

## REPRESENTING THE HOLOCAUST IN LITERATURE AND FILM

Jewish Studies Program – 350: MWF 10:00 AM 4 Film Showings: Tues. 6:30- end of film  
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This course explores the Holocaust as it is represented in various genres: fiction, poetry, testimony and commentary; fictional, autobiographical, and documentary film; and presentation by a Holocaust survivor. We will examine historical, artistic, and ethical questions about representing the reality of the Holocaust and questions about making meaning from its events.

Discussion and writing assignments will encourage students to reflect on their responses to different portrayals of victimization and survival and relationships between the teller and the tale and the role of memory, language, and history in representation.

Students will share their responses in class discussion. Discussion questions and short written reflections will facilitate everyone's participation.

Two papers and a midterm exam will focus on understanding the complex problems of representing the Holocaust.

Because of the sensitive nature of the subject, an important part of the course is your collaborative effort to facilitate understanding through consistent participation. Therefore, attendance is mandatory except for notification of serious excuses.

For writing tips, be sure to consult: <http://www.nuwrite.northwestern.edu/>

### READINGS

COURSEPACK at Quartet copies (Clark at Benson)

Doris Bergen. WAR AND GENOCIDE

Primo Levi. THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED

Charlotte Delbo. AUSCHWITZ AND AFTER

Art Spiegelman. MAUS I AND II.

### FILMS

1. JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG (179 min.)

2. MEMORY OF THE CAMPS (1 hour)

3. THE COUNTERFEITERS (99 min.)

4. Toyland

5. THE NASTY GIRL (90 min.)

Important Websites to consult:

USHMM Encyclopedia:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/index.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005143>

[www.romagenocide.org](http://www.romagenocide.org)

## REPRESENTING THE HOLOCAUST IN LITERATURE AND FILM

Mon., Jan. 4

Introduction to course, each other, and approaches to Holocaust film and testimony.

For Wed., read introductory materials in coursepack, including booklet on 1936 Berlin Olympics and on “Deadly Medicine” and “Historian Counters Holocaust Myths,”

Read USHMM Definition of Holocaust:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007043>

For film showing, read: “Film as Signifying Practice”

Tues., Jan. 5: 6:30PM: film showing, Video Theater, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor library: “Judgment at Nuremberg”

Wed., Jan. 6

Discuss how this film represents the Holocaust, Nazi ideology, its perpetrators, and victims.

Fri., Jan 8: Finish discussing film.

Assign: in coursepack for Monday: Gilman: "The Jewish Nose" and "Before the Holocaust.

Choose a cartoon or image in Gilman to identify its antisemitic elements.

Mon., Jan. 11

Discuss Gilman, race theory, and Nazi sexism.

For film showing on Tues.: Read Bergen, Ch. 1-3 and Primo Levi, "Preface" and "The Memory of the Offense."

Choose 1 point in readings to connect to analysis of one scene in the film.

Tues., Jan. 12: Film: 6:30, Video Theatre, library second floor: “Memory of the Camps.”

Wed., Jan. 13

Discuss “Memory of the Camps” and your reaction as informed by one point in readings.

Read for Fri.: Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, "Old Words," Elie Wiesel. "A Plea for the Dead"

Write a 1 page reflection on how you think they want us to respond to the Holocaust.

Fri., Jan. 15: Discuss Films, Nomberg-Przytyk and Wiesel.

Assign for next Wed.: Introduction to Charlotte Delbo and pp.3-40, 53, 58-59, 68-69, 85-86, 89, 95-96, 102-05, 109-114.

Divide reading among pairs of students. For Friday, Meet with partner to prepare a 5 minute presentation on one theme you discover in your reading.

Mon., Jan. 18: NO CLASS – MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Wed., Jan. 20: Model reading of Charlotte Delbo

Friday, Jan. 22: Charlotte Delbo: Present: pp.3-40, 53, 58-59, 68-69, 85-86, 89, 95-96, 102-05, 109-114.

Mon., Jan 25: Present Delbo, pp. 134-135, 139-141, 172-180, 224-231, 240-41, 254-270.

