

**Philosophy/Jewish Studies 442:
Moral Philosophy and the Holocaust**

Instructor:

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Course Information:

MW 4:00-5:15pm
Ingraham 223
Office Hours: Th 1:30-3:30

Course Description:

This course follows a tradition of moral philosophy (Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger) as it is taken up by thinkers writing in the wake of the Holocaust. Through readings in texts by Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, Emmanuel Levinas, Giorgio Agamben, and others, we will investigate how the Holocaust comes to figure and orient postwar reflections on questions of guilt, human subjectivity, language, responsibility, and evil. Over the course of the semester, we will also supplement our philosophical readings with poetic, literary, and cinematic representations of these events.

Learning Objectives:

- Close reading, interpretation, and written and oral analysis
- Familiarization with major terms and debates surrounding the Holocaust
- Consideration of the impact of these events on European moral philosophy
- Philosophical literacy; identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the interrelationships and impact of philosophical views

Course Requirements:

During the semester, students will be responsible for completing all assignments and requirements. First, students are expected to fully participate in each class. This means a thorough reading of all required material as well as active engagement in class discussion. Second, over the course of the semester, students will complete a series of assignments: 1 oral presentation (5 minutes); 4 response papers (~2 pages); and 2 papers (4-5 pages/6-7 pages). Due dates for the papers are listed in the course schedule. Oral assignments and response papers will be discussed during the first week.

Course Policies:

In order to receive full credit on paper submissions, students must follow these formatting guidelines: **Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins.** Papers should also include the **student's name, instructor's name, course title, and date** at the top-left of the page. All papers should also have a **title**.

Extensions: Extensions will be considered up to forty-eight hours before the deadline. If no extension is requested or granted, a third of a grade will be deducted for each day late.

Absences: More than three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the class.

Computers: This class will be a **computer-free** zone. Please bring all readings in print form. If you feel that you will require access to a computer in class, please come meet with me.

Collaboration and Academic Integrity: The course follows the university's policies on plagiarism and collaboration. Specifically, any material submitted to meet course requirements—homework assignments, papers, projects,

posted comments, examinations—is expected to be a student’s own work. I ask all students to bookmark and consult regularly the university guidelines on academic integrity, which can be found at this address: <https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/students/>. You are urged to take great care in distinguishing your own ideas and thoughts from information and analysis derived from printed and electronic sources, and you are responsible for knowing and following the university’s policy on proper use of sources. These policies are stated clearly on university’s website.

Disabilities Statement: The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with you or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. For more information, see <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/>.

Grading:

Scale:

A=100-93; AB=92-88; B=87-83; BC=82-78; C=77-71; D=70-65; F=60-0

Distribution:

Participation and Attendance: 15%

Oral Presentation: 15%

Response Papers: 25%

Paper #1: 20%

Paper #2: 25%

Required Texts:

The following books are **on reserve** at the College Library and widely **available for purchase**:

NGJ: Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933-1945: Abridged Edition* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009).

Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973).

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006).

Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

Primo Levi, *Survival In Auschwitz*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

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

All remaining texts will be distributed online through Learn@UW.

Course Readings and Schedule:

Week I: Introduction

Wednesday, January 18: Introduction; in-class readings

Week II: Immanuel Kant (I)

Monday, January 23: Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 3-20

Wednesday, January 25: Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 21-55
(NGJ: pp. 3-31)

Week III: Immanuel Kant (II)

Monday, January 30: Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 56-72; Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, pp. 57-63

Wednesday, February 1: Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, pp. 69-97
(NGJ: pp. 32-60)

Week IV: Friedrich Nietzsche

Monday, February 6: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Preface (pp. 3-10) and First Essay (pp. 10-3)

Wednesday, February 8: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Second Essay (pp. 35-67)
(NGJ: pp. 61-86)

Week V: Martin Heidegger

Monday, February 13: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 1-12; 219-246

Wednesday, February 15: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 247-277
(NGJ: pp. 87-110)

First Paper Topics Distributed

Week VI: Karl Jaspers

Monday, February 20: Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, pp. 1-54.

Wednesday, February 22: Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, pp. 55-117.
(NGJ: pp. 111-142)

Week VII: Hannah Arendt (I)

Monday, February 27: Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Preface to the First Edition (pp. vii-x); pp. 3-53

Wednesday, March 1: Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 267-302
(NGJ: pp. 259-286)

Due Date: First Paper

Week VIII: Hannah Arendt (II)

Monday, March 6: Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 389-419; pp. 437-459

Wednesday, March 8: Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 460-479
(NGJ: pp. 287-315)

Week IX: Theodor Adorno

Monday, March 13: Theodor Adorno, “The Meaning of Working Through the Past,” in *Can One Live After Auschwitz?*, pp. 3-18; “Education After Auschwitz,” in *Can One Live After Auschwitz?*, pp. 19-36

Wednesday, March 15: Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 305-308; Theodor Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” in *Can One Live After Auschwitz?*, pp. 146-162
(NGJ: pp. 316-344)

Week X: Hannah Arendt (III)

Monday, March 27: Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, pp. 3-55; pp. 112-150

Wednesday, March 29: Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 220-298
(NGJ: pp. 345-373)

Week XI: Emmanuel Levinas

Monday, April 3: Emmanuel Levinas, “Substitution,” in *Otherwise than Being*, pp. 88-108

Wednesday, April 5: Levinas, “Substitution,” pp. 108-119; “Useless Suffering,” in *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, pp. 156-165
(NGJ: pp. 374-395)

Second Paper Topics Distributed**Week XII: Primo Levi**

Monday, April 10: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz (If This is a Man)*, pp. 9-86

Wednesday, April 12: Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz (If This is a Man)*, pp. 87-173
(NGJ: pp. 395-422)

Week XIII: Primo Levi (II)

Monday, April 17: Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, pp. 11-22; 36-69;

Wednesday, April 19: Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, pp. 70-87; Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, pp. 11-39

Due Date: Second Paper**Week XIV: Giorgio Agamben**

Monday, April 24: Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, pp. 41-86

Wednesday, April 26: Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, pp. 87-135

Friday, April 28: Film Screening: *Son of Saul* (Time: TBD; Place: TBD)

Week XV: Son of Saul

Monday, May 1: Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, pp. 137-171; László Nemes, *Son of Saul*

Wednesday, May 3: László Nemes, *Son of Saul*; selections from Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*.