

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

INSTRUCTOR: Beth S. Wenger

OFFICE HOURS:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores how the Holocaust has been constructed as an event in popular memory. 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. We will examine works produced in the United States, Europe, and Israel, and explore an array of forms, including documentary and fictional film, radio and television broadcasting, museum displays, tourist practices, and monuments. 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.

BOOKS:

REQUIRED READINGS AVAILABLE AT PENN BOOKSTORES (3601 Walnut St.):

- ◆ Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition* (New York: Turtleback Books, 1997).
- ◆ Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006) **Second Revised edition.**
- ◆ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).
- ◆ Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (Vols. I & II)

* **All books ordered for purchase are also on reserve at the library.** You can often find used books at affordable prices at bookfinder.com.

* **All other required readings can be found on the Canvas site.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

◆ Participation in weekly discussions: Students are expected to prepare and participate actively in every class discussion. You will be evaluated according to how you contribute to a dynamic and engaging learning environment. The participation grade reflects

preparation of assigned material and how students' contributions to class discussion display informed and thoughtful engagement with course materials and concepts, rather than the quantity of comments. The goals of class discussion are:

- to encourage active participation.
- to develop skills in distilling and presenting arguments.
- to create an atmosphere of collegial participation and cooperation as the foundation of intellectual inquiry and exchange.

◆ Prospectus for Virtual Exhibition

Due Feb. 20

As you begin to consider the exhibition that you will prepare for the final assignment of the class, you should begin by identifying a potential theme, 2-3 artifacts, and 5-6 secondary sources. A prospectus is a forward-looking document meant to display work-in-progress. The final product will likely change and evolve. Write a 3-5 page description of your desired project that includes the key ideas you wish to consider, the reasons why this is a compelling topic, and the items and themes you intend to explore and analyze in your accompanying catalogue.

◆ Artifact Presentations

April 1 (In Class)

Students will present 1-2 artifacts that they have selected for their virtual exhibitions, stressing the key themes to be explored in their project. See below for the broad definition of an artifact.

◆ Analysis of Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial Plaza

Due April 18

Visit the Memorial; examine the website; take audio walking tour. You may analyze any of these parts of this exhibition or choose to explore press coverage of the initial monument's arrival in 1964 or the reopening of the redesigned plaza in 2018. Papers should be 4-6 pages double spaced.

◆ Virtual Exhibition and Written Catalogue

Due May 7

Students will create a virtual museum exhibition on a topic of their choice related to the themes of the course. The exhibition should include a minimum of 20 artifacts, which may include objects, newspaper articles, video clips and more. The exhibition should contain an accompanying catalogue of 7-10 pages designed to present the key themes of the exhibition and provide analytic context for the objects included.

GRADING:

Class Participation	15%
Prospectus for Virtual Exhibition	20%
Artifact Presentation	15%
Analysis of Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial Plaza	20%
Virtual Exhibition and Written Catalogue	30%

COURSE SCHEDULE:

I. THE HOLOCAUST TAKES SHAPE

January 22 Introduction: Approaches to the Holocaust

- Individual Introductions
- Group exercises

January 29 In the Aftermath

Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin eds., *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, 1-19, 161-211.

Kevin Mahoney, ed., *1945: The Year of Liberation*, 114-15, 169-197.

Michael R. Marrus, ed., *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945-46*, 194-217.

Media excerpts: *Nuremberg War Crimes Trial* (to be viewed in class)

February 5 Anne Frank Revisited

Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*

[You may skim this book or read a general summary.]

Focus particularly on diary entries for Friday, Sept. 10, 1943 – Monday, January 24, 1944. Also read April 11, 1944, and July 15, 1944.

“The Diary of Anne Frank: What is the Americanization of the Holocaust?” in Daniel H. Magilow and Lisa Silverman, eds. *Holocaust Representations in History*, 43-51.

A short description of the different versions of the diary:

<https://www.garretwilson.com/books/reviews/diary-anne-frank-critical-edition>

Look at these images of Anne Frank’s Diary:

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/12/world/gallery/anne-frank-diary-house-photos/index.html>

To be viewed **before** class:

Film: *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959)

February 12 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.

Edward Wyatt, "The Translation of Wiesel's 'Night' is New, But Old Questions Are Raised," *New York Times*, January, 19, 2006.

Excerpt from Oprah Winfrey interview with Elie Wiesel, May 24, 2006, on Canvas.

February 19 Eichmann on Trial

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Introduction, Chapters 2, 7, 8, and Epilogue, 269-79.

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.

To be viewed in class: *Verdict for Tomorrow*

**** Special Assignment:** In preparation for this class, you should find one review published at the time that the Arendt book was released. Be prepared to analyze what your review reveals about both the book and the popular sentiments of the period.

II. HOLOCAUST MEMORIES/HOLOCAUST MEANINGS

February 26 Post-Holocaust Productions: Popular and Scientific

Television:

Jeffrey Shandler, "This is Your Life," in *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust*, 27-40.

"*Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss* (television, 1978)," in Daniel H. Magilow and Lisa Silverman, eds. *Holocaust Representations in History*, 93-100.

Psychology:

Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (1974), 1974, 1-43.

Kirsten Fermaglich, "An Accident of Geography: Stanley Milgram's Obedience Experiments," *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness*

and Liberal America, 83-123.

To be viewed **before** class:

This is Your Life “Hanna Bloch Kohner” (1953)

Holocaust (1978), excerpts

Milgram video

**March 11 Holocaust Testimonies: Working with Penn’s Collection of the
USC Shoah Foundation Institute's Testimonies**

***Group assignments to work on analysis of testimonies this week.**

Lawrence L. Langer, “Memory's Time: Chronology and Duration in Holocaust Testimonies,” in *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays*, 13-23.

Jeffrey Shandler, *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age: Survivors’ Stories and New Media Practices*, 9-20.

**** Meet with me after spring break with an update on your exhibition project.**

March 18 Holocaust Monuments and Memorials: Europe and Israel

James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 27-48, 119-154, 263-81.

Irit Dekel, “Jews and other Others at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin,” *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* (2014) 23:2: 71-84.

March 25 Holocaust Museums in the United States

James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 323-49.

Edward T. Linenthal, “The Boundaries of Memory: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,” *American Quarterly* 46: 3 (Sept. 1994), 406-433.

James Ingo Freed, “The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,” in Young, *The Art of Memory*, 89-101.

Marouf Hasian, Jr., “Remembering and Forgetting the ‘Final Solution’: A Rhetorical Pilgrimage through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 21:1 (March 2004), 64–92.

Explore [The New England Holocaust Memorial](#) and the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) websites.

[ASSIGNMENT: To be completed between March 26 and April 10: As we conclude this section on Holocaust memorials, visit the Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial Plaza. Your visit to this memorial will replace our class meeting on April 22nd.]

The analysis is due on April 18th.

III. APPROACHES AND ENGAGEMENTS

April 1 Artifact Presentations

April 8 The Holocaust in Experimental Genres

Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (Vols. I & II)

“New Dimensions in Technology” (Interactive hologram, USC Shoah Foundation)

<https://sfi.usc.edu/dit>

April 15 Holocaust Tourism and Travel

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*, 175-84.

The Holocaust Tourist (film, UK, 2007) <https://vimeo.com/64033340>

April 22 Jewish Holiday of Passover—NO CLASS

Your visit to the Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial Plaza serves as the make-up for this class meeting.

April 29 Analogies and the Struggle for Meanings

Jewish Holiday of Passover—NO CLASS

WE WILL SCHEDULE OUR CLASS MEETING ON MAY 1, likely in the evening.

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

“Democracy Dies in a Variety of Ways” *Slate*, July 12, 2018.

<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/07/why-comparing-trumps-america-to-nazi-germany-misses-the-point.html>

Daniel Villareal, “Tennessee Hat Shop Blasted for Selling Nazi-Style Jewish Stars Proclaiming, 'Not Vaccinated,'” *Newsweek*, May 28, 2021.

“White House condemns Fox News over ‘dangerous and extreme’ Holocaust comments from top host,” July 26, 2023. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/07/25/media/white-house-fox-news-slavery-holocaust/index.html>

Ross Douthat, “ Hamas and the Memory of the Holocaust,” *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 2023

“Yad Vashem head: Stunt 'dishonors Holocaust victims, Israel'” *Times of Israel*, 31 October 2023.

“Yad Vashem chief rejects comparison between Hamas atrocities, Holocaust,” *Times of Israel*, 23 November 2023

Final Project Due May 7th.