

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: Wednesday and 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? The merit of these questions, which remain unanswerable, lies in the cognitive and emotional process that they produce. We will pursue this process throughout our study.

Although the story 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 the testimony and its reception. How did the survivors choose to present their experience? What do these choices tell us about their perception of the experience? 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 its 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 examine the impact of the survivors' testimony and testimonial art on the artistic representations produced by the recipients of the Holocaust legacy and consider the educational values of those representations. What do the representations of the Holocaust by post-Holocaust writers, playwrights, and artists tell us about the emotional impact of the event on people who "were not there"? 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

Attendance: 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.

Attitude: Your attitude is part of your grade. It includes being in class *on time*, deferring from using electronic devices during class time, and concentration on the subject matter.

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 in some way connected or associated with the Holocaust. 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 three short essays (2-3 pages). We have been fortunate to have been assigned Writing Fellows who will be working with you on Essay #2 and #3. 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 on top explaining the changes.**

The first version of the essay is **typed double-space, appropriately documented**, of quality of what you would turn in for grading. I purposely do not call the text you will be discussing with the WF “a draft;” it will 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. The presentations will take place toward the end of the semester in preparation for the final essay. The presentation should raise concepts, ideas and facts for questions and discussion.

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.

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

A grandmother’s retelling of her family’s experiences in the holocaust, utilizing animation to bring her stories to life.

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*.

You will find the other texts 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*

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.

-- 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

Summaries	15%
Class participation	10%
Attitude	5%
Presentation	10%
Short essays	30%

Lectures reports	10%
Final essay and presentation	20%

Syllabus

Students are expected to bring the assigned texts for every class

Jan. 21 Introduction

I. The Problems of Bearing Witness

Jan. 23 Aharon Appelfeld, "Individualization." [R]
Annette Vieviorka, "On Testimony." [R]

Jan. 26 Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening." [R]

Jan. 28 An audio-taped witness testimony and discussion

II. Testimonial Perspectives of the Holocaust Experience

Jan. 30 Alvin Rosenfeld, "Jean Améry as Witness." [R]

Feb. 2 Jean Améry, "Resentment." [R]

Feb. 4 Lawrence Langer "Deep Memory: The Buried Self" [R]
Charlotte Delbo, "Days and Memory." [R]

Feb. 6 Ruth Klüger, "'The Camps.'" [R]
An excerpt from Lanzmann's *Shoah* and discussion

Feb. 9 Primo Levy, "Shame." [R]
Primo Levy, "You Who Live Safe." [R]

Feb. 11 Eli Wiesel, "A Plea for the Dead." [R]
Livia E. Bitton Jackson, "Coming Age."

Feb. 13 Summary and Review

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]
An audio-taped interview and discussion
- Feb. 23** Gisella Perl, "A Doctor in Auschwitz." [R]
Ruth Elias interview and discussion
- Feb. 25** Gisella Pearl (Continued)

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

- Feb. 25** Jan Karski, "The Ghetto." [R]
Claude Lanzmann's excerpt from *Shoah*
- Feb. 27** Tadeusz Borowski, "Introduction,"
"This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen." [R]
- March 2** Borowski (cont.)
Czesław Miłosz, "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto."

V. Representation of the Holocaust in Art and Literature

- March 4** Paul Celan, "Deathfugue."
- March 6** Ida Fink, "A Scrap of Time." [R]
- March 9** Ida Fink, "The Table." [R]
Class reenactment
- March 11** Discussion of the Hillel event
- March 13** Poems by Abraham Sutzkever, Dan Pagis, and Nelly Sachs
- March 16** Poems (cont.)
- March 18** Discussion of *Schindler's List*

- March 20** Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl* Part I
- March 23** Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl* Part II
- March 25** Ozick (contd)
- March 27** **Summary and Review**
- April 6** Discussion of *Life Is Beautiful*
- April 8** *Maus*
- April 10** *Maus*
- April 13** *Maus*
- 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*
- April 22 continued
- April 24 continued
- April 27 Holocaust stories by American writers
- April 29** **Holocaust stories by American writers**
- 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.

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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.

Brenner, Rachel Feldhay. *Writing As Resistance: Four Women Confronting the Holocaust: Edith Stein, Simone Weil, Anne Frank, Etty Hillesum*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

---- "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.

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

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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.

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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.

Shapiro, Robert Moses, ed. *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*. Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1999.

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

Weissman, Gary. *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.