Jewish settlers of the West Bank don yellow stars to compare their removal to treatment of Jews during the Holocaust?
- Why does PETA, (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) use the Holocaust to try to convince people to become vegans?
- Why do some people compare current Wisconsin state governor Scott Walker to Hitler?
- Why would Michael Jordan choose to don a so-called “Hitler mustache”?
- When are such comparisons appropriate and when are they exploitative?
- Who decides? On what bases?

This interactive course is designed to explore both the history of the Holocaust and such current-day uses. First, we’ll examine the construction of Holocaust history, noting how its history, memory and representation are mutually entangled, politically charged and morally complex. Investigating a broad range of uses of the Holocaust, we'll critically analyze its representations—in literature, films, memoirs, monuments, museums, t-shirts, websites, classrooms and political discourse. Together, we will attempt to understand how the Holocaust has become a controversial subject of public discourse, how its representations both shape and reflect changing social, aesthetic and
ideological concerns, and the particular consequences of adopting the Holocaust as a moral paradigm.

The purpose of this course, then, is twofold: to provide a basic understanding of Holocaust history and to catalyze thinking about the structure of that history, the implications of its narrative forms. The terrain to be investigated is both factual and theoretical, historical and historiographical. The key questions organizing the course include: How are different accounts of this history constructed, towards what ends, and with what effects? Which accounts resonate with which audiences and on what basis? How does the medium of representation influence our understanding of the events? And, perhaps most important, what are the moral dimensions of Holocaust representations? Why is it that the Holocaust has such staying power as a symbol? How, too, does the history of the Holocaust fit within the larger history of genocide?

Expectations:
You are expected to attend all class meetings, as most sessions will be interactive, either discussion- or activity-based. In addition, you are assigned to complete the required readings and written work in advance of each class session and to come prepared to discuss them during class time. At a minimum, you should be able to help others understand concepts and arguments in the materials by asking about those points you don’t understand and by paraphrasing the claims you do. Ideally, you’ll come to class with a coherent critique or creative interpretation of the assigned materials. The quality of the class experience will depend wholly on your contributions. Your participation during class therefore is extremely important. Due to the potentially emotionally charged nature of the course content, it is also expected that you will maintain norms of civil discourse with all members of the class community whether within or outside the classroom.

Assigned work: This course places a heavy emphasis on communicating, both in written and in oral form. As such, we are going to work pointedly on improving your communication skills. Weekly short writing assignments are to be completed before class and will on occasion serve as your ‘ticket’ to participate in class. The short writings should focus an argument in response to the prompt given in the syllabus. The length of these assigned short writings varies considerably and is specified in the week-to-week chart. All writing assignments, however, need to be typed, double-spaced, in a font no smaller than 12-point. A final written group project is also expected of you. It is to be no longer than 15 pages and is your opportunity to investigate an idea, theme or Holocaust- and/or genocide-related topic in-depth. The research project can take almost any form—e.g. website, podcast, curriculum design, video, research paper, memoir, etc.—providing an argument is well articulated, and that the project is text-based. To aid you in your research project, a one-page overview of the project is due one month in advance of the project’s final due date. Late assignments will not be accepted. Please note: This project may not be done individually. (Nope, no way, no how, no exceptions; don’t bother pleading.) For this final project, you will need to work as part of a small team of 2-4 people.
Two in-class presentations are also expected of all students enrolled for credit. Of the two presentations, one will be based on this final project. That presentation, at the end of the semester, will enable you to share with the rest of the class what you and your other group members have learned. The other presentation, not to exceed 30 minutes, would better be called an opportunity to lead the rest of the class in an exploration of a topic related to a reading for that day's class. This presentation, too, will be designed and led with a partner or as part of a small group. Both presentations, therefore, are collective efforts, and the plans for both must be approved in advance of the presentations. Via email, phone, an in-person visit or even fax, it is up to you to make sure that you have your ideas approved by me by the Monday in advance of Thursday’s class session. If your plan is not approved, you will not be able to present in class.

