

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN/RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE: RC CORE 100 (006), FALL 2015

LISTENING TO HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS (Henry Greenspan, hgreensp@umich.edu)

A. READING

Most of the readings assigned in this course can be found in the “coursepack”—a collection of articles, etc. bound together. The coursepack can be purchased at Kolossos Printing (at 1214 South University, in the rear of the small mall next to Starbucks, on the block between Church and Forest). It should be there by September 1. Good to get it soon because you will need it for the first week of class, and Kolossos usually waits to see how many are selling before they print as many as we will probably need.

There are also four books that we will read all or much of:

1. Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War*. Henry Holt, paperback.
2. Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. HarperCollins paperback.
3. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I and Maus II*, Pantheon paperback.
6. Agi Rubin and Henry Greenspan, *Reflections: Auschwitz, Memory, and a Life Recreated*. Paragon House paperback (don't buy!)

If you buy these used, on-line, it should be possible to get all of them for \$25 or less. I have some loaner copies of *Gilbert* and *Reflections*. Let me know if you want to “reserve” one. No one should pay more than \$5.00 for *Reflections*. I have copies I can make available for loan or “at author cost.”

Gilbert and Browning are part of the early weeks of the course; the others, later. HOWEVER, because of some unique scheduling challenges this term, we have a number of books in quick succession at the end of the course--*Reflections*, and *Maus*. It would be a good idea to start reading these well before. I think you will find them accessible and compelling and none take more than a few hours. Still, planning ahead will make things a lot more relaxed for you!

In general, you should always bring to class the readings for that class. .

B. WRITING

RC first-year seminars are structured to satisfy LSA's first-year writing requirement. Thus, work on writing skills is a core part of the seminars, and a good deal of writing is required. For this course, most writing assignments are close interpretive/analytic essays, although a variety other kinds of writing will be assigned from time to time (especially journal entries and poetic/literary forms).

Interpretive essays are brief (usually 1-3 double-spaced pages) pieces that concern current course topics and readings. Most of the assignment sheets will be on the course c-tools site (or distributed beforehand in class). Final project papers are typically 10-12 pages or longer, depending on what best fits your topic.

In general, classes when a writing assignment is due are marked with asterisks in the syllabus. They come roughly every other class—most often on Tuesdays so that you have the weekend to work on an essay. Generally, when a writing assignment is due, reading is lighter.

*Always keep a “clean” copy of every writing assignment in your computer or other storage so you can retrieve it. **All writing assignments, including bullet-point type assignments, should be double-spaced, 12-point font, and printed out (not hand written). All pages should be numbered and stapled together.** You’d be amazed how often pages get lost or into “inappropriate relationships” with each other when they are not stapled! Even advanced origami is no substitute for a staple!*

The best way to improve writing is to hone writing already done. In other words, learning to be a better writer comes down to learning to be a better editor—of oneself. At the end of this syllabus there is a page of suggestions for self-editing. Please be sure to read this.

The writing assignments will sometimes include a rewrite of an earlier essay (or part of an earlier essay). Likewise, since most of the assignments are relatively short, it is expected that you will do a good deal of editing and rewriting before you hand a paper in. *Please include all corrected drafts with the final paper in front, and staple them together.* A number of papers will require four or five drafts. Final grades in the course will depend, in significant part, on effort devoted to writing as evidenced by progress in rewrites.

As we will discuss, *if you come to a place in your writing that you know is unclear, awkward, etc., mark it (underline) whether or not you have a fix.* The first step in editing is recognizing there is a problem—otherwise, nothing else happens!

I invite you also to include more than one option for a sentence or section to suggest you have questions about what version may be best. When we meet in individual writing tutorials, explained below, we will discuss the pros and cons of different options and potential solutions.

C. TUTORIAL MEETINGS AND THE SWEETLAND WRITING CENTER

There will be at least four *required* individual writing tutorial meetings with HG for each student during the semester, most scheduled for a half-hour on Mondays. I will pass around a sign-up sheet with times from which to choose. This will be *your* time and reserved for you on the specific dates indicated. The purpose of these meetings is to focus intensively and individually on the particular writing issues you’re working on as well as to discuss issues raised in the course as you choose. These are exact times, not ten minutes after.

In addition, structured and improvisational use of other classmates as editors will be part of our method for polishing writing.

Keep all written essays together in a folder (including earlier ones already reviewed) and bring the folder with you to our individual meetings. This will enable us to discuss progress in your writing by referring back to earlier essays. Also be sure you save copies of all assignments on a drive or computer.

