

GSSR
THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS CULTURAL MEANINGS
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Course Description:

A person can only hope to begin to comprehend the Holocaust if provided with multidisciplinary approaches which would allow a more complete viewing of its multidimensional complexity. The aim of this course is to introduce students precisely to those perspectives more often and more traditionally missed by the majority of such courses – the sociological, anthropological, and cultural points of view, the Jewish and non-Jewish standpoints.

The Shoah needs to be understood as something more than a historical or political event stemming from wholly unique circumstances. It was a sociocultural phenomenon originating out of, taking place within, and rending apart European culture and civilization. The Holocaust was committed by, witnessed by, and suffered by European peoples. After World War II had ended, its refugees were spread across all of the continents of the globe; their experiences and their stories went with them and also infected, as it were, other cultures and civilizations descended from and related to the European. One of the goals will be to demythologize accounts of the Holocaust to enable a critical, analytical, nuanced, and detailed understanding of Europe and Europeans (Jews and non-Jews) in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, before and after the Shoah. Another aim will be to treat the Shoah holistically, investigating it through the prism of various fields of study.

The course will include 10 meetings; each will comprise a lecture/seminar with student participation expected and encouraged.

Course Requirements:

The minimum requirements for all (credit or audit) students are: 1) attendance (no more than 2 absences), and 2) active participation.

Full credit participants will also be required to prepare a final paper of 10-15 pages (double-spaced, 12pt font and following general GSSR guidelines). The paper must be on a topic closely connected to the material presented during the course; it must, above all, represent original, individual research and thinking. Plagiarism of any sort or length will automatically result in immediate failure of the course.

A one-page outline must be submitted for approval (by email or in print) no later than class on Friday, 13 December 2019. The final work must focus on a clearly stated research question which the paper addresses directly and attempts to answer. Included must be an appropriate number of academic references in the text (no less than 8 presented in any consistent academic style) and a bibliography (no less than 6 sources including 2 books; *Wikipedia* not allowed). The deadline for submission of the final research paper (via the *TurnItIn* program as well as hard copy to GSSR) 4th February 2020.

Class One – 22 November

*Societal Definitions of Sociological Terms:
Holocaust, Genocide – Antisemitism, Racism*

How have the pertinent keywords been defined in different languages, in different countries, at different times? What do these definitions have in common, and how do they differ? Why do these disparities appear and what shifts and discrepancies in sociopolitical ideologies and interpretations do they reflect? Specifically, how has the Shoah influenced definitions and connotations of “old” terms; what are the connotations of the new terminology – genocide,

Holocaust, Shoah. For the social scientist, what fixed definitions are possible? What are the differences between pre- and post-WWII definitions of holocaust, antisemitism, and racism? What do these dissimilarities tell us about what society feels is important now, what lessons it feels it has learned from the Holocaust?

Definitions taken from pre- and post-war dictionaries and encyclopedias, published in the USA, Western Europe, and Central and East Europe.

Sartre, J.P., "What is an antisemite?", H. Fein (ed.), *The Persisting Question*, Walter de Gruyter: New York, 1987, 58-66.

Online: *UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*

Class Two – 23 November

*Sociocultural Codes and Mechanisms for Intolerance:
Stereotypes, Prejudices, Attitudes, Behavior*

Why are stereotypes and prejudices created, what purposes do they serve? What explains their persistence in modern European societies? How and why are "us/them" categories created and to which social groups have they been applied? How are members of minority groups defined socially? In the context of these sociological and psychological mechanisms, what was it that made the Jews the predominant and traditional "other" in European culture? How did Nazi Germany then build upon ancient stereotypes and embedded social mechanisms, justifying the persecution of not only the Jews, but also the Roma, the physically and intellectually disabled, etc.? How did various, old and new forms of cultural isolation facilitate the Shoah?

Allport, G., *The Nature of Prejudice*, 1954, "The Stereotypes in our Culture."

Aronson, E., *The Social Animal*, Viking Press: New York, 1972.

Girard, R., *The Scapegoat*, Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1989.

Class Three – 29 November

Was the Holocaust Inevitable? Is It Unique?

Are there differences between social, religious, economic, and political antisemitism; are there differences between national versions of antisemitism? Did all of these contribute equally to the Shoah? Are secular and religious Judeophobia, anti-Judaism, or antisemitism distinct, identifiable types? Was it antisemitism or general xenophobia which played a primary role in the prewar years; was it the same during the war? From a sociological point of view, were the mechanisms which caused the Holocaust so unique that such an event could never happen again? Noting genocides which preceded the Shoah, as well as the over 40 such occurrences in the decades following (including Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia), how can we perceive the Holocaust as unique? Does it belong to the Jews or to the entire human species? If we perceive it as solely a Jewish tragedy, how do we avoid political battles of victimhood? Can the Holocaust teach humanity how to avoid genocide?

Bauman, Z., *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1992, ch. 4.