Assign for Wed.: Nelly Sachs, "What Secret Cravings ..." and "You Onlookers," Dan Pagis, "Written in Pencil," "The Roll Call," and "Testimony." Bergen, ch.5-6.  
Choose an image to discuss in one poem by Sachs and one by Pagis in a two page reflection.

Wed., Jan.27

Discuss Nelly Sachs's and Dan Pagis's poems.

Friday, Jan. 29

Finish discussion of poems and Bergen.

Assign: Borowski, "This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen" and Levi, "The Grey Zone" and one page response connecting one point in Levi to one image or quote from Borowski.

Mon., Feb. 1

Discuss Levi and Borowski

Assign for film showing: read Bergen, ch.7, pp.161-182.

Tues., Feb. 2: Film showing: "The Counterfeiters." Prepare notes to discuss film's representation of moral dilemmas in the camps.

Wed., Feb. 3: Discuss film and readings

Assign: for Fri.: Steinfels on Vatican document, Bergen, ch. 7, pp.183- 203, and Isaiah Spiegel, "Bread." Bring in discussion question and reflection, applying one point in Bergen to "Bread."

Fri., Feb. 5: Discuss "Bread" and related readings

Assign: Midterm questions developed in pairs

Mon., Feb.8: Collect Midterm group questions and conduct review

Read: Primo Levi, "Stereotypes," "Letters from Germans, "Polish Town ...," and Bergen, ch. 8  
For film style, read "German expressionism" in coursepack

Tues., Feb. 9: Film showing: THE NASTY GIRL

Read "Nazi legacy: The troubled descendants" by Frances Cronin BBC News 22 May 2012

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-18120890>

Wed., Feb. 11: Distribute Midterm exam. Essays will be collected next Fri., Feb.20.

Discuss THE NASTY GIRL and related readings

Fri., Feb. 12: Discuss "The Nasty Girl."

Assign: "Lessons Learned, Women's Narratives," "Women of Valor," and Sara N-Przytyk, "The Verdict." One page reflection on moral dilemma of "The Verdict" recalling Levi's "The Grey Zone.

Monday, Feb. 15: Discuss readings

Assign: Ida Fink, "The Key Game," Anna Heilman and Rose Meth, USHMM on Resistance

While they don't erase the horrific facts of the Holocaust, these images show the ongoing resistance and heroism of targeted victims to Hitler's dehumanization.

<http://popchassid.com/photos-holocaust-narrative/>

Wed., Feb.17: Discuss assigned readings

Fri., Feb. 19: Collect midterm essays and discuss challenges of course

Discuss Guidelines for final paper project *and* final paper topic statements due: Mon., Feb.22; annotated bibliographies due Mon., Feb. 29, Papers due, Mon., March 7.

Assign: Bergen, Conclusion and "Toyland."

Start reading Spiegelman, *MAUS*.

Mon., Feb. 22

Collect final paper statements and Discuss *Toyland*.

Assign for Wed.: Spiegelman, MAUS I and 1 page reflection on how either Vladek or Art is portrayed, choosing frames or a page for a close reading.

Wed., Feb. 24

Discuss MAUS I and for Friday, choose an issue raised by MAUS you would like to discuss.

Fri., Feb. 26: Discuss MAUS I

Assign: Read MAUS II, and close reading of one page in MAUS I.

Mon., Feb. 29: Finish discussion of MAUS I

Wed., March 2: Discuss MAUS I and II

View the following:

[http://boingboing.net/2011/11/10/art-spiegelman-lecture-on.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+boingboing%2FBoing+Boing%29](http://boingboing.net/2011/11/10/art-spiegelman-lecture-on.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+boingboing%2FBoing+Boing%29)

Fri., March 4

Finish discussion of MAUS I and II. How does Spiegelman educate us about the Holocaust?

Mon., March 7: Collect and Discuss issues related to final papers.

Monday's class discussion will focus on a paragraph responding to the question of what you learned that challenged and impressed you most about analyzing and writing about your film and text and how this summed up what you learned in the course.

If you would like comments on your papers and have them returned to you, please deliver it with a stamped, self-addressed manila envelope. It's perfectly fine if you do not wish your paper returned.

