

## **JS 233: The Holocaust: Testimony, Poetry, Philosophy, Film**

Tues: 12:15-2:45PM  
313 University Club Building

**Sara Guyer**

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3-4PM and by appointment.

***What happens to literature, thought, film, art, ethics, and law after Auschwitz?***

***And, what happens to the Holocaust in when it is represented?***

***What is testimony and how does it differ from history?***

***How should we understand survival?***

***What of the Holocaust remains unrepresented – and why?***

We will approach these questions in the context of the philosopher Theodor Adorno's claim that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." Although, ultimately rescinded, Adorno's claim has taken on a life of its own, continuing to challenge traditional frames of understanding and modes of expression, whether in philosophy, poetry, history, or film. Once we come to recognize how these changes have occurred and analyze their implications for how we understand human experience, we will conclude by questioning our own framework, asking first of all, what it means to talk about "coming after" and second, what happens when Auschwitz, a particular camp, stands in for the entirety of the Holocaust.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Robert Antelme, *The Human Race* (Northwestern)

Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (Nebraska)

Paul Celan, *Selected Poetry and Prose* (Norton)

Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After* (Yale)

Sarah Kofman, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* (Nebraska)

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (Vintage)

Art Spiegelman, *Maus 1 and 2* (Random House)

### **Films**

Alain Resnais, *Night and Fog*

Claude Lanzmann, *The Last of the Unjust*

Josh Oppenheimer, *The Act of Killing*

Steven Spielberg, *Schindler's List* (Please watch this film on your own or with a group of other students before October 7)

Essays by Primo Levi, Hannah Arendt, Jan Gross, Giorgio Agamben, Jean-François Lyotard, Sarah Kofman, and Tim Snyder all available online via Learn@UW (L@UW).

*All books are also on reserve in the College Library.*

**COURSE FORMAT:**

This is a discussion-based seminar. I will typically prepare a brief opening lecture, but the majority of the class will be devoted to student-generated discussion of the texts, often in small groups. Students should expect to engage one another in discussion and should come to each class prepared with questions and passages that they would like to discuss in class.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

Students will be expected to attend all class sessions, to have read all of the assigned materials closely and carefully, and to participate actively in classroom discussions. Students will receive full credit for participation if they are prepared for class; demonstrate that they understand the readings; and offer well-timed, scholarly, and relevant contributions that further the discussion; help others to understand the issues at stake; and reflect an ability to learn from classroom engagement. **More than two absences (excused or unexcused) will reduce your final grade by a full grade (e.g., an A will become an AB).**

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due in class. Extensions will be given only if prior arrangements have been made. All of this said, if you find yourself in an extraordinary situation (accident, death in the family, etc.), please let me know as soon as possible. I will do my best to ensure that you still can succeed in this course.

The primary requirements for this course are a group project and two essays that you will revise. All projects will require that you combine close reading with critical analysis and rich argumentation.

In addition, by 9am every Tuesday that an essay is not due, you will be required to post a brief (one paragraph) comment on the day's reading. In order to do this, you must visit the course website on [Learn@UW](#), click on the "Communication" button, scroll down and select "Discussion" and compose your post. If you have any questions concerning how to do this, consult the Student Manual on the [Learn@UW](#) homepage or ask me. Your comment should make specific reference to a passage from the reading, and you should aim to offer analysis, rather than paraphrase. As the semester progresses, we will focus on developing a critical vocabulary that should help to guide your choice of passages and your analysis of them. Your comments need not be formal arguments, but they should be written with care. Late postings will not be accepted.

**WRITING FELLOWS**

Kevin Dlugos: [dlugos@wisc.edu](mailto:dlugos@wisc.edu)

Michael Orlowski: [morlowsk12@gmail.com](mailto:morlowsk12@gmail.com)

Each student will be assigned a peer writing fellow who will read a first version of their two essays; comment on the writing and argumentation; and meet individually with each student twice during the semester to discuss these comments and any suggestions for revision. These meetings are required of every student. Fellows will not grade student essays, nor are they copyeditors, but they will engage with your prose with the aim of helping you to write a successful essay.

**BREAKDOWN OF GRADES:**

Paper 1 – 20%

Paper 2 – 30%

Collaborative Project– 30%

Posts / Participation - 20%

Extra Credit: 5%

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Unacknowledged borrowing of other's words or ideas constitutes plagiarism, a serious academic crime that will result in disciplinary action up to expulsion from the University. If you have doubts or questions about plagiarism or the University policy on academic dishonesty, please ask me or consult the University policy online at: <http://www.wisc.edu/students/conduct.htm>

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

If you have a documented disability and anticipate that you will need accommodations in this course, please make arrangements with me as soon as possible.