Musial, S., "Black is Black: The Sin of Anti-Semitism Cannot Be Trivialized" in S. Kapralski (ed.), *The Jews in Poland: Volume 2*, Judaica Foundation & the Center for Jewish Culture: Kraków, 1999, pp. 385-392

Tomaszewski, J., "Anti-Semitism of Men and Anti-Semitism of Things" in S. Kapralski (ed.), *The Jews in Poland: Volume 2*, Judaica Foundation & the Center for Jewish Culture: Kraków, 1999, 87-100.

Online: *Protest* (Zofia Kossak-Szczucka), *Nostra Aetate* (Vatican) and *Dabru Emet* (Jewish Scholars Project)

Class Four – 30 November

The Sociocultural Roles of the Perpetrator, Witness, and Victim

In the initial post-World War II years, the divide was drawn between perpetrators and victims; now a third category has been added of the (helpless or pitiless) witness/bystander. How sharply can the lines be drawn between these three groups? Are perpetrators, survivors, and rescuers extraordinary or ordinary people? How should we deal with "good Germans", Jewish police and members of the *Judenrats*, or Polish (or other) rescuers, ambivalent bystanders, and denouncers? Can we understand the behavior of individuals; can we justify their behavior? What are the ethical and moral issues linked to these three roles? Would it be possible to hold antisemitic feelings and yet be a Righteous Among the Nations? Moreover, how "neutral" were the neutral states of Europe during the Holocaust and in its wake?

Blonski, J., *The Poor Pole Looks at the Ghetto*.

Christie, N., "Answers to Atrocities," in G. Skąpska, A. Orla-Bukowska, K. Kowalski, eds., *The Moral Fabric in Contemporary Societies*, Brill: Leiden, 2003), 335-56.

Oliner, S. & P., *The Altruistic Personality*, 1990.

Spiegelman, A., *Maus II*, 1991.

Online: Yad Vashem: *I Am My Brother's Keeper* (online exhibition)

Films: Jabłoński's *Fotoamator* (focusing on the firsthand accounts of Germans and Jews in the Łódź ghetto); Łoziński's *Birthplace* (a Polish Jewish survivor traces his family members Shoah histories and fates in the community around his hometown)

Break

1-page , final research paper outline due (print or email) by start of class on 13 December

Class Five – 13 December

Ways of Telling the Tale, Ways of Representing the Unthinkable

The Holocaust provoked the writing of poetry, fiction and non-fiction prose (some of these created as the Shoah was taking place), as well as comics, documentaries, Hollywood films and even operas. How should we interpret these works in general; how should we interpret the tales they tell of the different players (perpetrators, witnesses, victims)? What of Holocaust museums and monuments: what information do they relay about perpetrators, victims, and witnesses – and about us today? Is the aim to teach, to warn, or to remember?

Borowski, T., *This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*

Krall, H., *Sheltering the Flame* and other works

Levi, P., *Survival in Auschwitz*, 1958, preface, chapters 1, 8, 10, 17 + conversation.

Schiff, H., *Holocaust Poetry*, 1995.

Spiegelman, A., *Maus, vol. I & II*, 1991.

Film: Kieślowski's *Decalogue 8* (fictional essay on a bystander-victim relationship); various Hollywood or European feature films

Online: homepages, online exhibitions/virtual tours, Facebook pages of Holocaust museums and centers around the world.

Class Six – 14 December

An Attempt to Heal the Wounds: War Crimes Trials

Why were World War II crimes considered unforgivable and unforgettable? Is a war criminal ever too old to be tried; is it ever “inhuman” to try someone who acted inhumanly? How have post-Holocaust war crimes definitions been introduced into our understanding of and emphases on law and human rights? What have been the repercussions of war crimes trials — appearing on the scene in nearly every decade since the war — on European and global society? What does this tell us about how contemporary societies see themselves and understand morality? Has the Shoah established a new standard of measure for right and wrong? Do we want and get “justice” and “truth” or “revenge”?

Arendt, H., *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, ch. 8, Epilogue and Postscript.

Bauman, Z., “The Holocaust: Fifty Years Later” in D. Grinberg (ed.), *The Holocaust: Fifty Years After*, Jewish Historical Institute: Warsaw, 1994, 23-33.

Bloxham, D., “The Holocaust on Trial: Crimes against Humanity, Justice, and the Writing of the Historical Record” in D.J. Schaller, R. Boyadjian, V. Berg, H. Scholtz (edd.), *Enteignet – Vertrieben – Ermordet*, Chronos Verlag: Zurich, 2004, 295-318.

Christie, N., “Answers to Atrocities” in G. Skapska, A. Orla-Bukowska, & K. Kowalski (edd.), *The Moral Fabric in Contemporary Societies*, Brill: Leiden, 2003, 335-353.

magazine and newspaper articles, and comments regarding Holocaust war crime trials in Western Europe, extradition of criminals to Central & Eastern European countries, General Pinochet case, Simon Wiesenthal Center’s *Operation Last Chance*.