Please let me know if you would like and guidance and feedback as you revise your papers.

## COURSEPACK TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Maps of the Holocaust
2. USHMM booklets on 1936 Berlin Olympics and “Deadly Medicine”
3. Prof. Peter Hayes. “Historian Counters Holocaust Myths”
4. “Film as Signifying Practice”
5. Sander Gilman, "The Jewish Nose: Are Jews White?" and “Anti-Jewish Rhetoric”
6. “Anti-Jewish Rhetoric”
7. "Before the Holocaust: The Popes Against the Jews," Beliefs: Vatican Document
8. Elie Wiesel, "A Plea For the Dead."
9. Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, "Old Words"
10. Nelly Sachs, "What Secret Cravings of the Blood," “You Onlookers”
11. Dan Pagis, “Autobiography,” “Europe, Late,” "Written in Pencil ...," "The Roll Call"
12. Tadeusz Borowski, "This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen . . ."
13. “Polish Town Still Tries to Forget its Dark Past”
14. Isaiah Spiegel. "Bread."
15. U.S. Holocaust Museum booklet on Resistance
16. “They Saved the Jews, but Few Were Heroes.”
17. Ida Fink, "The Key Game."
18. “Lessons Learned from Gentle Heroism: Women’s Narratives.”
19. "Women of Valor"
20. Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, "The Verdict."
21. Anna Heilman and Rose Meth, "Resistance."
22. *New York Times* Review of “The Counterfeiters.”
23. Final Paper Assignment, Guidelines, and suggestions for topics

## JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG

How World War II and the Holocaust are remembered:

German memory and audience's –

### Question of rule of law and ethics

Is law that opposes international criteria to be followed?

What is the meaning of law?

In the Third Reich law became a legal weapon – to pronounce guilt without assuming innocence

### Question of individual and collective responsibility

Patriotism vs. Social relations and mutual consideration

What is the nature of responsibility for representing the law of the state?

What happens when ideology overrules humanity?

'raging roaring disease – a passing phase becomes a way of life'

Complicity of the free world

Crimes against humanity

'Conscious participation in violation of civilization – the enactment of laws whose purpose was extermination'

### What truth did the trials achieve?

Denial vs. awareness

Trial is about responsibility of judges to implement justice.

What is the nature of the justice at the end?

Moral Significance – 'ordinary men deluded themselves into legalization of crimes'

Justice Hayward addresses court and audience at end: "The value of a single human being."

### Cinematic features

Black and white photography

Role of ruins

Stadium – Judge Hayward imagines sounds of Nazi rally

Restaurant where songs reminiscent of Nazi era sang with gusto

Historical context:

Film made during the Cold War about 1948, the moment it begins with the Berlin blockade and airlift

What is at stake when Germany is needed as bulwark against the Soviet Union

‘What was war all about?

‘Echoes of atrocities cannot be stilled – they remain a dilemma of our time.

TEXT:

A 2011 legal precedent makes it easier to charge Nazi war criminals.  
Diane Cole  
for National Geographic News  
Published May 8, 2013

You can't hide from justice forever—not even for war crimes committed decades in the past, and not even when you're 93.

That message resounded loudly this week as Germany announced the arrest of Hans Lipschis, age 93, for complicity in mass murders that took place at the notorious Nazi death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he served as a guard in 1941-1945. Lipschis—who says he worked as a cook at Auschwitz—is the first to be charged from among a list of 50 former Auschwitz guards that the country's Central Office of the Judicial Authorities for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes plans to probe.

The Demjanjuk Precedent

Why go after them now, 68 years after the end of World War II? Because it was not always possible to do so in the past. In 2011, the conviction in Germany of Ukrainian-born John Demjanjuk, who had served as a guard at the Sobibor death camp in Poland, set a legal precedent for interpreting evidence more broadly than before. Until then, German prosecutors essentially had to prove that a suspect had committed specific crimes against specific victims at a particular time and date, and such direct evidence against camp guards was difficult to produce.