Writing Fellows: This class is lucky enough to have been awarded Writing Fellows who will read and critique drafts of two of your papers; in addition to making marginal comments, the Fellows will write extensive endnotes designed to identify and explain key areas for revision. They will seek to praise what works in your paper as well as point out what doesn’t, and they will offer suggestions and strategies for revision rather than merely exposing flaws. After returning your paper draft, your Fellow will meet individually with you to discuss revision possibilities and strategies. I have designed the course to have fewer writing assignments because I value revision, and I value the work you will do with this Fellow. Meeting with the Writing Fellow is an integral part of the class. Do not make the mistake of considering it optional. Revision is integral to learning to think, to write and to learn. Please be sure to respect the help you are receiving and the Fellow from whom you receive it.

A final note: In all the writing you do for this class, I fully expect you to cite your sources appropriately using American Psychological Association referencing (APA). If you are unsure about that reference system, please avail yourself of The Writing Center’s exceedingly useful on-line handbook. (http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/) Anyone enrolled in this course who is found to have plagiarized will receive an ‘F’ as a course grade, not only an ‘F’ for the assignment. You should know that I have had the unfortunate experience of having to fail students for this reason. You should know, too, that I actively seek out plagiarism. It is not hard to earn a strong grade in this class, which makes it doubly foolish to risk an ‘F.’

Evaluation:
My philosophy of grading is that grades are marks that help record your accomplishments. I do not use grades to rank or sort students. What this means is that I will try to set clear standards for you to meet (and if they are unclear, please let me know). I will also try to help you reach those standards by commenting on your work. All work must be carefully edited and proofread before it is handed in. Late assignments will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with me. All work deemed unsatisfactory will have to be rewritten until such time as you and I are satisfied that it warrants course credit.

I will judge your work based on rubrics that assess such factors as: completeness, accuracy, textual support and analysis, creativity and quality of writing. The rubrics
for each of the assignments are posted on Learn@UW, and you can view the rubrics before completing the assignments. As an example, the rubric below will be used to assess the quality of your participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attends class on a regular basis. Is a respectful class participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Is prepared for each class. Evidences preparation through input into small group activities that show grasp of authors' ideas. Develops &amp; implements a class activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is prepared for each class, showing competence through contributions to class discussions and through participation in discussion and group activities. Develops and implements a class activity that engages classmates in relevant ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Is not only prepared for class and shows understanding of readings but helps others understand as well through contributions to discussions and through well designed class activity. Contributions are well timed, scholarly, and relevant.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Grades for the course will be assigned as follows: short writings (30%), final project (20%), in-class leading (20%), regular attendance, quality of participation and performance on in-class quizzes (30%). Please note that missed quizzes receive failing grades and cannot be made up. You can track your grades in this course using the 'grades tab of Learn@UW.

In the case that you are unsatisfied with the grade I assign you for the course as a whole, you are free to resubmit your work to me for re-grading. Keep in mind, however, that in re-grading, I reserve the right to either raise or lower your originally assigned grade. Because of this possibility, I urge you to keep all copies of your work during the semester.

Please let me know if because of a disability or special situation, you need accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessment in this course. I will gladly try to make any necessary adjustments as confidentially as possible.

Required Texts:
The books required for this course are available for purchase from the University Bookstore. Two sets of books are also available on 3-hour reserve at the CIMC library, located at 225 North Mills, 3rd floor. Additional readings are available on-line.

- Doris Bergen, War and genocide: A concise history
- Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men
- Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, The racial state: Germany 1933-45
- Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz
- Samantha Power, A problem from hell: America and the age of genocide
- Simone Schweber, Making sense of the Holocaust: Lessons from classroom practice
- Art Spiegelman, Maus I+II
- Choose one: Markus Zuzak, The Book Thief or David Grossman, See Under Love
Session Topics and Assignments:

All reading and writing assignments are due for the class session under which they are listed. Readings listed in parentheticals are optional.

