

History 204-402  
Jewish Studies 204-402

Fall 2007  
Monday 2:00-5:00

## **REREADING THE HOLOCAUST**

INSTRUCTOR: Beth S. Wenger  
OFFICE HOURS: Monday 12:00-1:30  
and by appointment

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores how the Holocaust has been constructed as an historical event. Beginning in the mid-1940s, with the first attempts to narrate what had transpired during the Nazi era, this seminar traces the ways that the Holocaust became codified as a distinct episode in history. Taking a chronological approach, the course follows the evolution of historical and popular ideas about the Holocaust and considers the different perspectives presented by a variety of sources. We will examine documentary films, memoirs, survivor testimonies, as well as other scholarly and popular representations of the Holocaust. Students will be introduced to unfamiliar sources and also asked to reconsider some well-known Holocaust documents and institutions.

The course will be conducted as a seminar, requiring diligent preparation and active participation from all students. Students are expected to read and analyze all assignments before class and contribute to class discussions. Class preparation and participation are crucial elements of this course and will be considered as part of the final grade.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Every class will begin with a brief session called "Say Something." All students should be prepared to offer a one-minute oral response to the week's reading. This means expressing a reaction or opinion: raising one question, criticism, or issue that relates to the assignment. Students are expected to prepare and participate actively in every class discussion.

- Class presentation: Presentations of research-in-progress will be a central component of the course. All students will be required to give presentations of their work, identifying central themes of their projects and raising key questions for discussion. In addition, all students will act as a facilitator for one presentation, guiding the discussion of another student's project. Students will be required to meet with a CWiC peer advisor in the week prior to their presentations.

As a rule, the discussion of each project will take 15 minutes, including a 5-7 minute presentation by the student and the remaining time for questions and dialogue about the issues raised. Students will carefully plan their presentations, using them to formulate key concepts and questions, and also to consider revising opinions and ideas. In addition to the facilitator, who will conduct and guide the discussion, all students will be expected to participate actively in the conversation. The two weeks that we will devote to discussion of your research will constitute a workshop designed to improve the quality of your work.

- Research Paper: All students will be asked to write a 17-22 page research paper on a topic related to the themes of the seminar. You are free to choose your own topic, but you should do so in consultation with me. We will discuss potential topics throughout the semester.

**No Later than October 29:** you should choose a topic and confirm it with me.

**On November 5:** you should submit a detailed prospectus for your paper along with a working bibliography.

**On December 11:** FINAL VERSION OF PAPERS DUE AT 12:00 PM!

GRADING:

Class Participation	20%
Prospectus	20%
Class presentation	20%
Final paper	40%

**\*\* NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED--NO EXCEPTIONS!\*\***

REQUIRED READINGS AVAILABLE AT PENN BOOK CENTER (130 S. 34th St.):

Anne Frank, The Diary of A Young Girl

Elie Wiesel, Night

Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem

Lawrence L. Langer, Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory

James E. Young, The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning

Edward T. Linenthal, Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Make America's Holocaust Museum

**\* All books ordered for purchase are also on reserve at the library.**

**\* A packet containing all other required reading is available for purchase at Wharton Reprographics located in the basement of Steinberg-Deitrich Hall.**

## I. THE "HOLOCAUST" TAKES SHAPE

**September 10**      **Introduction: Approaches to the Holocaust**

**September 17**      **In the Aftermath**

Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin eds., From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry, pp. 1-19, 161-211.

Kevin Mahoney, ed., 1945: The Year of Liberation, pp. 114-15, 169-197.

**September 24**      **Documenting Atrocities**

Michael R. Marrus, ed., The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945-46, pp. 149-240.

Ilan Avisar, Screening the Holocaust, pp. 5-18.

Film: Night and Fog

Film excerpts: Nuremberg War Crimes Trial

**October 1**      **Anne Frank Revisited**

Anne Frank, The Diary of A Young Girl

Sander Gilman, Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews, pp. 345-60.

Judith Doneson, The Holocaust in American Film, pp. 57-83.

Film: The Diary of Anne Frank (1959) [To be screened before class]

\* All students should also review briefly the critical edition of Anne Frank's Diary on reserve at the library: David Barnouw and Gerrold Van Der Stroom, The Diary of Anne Frank: The Critical Edition.

**October 8**      **The Survivor Speaks: Elie Wiesel's Night**

Elie Wiesel, Night

Naomi Seidman, "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage," Jewish Social Studies 3:1 (Fall 1996): 1-19.

## **October 22                    Eichmann on Trial**

Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem

Gershom Scholem, "Eichmann in Jerusalem': An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt," Encounter 22 (Jan. 1964): 51-56; reprinted in Hannah Arendt, The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age, ed. Ron H. Feldman, pp. 240-51.

Jeffrey Shandler, While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust, pp. 107-132.

Film: Verdict for Tomorrow

\*\* Special Assignment: In preparation for this class, you should find one review published at the time that the Arendt book was released. Using sources such as the New York Times, Commentary, Midstream, Harper's Magazine, and a range of popular and scholarly periodicals, both Jewish and secular, the class will gauge the various responses to this influential and controversial work. You should photocopy the review you have chosen and bring it to class. Be prepared to analyze what your review reveals about both the book and the popular sentiments of the period.

## **II. HOLOCAUST MEMORIES, HOLOCAUST MEANINGS**

### **October 29                    Holocaust Testimonies**

Lawrence L. Langer, Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory.

Toby Blum-Dobkin, "Videotaping Holocaust Interviews: Questions and Answers from an Interviewer," Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review 16:1 (1994): 46-50

Video Excerpts: Yale University Holocaust Video Archives

Film: Shoah (excerpts)

### **November 5                    Holocaust Monuments and Memorials**

James E. Young, The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning, pp. 1-241, 263-322.

Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, "Reclaiming Auschwitz," in Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory, pp. 232-51.

**November 12            Holocaust Museums**

Edward T. Linenthal, Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Make America's Holocaust Museum.

James Ingo Freed, "The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," in Young, The Art of Memory, pp. 89-101.

Leon Wieseltier, "After Memory: Reflections on the Holocaust Memorial Museum," The New Republic May 3, 1993, pp. 16-26.

Oren Baruch Stier, "Virtual Memories: Mediating the Holocaust at the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Beit Hashoah-Museum of Tolerance," AAR: Journal of the American Academy of Religion 64:4 (Winter 1996): 831-51.

**November 19            Class Presentations**

**November 26            Class Presentations**

**December 3            Course Conclusions/Contemporary Reflections**

Oren Stier, "Lunch at Majdanek: The March of the Living as a Contemporary Pilgrimage of Memory," Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review 17: 1-2 (1995): 57-67.

Jack Kugelmass, "Why We Go to Poland," in Young, The Art of Memory, pp. 175-84.

Zygmunt Bauman, "Holocaust Ghosts and Hereditary Victimhood," Tikkun 13:4 (July/August 1998): 33-38.

Peter Novick, The Holocaust in American Life, pp. 239-63.

**PAPERS DUE TUESDAY DECEMBER 11 AT 12:00 PM!**