Along with our individual tutorial meetings, there are excellent on-campus resources that are available to help with your writing. We will discuss these in class, particularly the Sweetland Writing Center. Working with a Sweetland tutor is recommended for everyone. For people who need a good deal of help with their writing—and this includes many of us--working with a Sweetland tutor is *essential*. More on this below.

D. MONDAY EVENING FILMS AND SPEAKERS

On several Monday evenings during the semester, particularly at the beginning and toward the end, we will have films, survivor visits, or other programs. These meetings begin at 7:00 pm *sharp* (not 7:10). They are listed in the syllabus. While your schedule lists 7:00-9:00 pm, we will almost always finish before that, often well before it.

E. ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required at all class sessions, individual tutorials, and Monday night films. Being on time is also important—it is distracting for everyone when people arrive late. We need you. Never miss a class because a paper is not done. You're being with us is much more important.

Note that, it is LSA policy for instructors to offer alternative exam times if such a time conflicts with a scheduled class. For our purposes, scheduled class times include film nights.

Needless to say, religious holidays and similar are understood as exceptions.

F. GRADING

RC courses are graded in two ways: a written evaluation, in which your work in a course is discussed in its particulars, and a letter grade. As you would expect, the written evaluation is the more essential because it details your specific efforts as related to course expectations and requirements. By necessity, a letter grade is an abstract summation.

In this course, the following are considered especially important dimensions that will figure into both the final written evaluation and the final letter grade. They are not listed in order of importance; they are all very important.

1. **Quality and consistency of effort**--The quality and consistency of effort towards improving writing, including especially evidence of more than one draft, genuinely revised (not simply tweaked). Relatedly, the depth and seriousness with which course issues are engaged throughout the semester—in writing assignments as well as in class.

2. **Participation in class discussion**—The capacity both to express your own point of view and, equally important, to respond to the views of others in ways that develop a topic and deepen our discussion as a whole.

3. **Willingness to take intellectual risks** (versus “playing it safe”): Trying out new ideas, questioning old ones, bracketing (if only temporarily) your own opinion in order to better understand the views of an author or a classmate.

4. **Completion of all written assignments on time and, as above, attendance at class meetings, films, and tutorial sessions.** Please note, though, life happens. I will ALWAYS prefer to give you an occasional extension than your missing a class in order to get a paper done. Attendance takes priority because the seminar needs the participation of all of us.

The following are also contributions that will be recognized and undoubted cherished by all. But they cannot be “asked for” in the same way as the first list.

1. **Playfulness and humor**—yes, even in a course on the Holocaust, there will be times when playfulness is essential. And, of course, playing deeply is required in all creativity and probably in all good conversation (including seminar discussions) as well.

2. **Integrity and Courage**—Related to intellectual risks, the capacity to enter honestly into the tough intellectual and emotional challenges of this course, risking one's convictions, but also standing by them when that is what is needed.

3. **Compassion and care**—The capacity to enter into the challenges of this course, while maintaining compassion for oneself, one's classmates, and perhaps our human predicament more generally. This class is about listening to survivors—but not only to survivors.

Each writing assignment will be given two numbers between 1 and 10—the first, for exposition (the writing itself); the second for argumentation (depth of engagement with the material, logic of exposition, and more, to be discussed). In the context of writing assignments, a “5” is somewhere in the middle—passable, but still lots of room for improvement. As above, these numbers will not be averaged. Rather, they are to suggest, in a general way, where your writing is relative to where it may be able to go. Needless to say, the goal is higher numbers over time.

As noted, a written assignment is due on the day that we will be discussing that particular issue. So we will be ‘prepped’ to engage it together. At other times, it is expected that a writing assignment will specifically draw upon insights developed during class discussions. So class discussion is aimed to contribute to everyone's better understanding, and, in turn, more clear and engaged writing.

Our individual tutorial meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss your work in all aspects of the course. I am happy to meet with you at other times as well—just let me know.

G. OTHER THINGS

1. **Computing and email**—Important class information will sometimes be conveyed by email. Make sure you check email daily for any message related to the class, which will have “SURVIVORS” at the start of the subject line. You are responsible for knowing about info that is emailed.

As above, all writing assignments should be done on a computer and saved. All hard copies should be double-spaced, page-numbered, one-inch margin on all sides, and stapled.

2. **Computers, Cell phones, and the like**—*Once class begins, which includes films, there should be no phones, computers, or similar devices out and on (unless, of course, you are waiting for an emergency message).*

3. **Announcements, articles, and so on**—Holocaust-related items are very often in the news. If you see something that you think may be of interest to the class, let us know!

4. **Plagiarism**—Because our papers are very specific to this course, it would be hard to find anything remotely similar on line or elsewhere. In any case, passing off others' work as your own is very serious business. Always be in touch with me if you have any questions about where the lines are.

