

## GENDER, RACE, AND THE HOLOCAUST

Gender Studies 382

Jewish Studies 350

MWF 10-12, occasional film showings Tuesdays at 6:30

Professor Phyllis Lassner

Phone: 847 733 7712 (Between 8AM-8PM)

[phyllisl@northwestern.edu](mailto:phyllisl@northwestern.edu)

This course will introduce writing and film that represent responses to the experiences of men and women who were victims, survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders of the Holocaust.

Readings, films, discussion, and written responses will be historically contextualized to chart the Holocaust as it originated in racial and gender theories that underwrote the mythic construction of a "master race." Based on this myth, Nazi ideology prescribed and legislated ideals of womanhood and manhood, and the destruction of those deemed subhuman.

Discussion and written responses will explore the complications of Nazi scientific racism, its cult and crisis of masculinity, and paradoxical idealization of women and misogyny. We will also write about how literature and films depict these complications in the policies and practices of Nazi Germany's Third Reich and in the suffering and mass murder of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and others. Finally, we will discuss and write about the policies and practices of Nazism as challenges to all other categories and theories of race and gender even today.

Course requirements include short reflective papers, a take-home midterm essay exam, and a 7-8 page final paper project with *contextual* research.

### **Readings:**

Phyllis Bottome. *The Mortal Storm*

Liana Milu. *Smoke Over Birkenau*

Bernice Eisenstein. *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*

Course pack available at Quartet Copies

### **Films:**

Europa Europa (115 min.)

The Gray Zone (108 min.)

Bent (104 min.)

Important Websites to consult:

links to book reviews, biographies, and other sources.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/genocide/launch\\_ani\\_auschwitz\\_map.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/genocide/launch_ani_auschwitz_map.shtml)

<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/collections/genderstudies/index.html>

[http://en.auschwitz.org.pl/z/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=6&Itemid=8](http://en.auschwitz.org.pl/z/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6&Itemid=8)

[http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/album\\_auschwitz/multimedia/index.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/multimedia/index.html)

<http://www.library.yale.edu/testimonies/education/singlewitness.html>

Roma and Sinti: <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/26716>

## Gender, Race, and the Holocaust: Calendar of Activities

Mon., Sept. 21

Introduce course

Assign: Read in coursepack, History, Terms, and Timeline of the Holocaust,

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

Otto Weininger: "Sex and Character," and "Mosaic of Victims."

Bring in discussion question for Weininger and for "Mosaic"

NO CLASS WED.

Fri., Sept. 25

Discuss Weininger as basis for Nazi race and gender theories

Assign for Mon.: Gilman, "The Jew's Nose." Choose one of the antisemitic cartoons in Gilman to demonstrate one of Weininger's claims.

Mon., Sept. 28

Discuss Gilman and Weininger. Read "Working Definitions of Antisemitism" in coursepack

Read:

<http://www.npr.org/2011/05/09/135922322/william-dodd-the-u-s-ambassador-in-hitlers-berlin>

Wed., Sept. 30

Discuss Gilman, Weininger, and antisemitism as a category of racism:

We will address these questions:

How is gender racialized? How is race gendered?

How is antisemitism a category of racism?

AND: what difference do these questions make to our understanding of "Gender, Race, and the Holocaust?"

Assign for Fri.: Gisela Perl. *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz* in coursepack and bring in 1 pg. reflection connecting a point from Gilman or Weininger to Perl's drama of women's bodies

Also read in coursepack: "Sex, Rape, and Survival: Jewish Women and the Holocaust"

Suggested reading: essays on this link:

<http://www.theverylongview.com/WATH/essays/cohesion.htm>

Friedman, Jonathan. "Togetherness and Isolation: Holocaust Survivor Memories of Intimacy and Sexuality in the Ghettos." *The Oral History Review* 28.1 (2001): 1.

<http://find.galegroup.com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/gtx/>

Fri., Oct. 2

Discuss: Gisela Perl, Weininger, and Gilman.

Assign: *The Mortal Storm*, chapters 1-10 & Foreword. Read essay on link, and write 1 page reflection on 1 image of women in the novel.

<http://www.theverylongview.com/WATH/essays/motherhood.htm>

Begin reading sections from Klaus Theweleit: "Male Fantasies"

Mon., Oct. 5

Discuss *The Mortal Storm*

For Wed.: Read chs.11-20 in *The Mortal Storm*, and read Gisela Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany" and continue reading Theweleit. Bring in a question and 2-page reflection on novel's treatment of Nazi gender theory informed by one point in Bock or Theweleit.

