

JS 437 (#13449)/ Engl 533 (#12798)/ CWL 437 (#12301)  
HOLOCAUST & LITERATURE  
LEC T/TH 4:10-5:25pm; HUM 113

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**You should also remember that Jewish Studies observes all major Jewish holidays; therefore, if my classes and office hours coincide with the Jewish calendar, I will cancel class. I will not answer emails during this time.**

In Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, a defining text for the western appreciation of art, Kant presents aesthetic judgment as a process as in which art objects enable us to stretch our imaginations beyond their cognitive borders--their limits--so that we feel "liberated" from our own understanding and even from our own realities. In solitude, we experience a profound liberation that ends with our feeling a subjective link towards others who are "just like us" because they would arrive at the same judgments about the art object "if they were to experience the art object in the same way, i.e. if they were to stand in our shoes." Under these circumstances, literature's liberation of the imagination validates our judgments not only about art, but also about others who share our judgments. For the West, the stress in aesthetic experience has always been on a subjective liberation underwritten by identification: our judgments about art and literature affirm within us our identification with an imagined community of likeminded individuals. However, the Holocaust, or the Shoah, has laid an enormous burden on this idea of literature because it has required literature to bear witness to a previously unimaginable experience—an experience that has been neither liberatory nor beautiful for the imagination: the imagination now has to reflect on the exhibition of the memory under torture rather than the solitude of the imagination's liberation. According to Elie Wiesel, the upshot of this burden has been the creation of a genre particularly associated with the testimonial impulse of the twentieth-century.

In fact, many of the texts understood as Holocaust literatures suggest this testimonial impulse by reflecting an extreme conflict: the suturing together of an object meant to uplift the human subject, literature, to the destruction of the Jews. Without trying to elicit our identification, this course's assigned authors force readers to discover other means of connection between readers, witnesses, and victims. Therefore, the writer's use of literature isn't a mistake, a failed strategy, but rather a necessary process in the transmission of Holocaust testimony.

The course focuses on how different writers attempt to use literature to transmit the

experiences of the Holocaust. In addition to memoirs and *yizkor* (memory books), students will analyze novels, short stories, and poems as literary forms that have been uniquely shaped because of the writer's experience of the Holocaust. Since class discussions might cause us to modify the pace of the course, we might be a lecture behind or ahead of the syllabus. Students should check the online syllabus weekly.

In addition to the assigned texts below, this course also has several readings online and available through the Library's eres site, under JS 437 and JS 699. While you do not need to be a registered student to access the eres archives, you will need to write down the passwords for the sites when I give them in class. Due to the nature of the assigned texts, I will present two forms of assessment (exams and papers) so that you can choose the method of scholarly assessment that best fits your learning abilities. Since the course is part of Segment III, you will have at least 10 pages of writing, usually covered as part of your take-home exam and the writing responses due weekly.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Delbo, Charlotte. *Auschwitz & After*  
 Levi, Primo. *Survival In Auschwitz*  
 Améry, Jean. *At The Mind's Limits*  
 Klüger, Ruth. *Still Alive : A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered.*

### OPTIONAL TEXTS

Celan, Paul. *Poems Of Paul Celan*

The following **required readings** are available through ERES (<http://eres.sfsu.edu>); password given in class.

Kertesz, Imre. "Who owns Auschwitz?"  
 Améry, Jean. "At the Mind's Limits."  
 Celan, Paul. *Selections.*

| <b>Assignments:</b>  | <b>Percentage of Grade:</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Writing Responses (although ungraded, I will "mark" one before midterm so that you are aware of SEG III criteria.) | 25%                         |
| Midterm  | 30%                         |
| Final Paper (7-10 pgs) or Last Exam  | 30%                         |
| Class Participation and in-class assignments (includes attendance)   | 15%                         |

Last Words about Grading:

I have set up the course so that students who want to concentrate on the texts' ideas can explore this option through writing essays; students who feel more comfortable with the facts of the texts can opt to take a last exam in lieu of the written paper. The writing responses are an ungraded category: if you do at least 7/8 of them, you will receive full credit for the category (25%). Unless the syllabus states that the writing response is in-class, I will post target questions online prior to the writing response's due date. The due date is the date under which the response appears on the syllabus. For example, the first written response is due 9/10. On the rare occasion when the target is not online, it will be distributed in class. You will then write a one page response to the question and hand it in, typed, and according to MLA standards. You should note though that if the writing response is 1 page, I expect one page. If you do not produce, then, one page, you won't receive credit. In-class writing will be noted on the syllabus. To gain full credit for an in-class response, you will need to demonstrate in your answer a real approach to the prompt. For in-class writing responses, I will either let you come up with your own topic or I will assign a target question for discussion. You'll be given about 15-20 minutes to complete the in-class assignment.

As a rule, I will not accept late papers or give make-up quizzes and exams. If you miss a quiz or writing response, you'll take it as a loss. I won't reconsider this policy except for extreme circumstances. I expect you to participate actively in this course, but I understand that these texts are difficult and that they will effect students differently. Assignments can be turned in any time during the day on which the syllabus states they are due; moreover, they can come as email attachments or hard copies. However, if you do email a writing response, I will not be able to comment on it. If you're having difficulties with any of the assignments, come to see me asap. Don't debate about it; come to my office hours.

**I take attendance, furthermore, quite seriously.** In a course that meets only twice a week, failure to attend one meeting translates 1.5 absences. While some absences can't be helped, if you are routinely absent, routinely leave early or arrive late, you must know that missing more than one week's worth of class time seriously compromises your ability to pass the course.