Finally, I wish us all a semester that is engaging, creative, and inspiring of our best—personally and intellectually. This is a journey we take together, and its purpose is not simply to learn, but to learn

from and with each other. That is what creates a seminar, in contrast with other kinds of courses.

HG

RC Core 100, Fall 2015, Greenspan
LISTENING TO HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

I -- INTRODUCTORY

9/8/15 -- Welcome and introduction to the seminar.

9/10/15--Some History of the History of the Holocaust

***Due: Language, Politics, and Memory: The memorial tablets at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Reading:

(First, read the "Information" pages of this syllabus (first four pages and page 9). Bring any questions to our second class. *Very important.*)

1. "Anti-Semitic Ad Published at U-M" (from A2News, October 25, 1991).
2. "Today at Babi Yar the Spirits Will Rest" (from NYT, October 5, 1991).
3. "Poland Agrees to Change the Wording on Auschwitz Tablets" (from NYT, June 17, 1992).
4. "Camp Survivor says Publicity Saved Lives" (from A2News, March 2, 1993)

II -- HISTORICAL CONTEXT

9/14/15--FILM: *Genocide* (from BBC World at War series)

9/15/15--Historical Context—Antisemitism, Inside and Outside.

Reading:

1. John Roth and Michael Berenbaum, "Prologue: Who, What, Where, When, How?" (from Roth and Berenbaum, Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications, pp. xiii-xxxvi).
2. Raul Hilberg, "Precedents" (from Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, pp. 5-9)
2. Norman Cohn, "Foreword" and "The Origins of the Myth" (from Warrant for Genocide, pp. xi-xv, 25-29).*
3. Martin Gilbert, Preface
Chapter 1, "First Steps to Iniquity"
Chapter 2, "1933: The shadow of the swastika"
(from The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War, pp. 17-41)

9/17/15--Historical Context—Law, Racism, and Fascism as Public Health

***Due: The Rationality of Madness

1. Martin Gilbert, Chapter 3, "Towards Disinheritance" (from *Gilbert*, pp. 42-49).
2. "The Nuremberg Laws" from websites, in coursepack
3. Raul Hilberg, "Definition by Decree" (from *Hilberg*, pp. 65-80)
4. Wikipedia articles (on Internet) on Madison Grant, Racial Integrity Act of 1924.
5. Robert Proctor, Prologue, *The Nazi War on Cancer* (Princeton, 1999), pp. 3-12 and 220-21.

9/21/15--FILM: *Lodz Ghetto*

9/22/15-- Historical Context--Prelude to Wannsee

***Due: Chronology (part I), although many of you will have done the whole chronology, which is good!

Reading:

1. Martin Gilbert, Chapter 5, "Hunted Like Rats"
 Chapter 7, "September, 1939: The trapping of Polish Jewry"
 Chapter 12, "It cannot happen"
 Chapter 13, "A crime without a name"
 Chapter 15, "The 'final solution'"
 (from Gilbert, above, pp. 57-65, 84-98, 154-212, 241-51).

9/24/15-- Historical Context (cont.)--The "final solution"

***Due: Chronology (part 2); and The Implications of a Fragment (reflective piece)

Reading:

1. Martin Gilbert, Chapter 16, "Eye-witness to mass murder"
 Chapter 17, "20 January, 1942: The Wannsee Conference"
 Chapter 20, "If they have enough time, we are lost"
 (from Gilbert, above, pp. 252-93, 352-72).

9/28/15—FILM: *Obedience*, the Milgram experiment and excerpts from “Weapons of the Spirit”

9/29/15--Historical Context / Perpetrators

***Due: The structure and logic of Browning’s argument, an outline of points of potential use for paper due next week. Outlines to be shared on ctools site.

1. Christopher Browning, Preface, Chapters 1, 4-8, 18.
 (from Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution Poland, pp. xv-xxii, 1-2, 26-77, 159-89). Don’t skip the Preface—very important.
2. Daniel Goldhagen, critical review of Ordinary Men in The New Republic.

10/1/15—Historical Context/Rescuers-Resisters

***Due: outline for paper, due next week, on similarities and difference on factors that may lead to *either* obedience or resistance. Outlines to be shared on ctools site.

1. Ervin Staub, “Steps along a continuum of destruction: perpetrators and bystanders” and “The SS and the Psychology of Perpetrators” (from Staub, *The Roots of Evil*, pp. 79-85 and 147-50).’
2. "The Village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon" (from Revolt Amidst the Darkness, pp. 243-6).
3. Rochat/Modigliani articles on resistance in Milgram and Le Chambon (in ctools)

10/5/15: No film, as will be true for a while. Thus no listings for Mondays.

