

History 214-401  
Jewish Studies 214-401

Fall 2015  
Thursday 1:30-4:30

## **REREADING THE HOLOCAUST**

INSTRUCTOR: Beth S. Wenger  
OFFICE HOURS: Tues. 1:30-2:30  
and by appointment

OFFICE: 320 College Hall  
PHONE: 898-5702  
E-MAIL: bwenger@sas.upenn.edu

### 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.

\*This course fulfills the research requirement for the history major.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Participating in weekly online discussions: Each week, students should post responses to the readings on Canvas (on the discussion page). I have provided some questions and prompts each week as a way to spark your thinking. You need not respond to all of the issues and you are free to offer a wholly different response of your own. These should be brief, approximately 200-word responses, and you are encouraged to engage in dialogue with one another. This is simply the beginning of our discussion but does not substitute for it. Students are expected to prepare and participate actively in every class discussion. **POSTINGS MUST BE MADE NO LATER THAN 5:00 PM ON WEDNESDAY.**
- 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 16-22 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 22:** you should choose a topic and discuss it with me.

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

**On December 10:** 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

Art Spiegelman, Maus (Vols. I & II)

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

**\* All other required readings can be found on the Canvas site for History 214-401.**

## I. THE "HOLOCAUST" TAKES SHAPE

**August 27**                      **Introduction: Approaches to the Holocaust**

**September 3**                      **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.

Michael R. Marrus, ed., The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945-46, pp. 188-213.

Video excerpts: Nuremberg War Crimes Trial (screened in class)

**September 10**                      **Anne Frank Revisited**

Anne Frank, The Diary of A Young Girl

Cynthia Ozick, Quarrel & Quandary, pp. 74-102.

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.

**September 17**                      **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.

## **September 24                    Eichmann on Trial**

Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem (selected sections)

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 (screened in class)

**\*\* 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 or have the review you have chosen in front of you online in 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 1                            Holocaust Testimonies**

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

### **October 15                        Working with Holocaust Testimonies: Penn's Collection of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's Testimonies**

### **October 22                        Holocaust Monuments and Memorials in Europe**

James E. Young, The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning, pp. 1-208.

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

**October 29                      Holocaust Monuments and Memorials in Israel  
and the United States**

James E. Young, The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning, pp. 209-41, 263-349.

Saul Friedlander, "Memory of the Shoah in Israel," in James E. Young, ed. The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History, pp. 149-57.

Peter Novick, "Holocaust Memory in America," in Young, ed. The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History, pp. 159-65.

**November 5                      America's National Holocaust Museum**

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.

**November 12                      Class Presentations**

**November 19                      Class Presentations**

**November 24                      The Holocaust in New Genres**

Art Spiegelman Maus. (Vols. I & II)

**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.

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

**PAPERS DUE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 AT 12:00 PM!**