Wed., Oct.7

Discuss *The Mortal Storm*, Theweleit, and Gisela Bock and treatment of Nazi gender theory.

Assign: read ch. 21-30 and Choose 1 of these questions on which to write a 2 page reflection:

1. How does Gisela Bock's analysis of Nazi policies for women help us understand a male or female character's role in *The Mortal Storm*?
  2. How does Theweleit's analysis of fascist male militarism help us understand the male characters in *The Mortal Storm*?
  3. choose one point Weininger makes about men and one about Jews to discuss how Bottome shows that this is a lie.
- This should round out our work so far, building a foundation on which to move on.

Fri., Oct.19

Discuss *The Mortal Storm* in relation to gender ideologies and roles.

Assign: Finish novel and bring in 3 page paper on any issue that interests you. Be sure to articulate a focused thesis and develop it through detailed examples, and quotes, all of which need YOUR interpretation. Use Times New Roman 12 pt. font, double space, and include an eye catching title.

Mon., Oct. 12

Discuss papers and share insights.

Assign: Charlotte Delbo and Livia E.B. Jackson in coursepack.

Choose a selection to discuss gendered victimization in a 1-2 page reflection.

Wed., Oct.14

Discuss Delbo and Jackson.

Assign: Foreword by Primo Levi, "Lili Marlene," "Under Cover of Darkness," and "High Tension in *Smoke Over Birkenau* by Liana Milu.

Fri., Oct. 16

Discuss stories

Assign: Read 'The Five-Ruble Bill,' "Scheiss Egal," and "Hard Labor"

Mon., Oct. 19

Discuss stories

Assign: Meet with a partner to create a midterm exam discussion question. Email me the question by Tues., 8PM

Read for Wed.: Claudia Koonz and Alison Owings. Work with your exam partner to construct a brief discussion of a selection from Owings on moral and political responsibility and women's agency. How does Holocaust history affect your assessment?

Wed., Oct. 21

Presentations on Koonz and Owings. Distribute Midterm Exams – due Wed., Oct. 28 with one page anonymous midterm course assessment

Fri., Oct. 23

Complete presentations on Koonz and Owings

Mon., Oct. 26

Midterm Review. For film showing tomorrow, finish reading Theweleit and review Gisella Bock

Tues., Oct 27. Film showing: *Europa Europa* (115 min.)

Wed., Oct. 28

Discuss intersections of race and gender in film

Collect midterms and discuss

Assign for Fri.: One page reflection on an issue of race and/or gender arising from film

Discuss final paper projects: 1 page Project statements due Mon., Nov.2; proposals with annotated bibliographies due Fri., Nov. 13, Final paper due: Wed., Dec. 2

MLA Citation Guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Fri., Oct. 30

Discuss *Europa Europa*.

Mon., Nov. 2

Collect Project Statements and discuss approaches to research and how to write annotated bibliographies. Bring in 2 articles and summaries related to your topic on Wed.

Assign for Friday: "The Holocaust Odyssey of Daniel Bannahmias, Sonderkommando and Primo Levi, "The Gray Zone" in coursepack.

Wed., Nov. 4

Discuss research articles and questions about final paper project

Fri., Nov. 6:

Discuss Daniel Bannahmias and Primo Levi's "The Gray Zone"

Mon., Nov.9

How does Levi affect our earlier readings?

Tues., Nov. 10: film showing: "The Gray Zone (1hr.48 min.)

Wed., Nov. 11

Discuss Levi and film

Assign: Read: Giles, "Why Bother About Homosexuals?" and Paragraph 175, Nazi Persecution of homosexuals, and [http://www.essex.ac.uk/history/journal\\_thhm/vol\\_4.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/history/journal_thhm/vol_4.aspx)

Fri., Nov.13

Discuss homosociality in “The Gray Zone” and its implications for Holocaust education  
Collect annotated bibliographies and discuss research

Mon., Nov. 16: NO CLASS

Tues., Nov. 17, 6:30: film showing: "Bent"

Wed., Nov. 18

Discuss "Bent" and Nazi construction of homosexuality and issues about Other victims, including Roma and Sinti, handicapped  
How does “Bent” defy Weininger’s essentialist theory of homosexuality

Fri. Nov. 20

Discuss film and final papers: oral presentations

Mon., Nov. 23

Discuss final papers: Oral presentations

Wed., Nov. 25

Oral presentations

Mon., Nov. 30: Conclude course ----

Wed., Mon., Dec. 2: Collect papers at my house

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## GENDER, RACE, AND THE HOLOCAUST MIDTERM EXAM

The purpose of this exam is to give you an opportunity to reflect on how our texts 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 the coursepack materials for historical accuracy and to supply context. Be sure to always identify the specific time and places you are discussing.