Demjanjuk's conviction—in which his SS identity card from Sobibor played a major role—"was a game-changer because it allows for the prosecution of people who would otherwise not have been prosecuted," said Efraim Zuroff, the Chief Nazi Hunter for the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a global Jewish human rights organization whose mission includes confronting anti-Semitism and promoting tolerance.

As a result of the Demjanjuk precedent, guards who worked at death camps could be charged with abetting, contributing to, or being complicit in the killings that took place there.

Lipschis is an example. "We don't know if Lipschis personally murdered anyone, but he served at Auschwitz for almost the entire time that the camp was in existence," Zuroff said. Lipschis had lived in Chicago since the 1950s, but was deported from the United States in 1983 for falsifying his past as a Nazi. Of the 50 former guards being sought for investigation in Germany, Lipschis was the only one to also appear on the SWC's 2013 Most Wanted Nazi War Criminals list.

Number One on the List

The highly dubious "honor" of being number one on the SWC list goes to Laszlo Csatary, now 98. While serving as a senior police officer in Hungarian-occupied Slovakia in 1944, he organized the deportation of approximately 15,700 Jews to the Auschwitz death camp. In 1948, a Czechoslovak court convicted and sentenced him to death in absentia.

Csatary eluded authorities, fleeing Europe for Canada. He worked there as an art dealer until 1997, when Canadian authorities found out he had lied

on his passport application and revoked his citizenship. He did not surface again until 2011, when he was spotted in Budapest, Hungary, as the result of a tip received by Operation Last Chance, a joint project of the SWC and the Tagum Shlishi Foundation of Miami. He awaits possible prosecution in Hungary, where he is currently under house arrest, or—if he is extradited—in Slovakia. "Until we exposed him, he was driving his own car," said Zuroff.

Second on the SWC list is Gerhard Sommer, a former SS-Untersturmfuehrer in the 16th Panzergrenadier Division Reichsfuehrer-SS, who was convicted in absentia in 2005 by a military court in La Spezia, Italy, for participating in the 1944 massacre of 560 civilians in Sant'Anna di Stazzema. No criminal charges have as yet been brought in Germany, where Sommer now lives in a nursing home. "We're not that optimistic" about his being brought to justice, said Zuroff, "because he has been under investigation for several years, but so far there has been no progress in prosecuting him."

Vladimir Katriuk is third on the SWC list, which describes him as having served as a platoon commander of a Ukrainian battalion that "carried out the murder of Jews and innocent civilians in various places in Belarus."

Like Csatary, Katriuk managed to emigrate to Canada after the war. He gained citizenship and was reported to have been a beekeeper and a prominent member of his local Orthodox Church. Although his citizenship was revoked in 1999 after his Nazi collaboration became known, the decision was overturned in 2007. Since then, however, new evidence has come to light about Katriuk's role in the mass murder of the residents of Khatyn, Belarus.

#### Why Age Is Not a Factor

Even though most of those on both lists are now in their late 80s or 90s, their age is no reason to stop seeking justice, said Zuroff, who is the author of Operation Last Chance: One Man's Quest to Bring Nazi Criminals to Justice. "Don't look at these people and say they look frail and weak. Think of someone who at the height of his powers devoted his energies to murdering men, women, and children."

He added: "The passage of time in no way diminishes the guilt of the killers. Old age should not provide protection. The fact that they have reached an elderly age does not turn them into righteous gentiles."

Holocaust historian and Emory University professor Deborah Lipstadt agrees that there is no time limit. "Just because they did this a long time ago doesn't mean they should be exonerated," said Lipstadt, author of such books as Denying the Holocaust and The Eichmann Trial. "If someone raped children decades ago and we found that person now in his 80s or 90s, you would still say they should be tried. The victims deserve to have the perpetrators brought to justice. And society needs to know that you don't get a free pass."

## REPRESENTING THE HOLOCAUST MIDTERM EXAM

The purpose of this exam is to reflect on how our texts, films, and discussions cohere in your learning experience. While it's obvious that answers will draw on class discussion, your interpretations should not repeat, but allow your individual responses to emerge and develop.