III -- DIMENSIONS OF TRAUMA: DEATH, DESOLATION, SHAME, LOSS

10/6/15-- Knowing Death: what does and does not survive

1. Jean Amery, "Torture" (from Jean Amery, At the Mind's Limits, pp. 21-40).
2. Henry Krystal, excerpts from "Trauma and Affect":

- "The Challenge of the Affect Experience,"
 "Surrender, Psychogenic Death, and Trauma,"
 "Catastrophic Psychic Trauma and Trances"
 (from Henry Krystal, Integration and Self-Healing, pp. 143-5, 154-6).
 3. Daniel Goleman, "Terror Takes Toll on the Brain," NYT, June 14, 1990.

10/8/15—Open forum

***Due: Paper on similarities and differences in factors that may yield either obedience or resistance to malevolent authority (e.g., roles of authority, conformity, timing, etc.)

10/13/15-- Knowing Death (cont.)

***Due: "To Be and Not To Be."

Reading:

1. Charlotte Delbo, "Springtime" (from None of Us Will Return, pp. 122-7).
2. Charlotte Delbo, Chapter I (from Days and Memory, pp. 1-4).
3. "On Irreducible Duality in Survivors' Experience" (pages in coursepack).

10/15/15—Desolation: the assault on belonging

Reading:

1. Primo Levi, "Author's Preface," "The Journey," "On the Bottom," "Our Nights" (from Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz, pp. 9-10, 13-27, 56-64).
2. Primo Levi, "The Thaw," "The Awakening" (from Primo Levi, The Reawakening, pp. 181-7, 370-4).
3. Ferdinand Camon / Primo Levi, "Why Write?" (from F. Camon, Conversations with Primo Levi, pp. 41-3).
4. Isabella Leitner, "The Arrival," "My Potyo, My Sister," "Grave," "Rachel," "Serenity" (from Isabella Leitner, Fragments of Isabella: A Memoir of Auschwitz, pp. 18-23, 46-51).
5. Isabella Leitner, "xii, xiii-Liberation," "xiv-En Route to Odessa" (from Isabella Leitner, Saving the Fragments, pp. 43-50, 53-8).

10/20/15—FALL BREAK! NO CLASS

10/22/15-- Dreams and Desolation

***Due: Agi Rubin's dream in Auschwitz-Birkenau

1. "Excerpts from HG Interviews with Agi," in coursepack. Having read *Reflections* should also help.

10/27/15-- Shame: from individual guilt to "atavistic anguish"

***Due: Rewrite of at least one page of a prior paper (not reflection)

Reading:

1. Primo Levi, "Shame" (from Primo Levi, The Drowned and the Saved, pp. 70-87).

10/29/15--Atrocity and tragedy; the tellable and the retellable

***Due: One paragraph proposal of final project topic (final proposal due on 11/14)

Reading:

1. "Excerpts from HG Interviews with Leon," in coursepack.
2. Lawrence Langer, "Preface" (from The Age of Atrocity, pp. xi-xiv).
3. H. Greenspan, "Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Interpreting a Repeated Story"

11/3/15—Loss—Invisible Cemeteries

***Due: Reuben's Loss

Reading:

1. "Excerpts from HG Interviews with Reuben," in coursepack.
2. Elie Wiesel, "Why I Write" (from Rosenfeld and Greenberg, eds., Confronting the Holocaust, pp. 200-205.

11/5/15—Testimony as a Verb

***Due: Close analysis of the construction of retelling

Reading (mostly watching)

1. Videotestimony of Pinchas Gutter

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1mfybmZxgI>

First watch the entire videotestimony, with questions from assignment sheet in mind. Go back and watch the section from minute 59 through 1:08 several times, also with questions in mind.

11/10/15: The "Post Survivor" Discussion/Debate

1. NPR piece on survivor holograms <http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2013/04/08/holocaust-survivor-holograms>
2. Greenspan, "Treblinka and the Ardent Lover," *Oral History Review*, May 1, 2015, [Oxford University Press Blog](#)

--Discussion of final projects and other "burning questions"

11/12/15—Children of Survivors: Mice

***Final proposal with final project, including bibliography as possible/relevant

Reading:

1. *Maus* 1 and 2

11/16/15 (Monday)—Film: Ghosts of Rwanda

11/17/14—The Rwandan Genocide and Intervention

Reading:

1. Samantha Power (now UN representative from U.S.), "People in Offices"

11/19/15—Rwandan Genocide Survivors—"Reconciliation," "Justice," and the Aftermath of Genocide

Reading:

1. Survivors in Rwanda (excerpts in cousepack)

11/23/15—Short film—Irene Butter, "Never a Bystander," and visit with Irene.