Sept 8° Introductions: terms, issues, and starting points
Unfortunately, on the second Thursday of each month—the starred dates in this chart, I will be unavailable to teach at our regular time. (I was elected to a committee that meets on Thursday afternoons after I had already assigned the time we meet as a course.) As a result, you’ll either have a substitute time for those sessions or a substitute teacher on those days. This class time will be substituted by September 18th.

I. Holocaust history (on one foot)

Sept 15 Beginnings
Bergen: Read chapters 1, 2, 3, entitled “Preconditions,” “Leadership and will,” and “From revolution to routine,” p. 1-80.
Short writing: What ‘preconditions’ (background experiences, personal circumstances, etc.) from your own history have shaped your conception of the Holocaust? (2 pages maximum)

18 Special screening of Claude Lanzmann’s Shoah, Hillel Building, 611 Langdon Street, time tba (to be announced)

21 Faculty panel and discussion on Shoah screening, attendance required

22 Middles: Building the Reich
Bergen: Read chapters, 4, 5, and 6, pp. 81-160.
Burleigh & Wippermann: Read section III, which includes chapters on youth, women and men in the Third Reich, pp. 199-303.
Short writing: Given the different roles that were expected of women, men and youth, how do you imagine the Reich affected the relationships among them (as in family life, for example)? (1 page maximum)

25 Part II of special screening of Shoah, Hillel Building, time tba

29 Victim experiences by category
Burleigh & Wipperman: Read section II, chapters 4, 5, and 6, pp. 75-198.
Excerpt from Marion Kaplan, *Between dignity and despair: Jewish life in Nazi Germany*

Short writing: Compare Bergen and Burleigh & Wippermann’s books. How do the organizations of the books and their writing styles communicate this history differently? (1 page maximum)

Oct 6 Endings: The “Final solution”
Levi, P. *Survival in Auschwitz*. (In toto)

*Essay #1: Construct an argument about Primo Levi’s memoir.* (For example, you might argue that Levi’s consistent optimism makes his memoir suspect or that Levi’s attention to detail makes the narrator distanced.) Whatever the argument, make sure to draw evidence from the text itself for support. (3 pages)

13* This class meeting time has been replaced by the Sept 25th screening.

20 Explaining perpetrators
Browning, C. *Ordinary men* (In toto)
Goldhagen, D. J., *Hitler’s willing executioners*, one chapter excerpt.
Gross, J. “Neighbors.” (from *The New Yorker*)
(Shore, M. ‘Conversing with ghosts, in *Kritika*, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/kritika/v006/6.2shore.pdf.)

*Short writing: How do you explain the actions of the perpetrators? Why do you explain them that way? (What does this explanation say about you?)* (1 paragraph, yup, 1 paragraph)

II. Holocaust memory

27 Memoir as shaping cultural memory
Speigelman, A. *Maus I and II* (In toto)

*Revision of Essay #1 due*

Nov 3 Film:
Watch a Holocaust film with a partner before doing the assignment.
You might consider *Life is Beautiful*, *Schindler’s List*, *The Pianist*, or any newer release that is a Holocaust film.

**Essay #2 due:** Analyze the film you viewed. How does it connect to larger arguments about Holocaust representation? If a theoretical audience member knew nothing about the Holocaust and saw this film, what would they 'know'? What wouldn’t they? Would you encourage others to view this film? Why or why not? (5-page maximum)

10° Fiction

Zuzak, *The Book Thief* (In toto) OR Grossman, *See Under Love*

Short essay: In preparation for literature discussions today, you’ll be assigned a role to write from. More details to follow.

**Idea sketch due for final project**

17 Education


**Revised essay #2 due.**

24 No class: Thanksgiving

**Dec 1**

**The persistence of genocide**


**Short essay #3:** Given the persistence of genocide, why teach about it? If, in other words, it seems as though learning about past atrocities doesn’t seem to prevent present or future ones, should university students bother to learn about genocide at all? Why or why not? Make sure to marshal evidence for your claims from the semester’s readings. (3 pages)

8° Commemoration


15 Student Presentations

20 **Final projects due by noon, 210 of the Teacher Education Building**