Use Bergen, Levi, Wiesel, Gilman, Nomberg-Przytyk, and other articles and maps for historical and philosophical contexts to guide, to add substance or support, and to raise questions for your answers, but NOT as primary texts. Primary texts are: documentary or feature films, poetry, personal testimony, autobiographical and imaginary fiction.

Discuss or refer to at least one poem and one film in your exam.

Choose 2 of the following 4 questions on which to write two 2 ½ page essays

1. One of the most vexing issues in Holocaust study is who bears responsibility for it? Discussing 1-2 readings or a reading and a film, consider whether or how the categories perpetrator, bystander, and in Bergen's term, "beneficiary" are distinct or overlap and what they teach us about the meaning of responsibility in their individual and collective or community contexts.
2. As we have discussed, there is a tension between Holocaust writers' need to understand and testify to the atrocities of the Final Solution and the challenges of constructing a coherent narrative and finding precise language and effective form. Choose two readings or one reading and a film to discuss how they represent this tension differently.
3. Meanings of terms we take for granted, such as innocence, changed radically in the brutal circumstances of the Holocaust. Choosing 1-2 readings or a reading and film, discuss how prisoners' responses defied, challenged, or complicated the Nazis' attempts to strip their victims of innocence and how those responses change the meaning of innocence.
4. Given the brutal treatment and extermination to which Nazism's targeted victims were subjected, living just another day often involved behavior that in pre- and postwar settings would be considered immoral. Contrast 1-2 readings or one reading and one film to analyze how they represent the radically changed meanings of morality and what this teaches about the Holocaust.

Remember that quotes, images, metaphors, and incidents are not self-explanatory; they require introductions to explain their function as subject or support in your interpretation.

In response to the struggle to find language to express Holocaust experiences, you should use precise, accurate, clear, and concrete language. NO GENERALITIES ALLOWED!!

Be sure to proofread your essays carefully for surface but reader unfriendly errors and check all names and places for historical accuracy and spelling.

## Guidelines for Writing the Final Paper

Because this is a course about Holocaust Representation, your papers should be concerned with HOW your primary texts depict their subjects and issues. Because we already know that the Holocaust produced unbearable suffering and unprecedented brutality, you need not focus on this basic subject.

Read and view your primary texts closely to see what issues they dramatize and HOW. Focus on the techniques your texts use to represent the characters' and authors' responses to suffering, to their individual and collective moral dilemmas and to their relationships with others. This will lead you to reflect on how different techniques shape the texts' messages and the questions and problems they raise.

Example: The first person narration and present tense of "This Way for the Gas . . ." confront us with the immediate and ongoing rage of the Sonderkommando. Through his dialogue with Henri, we learn that the narrator expresses hatred of the victims because he has no outlet through which to express rage against the Nazis who hold them captive. A problem for readers is whether to consider the Sonderkommando victims or bystanders.

Consider 1-2 issues that have shaped our course:

Consider whether or not a text can be considered Holocaust testimony. Does it represent any kind of Holocaust insight or truth which furthers our learning?

What difference does genre make?: Poetic prose and prose poems, poetry, documentary or feature film, memoirs, philosophical reflection?

The moral gray zone and choiceless choices of characters.

The moral responsibility of bystanders and onlookers.

The nature and limits of memory. See Delbo and Levi.

The nature and limits of language to express suffering. See Nomberg-Prtzyk and Delbo.

The use of symbols, images, metaphors.

The use of first or third person narrators and what they can and can't observe and reveal.

The use of present and past tense and narrative movements between past and present.

The use of visual and audio images, including how a written text is organized/structured, camera work, film color and set design, music.

Use your Midterm essays and comments on guides to strong writing and how to use quotes, close readings, historical context, and how to avoid Generalizations and universal statements.

Use quotes judiciously and never in bits and pieces or out of context.

From primary sources: ALWAYS interpret and introduce purpose of using quotes.

From secondary sources: For purposes of learning a concept that enriches your analysis, as a foil with which to argue, as support for your argument. Paraphrase more than quote.

DON'T hunt for supporting quotes. Summarize a supportive position.

Use MLA format for parenthetical citations and bibliographies. NO foot or endnotes.

<http://www.pbs.org/auschwitz/dachau/#>