11/24/15—Thanksgiving/Hanukah Pageant—Reflections and Legacies

Reading:

1. Rubin and Greenspan, Reflections

12/1 12/3, 12/7, 12/8 12/10—Final Projects and Colloquium

Learning to be a better writer means learning to be a better editor (of oneself).

Here are some editing suggestions—best to do all of them!

1. Have a smart someone else read your paper and flag parts that they think are awkward, unclear, redundant, and so on.
2. Leave as much time as you can between the first draft and the second draft—ideally, let it sit for a day before you go back and work on the second version.
3. When you go over it, read the paper **out loud** rather than just “in your head.” If it sounds awkward or unnatural to you, it almost certainly is. Mark those segments.
4. When you get to an unclear, convoluted, unnatural patch—and it’s not obvious how to fix it—consider the following.

--Often, you can smooth out a rough patch simply by deleting pieces of it. Ask yourself if you are repeating yourself, using redundant or superfluous language, and so on. If so, take it out. (Sometimes this happens when you don’t trust what you’ve already written to set the context. So you end up repeating it with no development.)

--When you’re really stuck, it often helps to put down the paper, look at the wall, and ask: “OK, dang it, what the heck am I trying to say here?” Forget the language you already have. The point is to start afresh, as simply and straightforwardly as possible. You may come up with a whole new way that works. Or you may come up with some language that will knit back into what you’ve already got. It may take several efforts, separated by some time, before you find a better way.

5. As follows from above, always be prepared to ditch what you’ve got in favor of something better. Most of us become “attached” to an early version. Good writers learn how take a deep breath.....**and let go**. (Elie Wiesel’s *Night* was once three times longer and entirely different than the version we have now.)

6. Use the Sweetland Writing Center—they have writing help on-line and in person. Ideally, create a relationship with someone there with whom you can work regularly. More on this in class.
7. If you know a word is not quite what you mean—or you're stuck between several different possibilities of phrasing—include all of them (indicate in brackets that you are doing that). When we meet we can then discuss the pros/cons of different options. In general, flag sections which you recognize as having problems whether or not you know how to fix them. We'll discuss these when we meet. Priority #1 is recognizing that where there are problems. Improving depends on it!
8. As we've discussed, trajectory! Ideally, each sentence should follow clearly from the previous, so you take your reader on a journey that is clear, informing, and memorable.

Writing Goals for the Residential College First-Year Seminar Program*

The First-Year Seminar Program in the Residential College aims to prepare you, the student, to meet the writing challenges you will encounter during your academic career at the University of Michigan. This preparation entails training you to write clear, correct, and interesting English prose, the foundation upon which more specific modes of analysis or interpretation can then be built as you enter the various departments and programs at the University. The Upper-Level Writing Requirement, completed later in your university career, is an opportunity to further refine your writing skills.

Because the RC first-year seminars satisfy the LSA first-year writing requirement (FYWR), these seminars uphold the learning goals common to all FYWR courses:

- Producing evidence-based arguments
- Summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing complex texts to generate and support writing
- Writing in a variety of genres and rhetorical contexts
- Developing strategies for organizing, revising, editing, and proofreading writing to improve development of ideas
- Collaborating with peers and instructors to revise writing

Although these learning goals may be addressed through various pedagogic approaches, the RC first-year seminars make use of strategies common to all FYWR courses:

- Requiring at least 25 pages of polished writing (which has gone through substantial revision)
- Providing feedback to students in regular and specified ways
- Spacing writing and revisions across the semester
- Varying assignments in terms of genre, audience, and purpose

Underlying these specific goals and strategies is the general goal of each seminar: to ensure that you have achieved a basic level of writing competence: correct syntax, well-ordered paragraphs, and a style capable of communicating ideas clearly to a general reader.

First-year seminar instructors will work with you – in groups and individually – to improve your writing. In the course of the semester, you or your instructor may decide that you could benefit from supplemental guidance. The Sweetland Center for Writing will work with you during both walk-in and scheduled tutorials to facilitate your success as a writer. It is a free consultation service, offering one-to-one assistance with all stages of the writing process.

In the presence of persistent and severe writing difficulties, you might be asked to submit a writing portfolio to the RC Writing Board near the end of the Fall semester in order to determine if you have met the minimum first-year writing requirement.

**Folks--Here is a revised overview of general writing goals for all the RC first-year seminars as already conveyed. Each seminar will meet them in its particular way.*