Each essay should use one scholar – Gilman, Theweleit, Bock, Goldenberg, Koonz, or Owings to inform or support your insights or for your insights to question or challenge.

Use different texts for each essay, choosing from poems, novel, stories, interviews, and memoirs.

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

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1. Compare the representation of women in 2 autobiographical texts to discuss how women's concentration camp experiences interact with or against Nazi gender ideology. You might apply Theweleit's analysis of militarist masculinity and how it is threatened by the power of female sexuality.

2. How does Gisella Perl's depiction of motherhood and childbirth in Auschwitz change the meanings of familial, marital, and/or friendly companionship and inform our reading and understanding of Liana Millu's *Smoke Over Birkenau*?

3. Nazis designed and constructed Auschwitz in part to torture, humiliate, and dehumanize the people they had theorized and legalized subhuman. Comparing 2 texts, one poem and one prose selection, discuss how Nazi race and gender ideologies reflected in the structure of the camp. How did prisoners assert their humanity in the face of Nazi efforts?

4. Comparing 2 memoirs, one by a survivor and one by a perpetrator or bystander to examine how the narrator's subjective point of view conveys the emotional and physical toll of an event or time period? How does the narrator's bias influence the impact of a memoir?

Remember that quotes are not self-explanatory, but need introductions to explain their functions in your discussion and then immediate interpretation of their language and meaning. Use a variety of textual support, including concrete images and incidents, as well as contextual, historical and theoretical support. Cite page numbers of primary texts and contextual readings parenthetically (ex.: Gilman 99).

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 spelling.

Number your pages and create an engaging title.

As always, use Times New Roman 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins and double space.

## Suggestions for Writing the Final Paper: Not a Prescription

### Introduction

This should only be provisional as the final version will reflect what you discover as you work.

1. A short paragraph stating very directly what your paper will be about – what texts, complete with title and author or film director, setting in time and place, very brief plot summary, and what issues you wish to deal with.

Example: The forms of persecution and suffering differed during the Holocaust in different settings and between men and women. In her 1948 memoir, *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*, Gisella Perl, a Hungarian Jewish women gynecologist, recounts her excruciating choiceless choices as she tried to use her expertise to help pregnant women threatened with death. In the 2008 film, *The Counterfeiters*, directed by Stefan Ruzowiczky, set in Sachsenhausen, Solly Sorowitsch, a Norwegian Jewish counterfeiter, faces different choiceless choices as he tries to use his expertise to save the men on his team while complying with the demands of the Nazis. Comparing these accounts will reveal how men and women in the Holocaust suffered different horrors in the same hell.

### Body of the Paper

- A. First paragraph: Discusses/analyzes/interprets the suffering depicted in the two texts. Analyzes one scene from each text in terms of HOW the suffering is gendered and/or racialized and represented in the text's narrative style. Stylistic features could include: realistic or non-realistic, the dialogue, images used by the narrator or characters, the narrator's voice and tone, the action, movement in time and space, descriptions and behavior of the characters.
- B. Second paragraph: Focuses on Perl's and Sorowitsch's moral crises and coping strategies in the camps and how they are gendered and racialized. Choose one incident in each text to interpret.
- C. Third paragraph: Focuses on how close relationships during the war and afterwards are gendered and work and don't work and why you think so. Choose one aspect of one relationship in each text to interpret according to dialogue, how author/director presents them, in their own voices or through the narrator or camera.
- D. Fourth paragraph: Focuses on whether and how the characters' gendered and racialized suffering is resolved. Choose one instance of suffering and examine how representative it is of the whole.
- E. Conclusion: Addresses question: What does this focus on the gendered and racialized suffering and adaptation or lack of it reveal about what you have learned from your study? Use examples from the paper's texts and refer to others we've studied in this course.