I wish to make this course as accessible as possible to students with disabilities or medical conditions that may affect any aspect of participation in the course. You are invited to communicate with me at the beginning of the course or at your discretion about any accommodations that will improve your experience of or access to the course. If you identify as differently-abled, you can and should contact the Disability Resource Center at 338-2472 (Voice/TDD); the DPRC will provide you with the documentation necessary for me to accommodate your needs appropriately in the course. The University requires such documentation.

Note: This course is part of the General Education Segment III Cluster, entitled "Jewish Experience, Category A/Culture, Philosophy and Religion." To receive Segment III credit for this course, students must complete the cluster as described in the Class Schedule and Bulletin, including the requirement that they must have earned 60 units by the end of the

semester in which they take the course. Segment III courses are required to include a minimum of 10 pages of writing that will be submitted to and corrected by the professor.

Helpful Resources for the course:

[U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)

[Voices from Ravensbruck](#). An interactive art site.

[Yad Vashem \(http://www.yad-vashem.org\)](http://www.yad-vashem.org).

[Bibliography of Holocaust Testimony](#) (derives from Giles, UFL)

## Schedule

Changes in the schedule will occur periodically over the semester. Therefore, you should get into the habit of checking your registered iLearn email address weekly. I will use that address to communicate with you individually and as a class. Failure to check that address does not excuse you from being responsible for any and all assignments and/or their modifications that may come via iLearn.

| Date        | Lecture  | Homework   |
|-------------|--|--|
| 8/27        | Introduction. Model of <a href="#">yizkor</a> .  | Rdg: Kertesz, "Who Owns Auschwitz?" (available at ilearn).     |
| 8/29        | <b>Issues and methodologies.</b><br>Kertesz, "Who Owns Auschwitz?"                     |  |
| 9/03        | Kertesz finishes.  | Rdg: <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> , 9-37.                      |
| 9/05        | <b>Rosh ha-Shanah. Class cancelled.</b>  | Rdg: Levi, 38-130.   |
| 9/10        | <b>Experience in the Camps. In-class writing (WR1).</b> <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> . | Rdg: Levi, 131- end. <a href="#">Guide</a> to Editorial Marks. |
| 9/12        | <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> .   | <b><a href="#">WR2 due 9/17.</a></b>                           |
| <b>9/17</b> | <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> ends. <b><a href="#">WR2 due today.</a></b>               |  |
| 9/19        | <b>Sukkot</b>  | Rdg: <i>Auschwitz &amp; After</i> , 1-16.                      |
| <b>9/24</b> | <i>Auschwitz &amp; After / None of Us Will Return.</i>                                 |  |

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| 9/26         | <b>Shmini Atzeret.</b> Class cancelled.  | Rdg: <i>Auschwitz &amp; After</i> , 17-41.   |
| <b>10/01</b> | <i>Auschwitz &amp; After / None of Us Will Return.</i>                                 |  |
| 10/03        | Class cancelled. Professor out of town.  | Rdg: <i>Auschwitz &amp; After</i> , 42- 87   |
| 10/08        | <i>Auschwitz &amp; After / None of Us Will Return.</i>                                 | Rdg: <i>Auschwitz &amp; After</i> , 87-114.  |
| 10/10        | <i>Auschwitz &amp; After / None of Us Will Return.</i> Finishing Delbo.                | Rdg: "At the Mind's Limits."<br><a href="#">WR3 (Améry)</a>                          |
| 10/15        | Beginning Améry. Significance of Mind and Memory. Améry discussion.                    | Rdg: Second half of "At the Mind's Limits"   |
| 10/17        | Améry continues.   | Rdg: "How Much Home"   |
| 10/22        | Améry continues.   | Rdg: "Resentments"   |
| 10/24        | <a href="#">WR3 (Améry) due.</a> Améry finishes.                                       | Rdg: <i>Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered</i> . Part 1, Vienna, pp. 13-60 |
| 10/29        | <i>Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered</i> discussion                         | Rdg: The Camps, pp. 61-70. Klüger review lecture <a href="#">online</a>              |
| 10/31        | <i>Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered</i> discussion                         | Rdg: "The Camps," pp. 70-132   |
| 11/05        | <i>Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered</i>                                    | Rdg: "Germany," pp. 133-150  |
| 11/07        | <i>Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered</i>                                    | HW: <a href="#">WR4 (Klüger)</a>   |
| 11/12        | <i>Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered.</i> <a href="#">WR4 (Klüger)</a> due. |  |
| 11/14        | In-class Midterm. <a href="#">Take-home midterm prompts.</a>                           |  |
| 11/19        | <b>Problems of Literature.</b>   | Notify instructor of intention to write a paper in lieu of the exam by this date.    |
| 11/21        |  |  |
| 11/26        | <b>Thanksgiving Recess.</b>  | <a href="#">Study Guide for Final Exam</a>   |

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| 11/28         | <b>Thanksgiving Recess.</b>                          | <a href="#">Suggested Topics</a> for Papers.<br>Rdg: Celan poems at ilearn. |
| 12/03         | Celan's Poetic Project.                              | Rdg: To be determined   |
| 12/05         | In-Class Writing Response (5).<br>Secondary Sources. | Rdg: To be determined   |
| 12/10         | Review and More Secondary<br>Sources.                |   |
| 12/12         | <b>Final paper or Exam due.</b>                      |   |
| <b>Finals</b> | Finals Week.   |   |