**READING/VIEWING SCHEDULE:**

September 2: Introductions – watch *Night and Fog* in class

September 9: History and Background (Guest: Simone Schweber)

September 16: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

Giorgio Agamben, "The Witness" (L@UW)

September 23: Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After: "None of Us Will Return"* and "Useless Knowledge"

September 30: Delbo, "The Measure of Our Days"

J-F Lyotard, "Discussions, or Phrasing 'after Auschwitz'" (L@UW)

October 7: Read excerpts from *The Drowned and the Saved* (L@UW); Watch *the Last of the Unjust* in class (3h38m)

**Essay #1 due to Writing Fellows (4 pages)**

Construct an argument about Holocaust testimony based on your reading of either Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* or Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After*. You should use clear evidence from the text to support your argument.

October 14: *Maus* I & II (Guest: Simone Schweber)

October 21: Watch *The Act of Killing* (2012)

October 28: Hannah Arendt, on Eichmann in Jerusalem (from the *New Yorker*) (Group 1)

**Final Version of Essay #1 due in class (Remember to turn in BOTH versions.)**

November 4: Robert Antelme, *The Human Race* (Group 2)

November 11: Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (Group 3)

November 18: Sarah Kofman, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* and excerpt from *Smothered Words* (L@UW) (Group 4)

November 25: Paul Celan, "The Meridian"; "The Bremen Address"; "Deathfugue"; "Etched Away"; "Ash-aureole"; *Solve*; *Coagula*; (Group 5)

December 2: Tim Snyder, "The Holocaust" (NYRB); Jan Gross, "Neighbors" (*New Yorker*)

**Essay #2 due to Writing Fellows (6 pages)**

Drawing upon our readings in class and/or for your group project, make an argument about the representation of the Holocaust. Your essay may focus on art, literature, philosophy, or film, as we have done in this class, or it may look more broadly to consider how the Holocaust is used within contemporary discourse. For example, you might analyze and make an argument about other genocides or atrocities; about Israeli, European, or US politics; or about a Holocaust Memorial or Museum. More details will appear in an assignment sheet later in the semester, but you might begin to think about your essay early, and this initial description should help you to do so.

December 9: Conclusions

December 19: **Final Version of Essay #2 emailed to me before the end of the day. (Remember to turn in BOTH versions.)**

**Special Lectures related to the course:**

September 9, 4.30-6pm, Sarah Stein, "Seductive Subjects: the Balkan Wars and the International Rush on the Jews of Salonica" Elvehjem

September 10, 4:30 p.m. "Citizens of a Fictional Nation: Ottoman-born Jews, France, and the First World War" Elvehjem

Weds, October 1, 4pm: Paul Hanebrink, "The Nazi Occupation Monument in Budapest: Holocaust Memory in Hungary and the Problem of 'Double Occupation'" Pyle Center

October 18, 6:00pm, Anthony Doerr, Wisconsin Book Festival, *Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery*

October 23, Barbie Zelizer, "The Holocaust in Visual Memory" Union South

Monday, October 27, 7pm: Shiza Shahid, "I am Malala" Union South

Saturday, November 8, 7.30pm: Elizabeth Kolbert, WID

Tuesday & Wednesday, December 9 & 10, Alain Badiou, Elvehjem Bldg

*If you attend 3 of these events and write a 1 page response to each one, including a question that you asked (or would have asked), you can receive 5% extra credit.*

## JS 233 – Guyer (Fall 2014)

### Group Presentations

Group projects will begin on October 28. Each group will focus *intensively* on the week's assigned texts.

More specifically, each group will:

- 1) Develop an **annotated bibliography** that includes at least **seven** essays or book chapters that analyze the readings under discussion or that include relevant scholarship on the author. Each member of the group should plan to read at least **three** chapters or essays from this list. The bibliography should be turned into me on the day of your presentation – and should be shared with the class via email or Learn @ UW. Information on how to prepare an annotated bibliography is available from the Writing Center: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/AnnotatedBibliography.html>.

You should use the MLA style for citation:

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocMLA.html>

- 2) Prepare and deliver an **oral presentation** in which they discuss the text, drawing upon their own analyses and those of other critics. In this presentation, students should be prepared to reflect specifically upon the general topoi discussed in the class and relate their discussion to previous readings. This presentation should be an argument that includes an overarching thesis about the work under consideration, and each participant should support the thesis by analyzing particular sections or aspects of the work.
- 3) Prepare a **glossary/key** that identifies and defines important historical, terminological, or conceptual details in the work. This should be a **1-2 page handout distributed on the day of their presentation**.

Please sign up for one of the groups. Each group will be composed of 3-4 students. The research undertaken for the group project can be used in support of the final essay.