

GRMN 1210-401, ARTH 2871-401, COML1210-4 01, JWST1210-401

Witnessing, Remembering, and Writing the Holocaust

Liliane Weissberg

Spring 2025

M,T,W 1:45pm-3:14 pm, Van Pelt Library

What is a witness? What do the witnesses of the Shoah see, hear, experience? And how will they remember things, whether they are victims, perpetrators or bystanders? How are their memories translated into survivors' accounts: reports, fiction, art, and even music or architecture? And what does this teach us about human survival, and about the transmission of experiences to the next generation?

The course will ask these questions by studying literature on memory and trauma, as well as novels, poetry, and non-fiction accounts of the Holocaust. We will also look at art work created by survivors or their children, and listen to video testimonies. Among the authors and artists discussed will be work by Primo Levi, Paul Celan, Jean Améry, Eli Wiesel, Christian Boltanski, Daniel Libeskind, but also Philip Roth and Cynthia Ozick.

Syllabus

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| Wednesday, January 15 | Introduction: Witnessing, Remembering, and Writing the Holocaust |
| Monday, January 20 | no class |
| Wednesday, January 22 | The Historical Frame
Doris L. Bergen, <u>War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust</u> (excerpts) |
| Monday, January 27 | Witnessing and Remembering: Between Law and Psychoanalysis
Freud, "A Note upon the "Mystic Writing Pad" (1925; canvas) |
| Wednesday, January 29 | Liberation I
John C. McManus <u>Hell Before Their Very Eyes: American Soldiers Liberate Concentration Camps in Germany, April 1945</u> (excerpts) |

- Monday, February 3 **Liberation II**
Barbie Zelizer, Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye (excerpts)
- Wednesday, February 5 **Film Screening:** Andrzej Wajda, Landscape After the Battle (1970)
- Monday, February 10 **Early Victims' Accounts**
Alan Rosen, The Wonder of Their Voices: The 1946 Holocaust Interviews of David Boder (excerpts)
- Wednesday, February 12 **Oral History Archives: The Fortunoff Archives at Yale University**
(material on canvas)
- Monday, February 17 **Oral History Archives: The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives**
(material on canvas)
- Wednesday, February 19 **Film Screening:** Claude Lanzmann, Shoah, part I (1985)
- Monday, February 24 **Working with Trauma I**
(material on canvas)
- Wednesday, February 26 **Working with Trauma II**
(material on canvas)
- Monday, March 3 **Assessing Mourning**
Sigmund Freud, Mourning and Melancholia (on canvas)
- First Paper Due***
- Wednesday, March 5 **Literary Works by Survivors**
Eli Wiesel, Night
- Monday, March 10 and Wednesday, March 12: **Spring Break**
- Monday, March 17 **Literary Works by Survivors I**
Primo Levi, If This is a Man/Survival in Auschwitz
- Wednesday, March 19 **Literary Works by Survivors II**
Paul Celan, poems (on canvas)
- Monday, March 24 **Philosophical Reflections**
Jean Améry, At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities (excerpts)

Wednesday, March 26	Second Generation Narratives Art Spiegelman, <u>Maus I</u>
Monday, March 31	Literary Imagination Cynthia Ozick, <u>The Shawl</u>
Wednesday, April 2	film screening: Steven Spielberg, <u>Schindler's List</u> (1993)
Monday, April 7	Visual Art (material on canvas)
Wednesday, April 9	Music (material on canvas)
	<i>Second Paper Due</i>
Monday, April 14	Holocaust Memorials James E. Young, <u>The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning</u> (excerpts)
Wednesday, April 16	Holocaust Museums I: Yad Vashem
Monday, April 21	Holocaust Museums II: Washington (material on canvas)
Wednesday, April 23	Jewish Museums: Berlin (material on canvas)
Monday, April 28	Film Screening: Claude Lanzmann, <u>The Last of the Unjust</u>
Wednesday, April 30	<i>Research Project Due</i>

Course Requirements:

Regular attendance of classes and recitations; participation in weekly discussion on canvas (see below); two brief papers (ca. 5-7 pages); a final research project focusing on an oral witness report (via the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives or the Fortunoff Archives)

Weekly Canvas Discussions:

Every Friday, questions for comments or discussion will be posted on the canvas site. Students are required to respond to these questions by the following Wednesday, 5pm. These are not quizzes; the idea is to continue discussion outside the class room, and prepare the reading for the week.

Liliane Weissberg's Office Hours:

W, 3:30-4:30pm, Williams 747, and by appointment lweissbe@sas.upenn.edu

Books:

Doris L. Bergen, War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust
(on-line access)

John C. McManus Hell Before Their Very Eyes: American Soldiers
Liberate Concentration Camps in Germany, April 1945

Barbie Zelizer, Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the
Camera's Eye

Alan Rosen, The Wonder of Their Voices: The 1946 Holocaust Interviews of David
Boder (on-line access)

Eli Wiesel, Night (on-line access, Internet Archive)

Primo Levi, If This Is a Man (Survival at Auschwitz) (on-line access, Internet Archive)

Jean Améry, At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz
and its Realities

Art Spiegelman, Maus I

Cynthia Ozick, The Shawl (on-
line access)

James E. Young, The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning