

Fall 2017

**The Limits of Representation:
The Holocaust in Literature and Film**

GET3930 and JST3930

Instructor: Eric Kligerman
Office: 206 Walker Hall
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Time: Tues, periods 8-9, Thurs, 9
TUR 2349
Office hrs: Tues period 5/Thurs, Period 6

This course is designed to give students an understanding of the historical, political and aesthetic import surrounding the attempted destruction of the European Jewish community by Nazi Germany. Through an analysis of Holocaust literature, film and visual media, we will investigate the connections between history, trauma, witnessing and representation. How do authors, filmmakers and artists depict events that shatter traditional forms of perception and comprehension? How do history, memory and imagination coalesce in their respective texts? The course will begin with a discussion of controversial issues of historiography of the Holocaust, including the uniqueness of the event, the nature of anti-Semitism, and the role of “ordinary Germans” in the Nazi genocide. 2) Afterwards, we will investigate various examples of Holocaust film and literature, moving from documentary to figurative forms of representation. Among the topics we will discuss are the aestheticization of trauma, the function of testimony, narrative and witnessing, and the transformation of the Holocaust into a metaphor for other types of suffering. How has the Holocaust been appropriated and reconfigured by artists, poets and filmmakers over the past seven decades? The course will constantly shift from how Germany itself remembers and constructs its representation of the Holocaust to how other European writers and artists represent the destruction of the European Jewish community.

Required course texts:

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale. My Father Bleeds History*

Please procure these books via Amazon.com or elsewhere ASAP.

In addition, you will find on our Sakai site PDFs with essays and excerpts from books that we will discuss in class.

Course assignments and grading criteria

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| 1. Class participation/Attendance | 20/5%=25% |
| 2. Midterm exam | 25% |
| 3. Final Exam | 25% |
| 4. Final Paper | 25% |

1) Students are allowed 3 unexcused absences. 1/2 a point will be deducted from your final grade for each unexcused absence thereafter. Missing a Tuesday class is equivalent to 1.5 days, while missing a Thursday class is equal to 1 class. **If you miss 6 classes in the**

semester, you will automatically fail the course. Participation will play a major part of the final grade and students are expected to partake and contribute daily to class discussions. If you do not bring to class the text we are discussing for that day, you will be marked as absent.

2) There will be a final 8-10-page double-spaced research paper on a topic related to representations of the Holocaust. Topics for the final paper will be student-generated and must be pre-approved by me.

3) There will be take home midterm and final exams comprised of close reading of short passages from texts and scenes from films.

Academic Integrity:

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Violations of the honor code include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, bribery, misrepresentation, fabrication, and conspiracy. Such violations may result in the following: lowering of grades, mandatory 0 on assignments, redoing assignments, a final failing grade in the course, expulsion from the course, referral to the student-run Honor Court. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.* For more information, refer to: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/>

Students with Special Needs:

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Syllabus Subject to Change

I. History of the Holocaust

8/22 Introduction to Course

Screening at Home: Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*

Readings: Mary Devereaux, "Beauty and Evil: The Case of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*"

8/24 Discussion of *Triumph of the Will* and article "Beauty and Evil"

Genocide and Modernity

8/29 Continue discussing *Triumph of the Will*

Screening in class, Stevens' *Nazi Concentration Camps*

Readings for the day: Douglas, "Film as Witness: Screening Nazi Concentration Camps"

Himmler's Posen Speech

8/31 Discussion of *Nazi Concentration Camps* and essay "Film as Witness"

9/5 Read and discuss: Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* and Raoul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*

The Victims

9/7, 9/12 and 9/14

Jean Amery's "Torture", Primo Levi's "Shame" and Charlotte Delbo's "Voices"

The perpetrators

9/19 Christopher Browning, "One day in Józefów" excerpts from *Ordinary Men*; Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (selections)

9/21 **NO CLASS**

9/26 Continue discussing Browning/Goldhagen debate
Start discussion of Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*,

II. The Holocaust in Film and Literature

Memoirs

9/28, 9/28, and 10/3

Continue discussing: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (and Dante Alighieri, "The Inferno," Canto XXVI)

10/3 Screening and discussion of Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog*

10/5 NO CLASS

Take-home Midterm due 10/12

Shoah and Schindler's List

10/10, 10/12 and 10/17

Screening of scenes from Lanzman, *Shoah*; Reading: Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony* (Chapter on *Shoah*)

10/19, 10/24

Find screening time for *Schindler's List*

Discussion of Lanzmann and Spielberg;

Reading Miriam Hansen, "Schindler's List is not Shoah: Second Commandment, Popular Modernism and Public Memory"

Poetry after Auschwitz

10/26, 10/31 and 11/2

Paul Celan, “Todesfuge” and “The Lock Gate”, view paintings by Anselm Kiefer; poems by Dan Pagis; Sylvia Plath, “Daddy,” “Lady Lazarus,” “Mary’s Song”

Graphic Novel

11/7, 11/9 and 11/14

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor’s tale. My Father Bleeds History* and Andreas Huyssen, “Of Mice and Mimesis”

Memorials and Museums

11/16 and 11/21

James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Museums*

11/23—No Class, THANKSGIVING

Postmodernity and the Holocaust

11/28, 11/30 and 12/5

Laszlo Nemes, *Son of Saul*

Take-home Final due 12/4

Final Paper due 12/11

Web links:

Timeline of the Holocaust: www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html

List of camps: www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/cc.html

Multiple links to Holocaust history: www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/holocaust.html