Class Seven – 20 December

Cultural Memory and Social Consciousness of the Holocaust:

Jewish Perspectives, Part 1

How does the Shoah figure into the collective memory of Israel today? For the purposes of the imagined community of the reborn state, what is being forgotten, what is being emphasized, what is being reshaped? What is the cultural memory being shaped? In light of the “Europeanness” of Israeli society, what are the different memories and histories taught among the Jewish diaspora outside the homeland? How do events like the March of the Living, and “death camp pilgrimages” by Israeli secondary school pupils shape a young person’s memory and consciousness of the Shoah as well as of the European nations they visit? Outside Israel, do Jews continue to feel an imminent threat of antisemitism and genocide?

Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities*, Verso Books: London, 1991, ch. 11.

Berenbaum, M., *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as told in the US Holocaust Memorial Museum*, 1993, iv-65.

Richmond, T., *Konin*, Vintage: London, 1996, Introduction, Part I: 11-15; Part II: 24; Part III: 46-48; Part IV: 67-69.

Young, J.E., *The Texture of Memory*, Yale University Press: Princeton, 1993, ch. 9-10, 11-12.

Class Eight – 21 December

Cultural Memory and Social Consciousness of the Holocaust: Jewish Perspectives, Part II

How is the Shoah presented by Jews to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences outside Israel? How do films (documentary and other) shape Jewish memory of the Holocaust? Which narrative and mode serves whose Shoah memory? Consider popular, commercial films such as *Schindler's List*, *The Train of Life*, *The Pianist* and documentaries or filmed testimony of firsthand participants. What are the languages and genres of the Jewish perspective? What is shown, what is not shown, what memory is being created? Note the new turn towards museums accenting "life" over "death" (among others, the newest pavilion at Yad Vashem or the Museum of the History of Polish Jews).

Hoffman, E., *Shtetl*, Mariner Books: New York, 1998.

Lanzmann, C., *Shoah* (script published by Schocken Books)

Niewyk, D., *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 1997.

Films: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* and Marian Marzyński's *Shtetl*.

Online: USC Shoah Foundation Video History Archives

Break

Class Nine – 10 January

Cultural Memory and Social Consciousness of the Holocaust: Non-Jewish Perspectives

At various times in various countries today, about 20% of the general population does not know or is not sure if Jews were targeted during WWII. What, in fact, do today's non-Jews around the world know and not know about the Holocaust? What are the real dangers of revisionism and other forms of Holocaust denial? What are the different memories and histories taught and shown in different countries at different education levels? Why have the stories of Righteous Among the Nations of the World (e.g., Wallenberg, Schindler, or Karski) emerged and become more prominent?

Steinlauf, M., "Reflection on the Shadow of the Holocaust in Post-War Poland" in D. Grinberg (ed.), *The Holocaust: Fifty Years After*, Jewish Historical Institute: Warsaw, 1994, 61-72.

Welzer, H., *Grandpa Wasn't a Nazi: The Holocaust in German Family Remembrance*, AJC: New York, 2005.

Young, J.E., *The Texture of Memory*, Yale University Press: Princeton, 1993, ch. 1-2 & 11-12.

Film: *The Nasty Girl* (based upon Anna Rosmus' research into the wartime history of her hometown in Germany).

Online: *Institute for Historical Review*, www.hdot.org

Class Ten – 11 January

In the Aftermath of the Holocaust in Central Europe

What problems in dealing with the Shoah are more specific and unique for Central Europe? How did the Shoah (and subsequent sociopolitical events) specifically impoverish histories and collective memories in this region? What "amputee pain" has been and is being experienced? How can there be "antisemitism without Jews"? What effects have the shifts to political democracy and economic capitalism had on feelings towards Jews? How have Jewish

foundations and agencies (international and national) affected discussions of the Holocaust in Central Europe? How are Shoah sites memorialized in Poland and Berlin? Will dealing with the Shoah help bring Central European nations back into the fold of “Europe” as a whole? Will it help restore memory of the prewar multicultural life?

Bibo, I., “The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944”, ed. K. Nagy, *Democracy, revolution, self-determination*, Columbia University Press: New York, 1991, 192-244.

Kugelmass, J., Boyarin, J., Baker, Z., *From a Ruined Garden*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1998.

Orla-Bukowska, A., “Presenting and Representing the Shoah in the Postcommunist World” in D.J. Schaller, R. Boyadjian, V. Berg, H. Scholtz (edd.), *Enteignet – Vertrieben – Ermordet*, Chronos Verlag: Zurich, 2004, 319-347.

Orla-Bukowska, A., “Representing the Shoah in Poland and Poland in the Shoah” in R. Lentin (ed.), *Re-Presenting the Shoah for the Twenty-First Century*, Berghahn Books: Oxford, 2004, 179-194.

Shafir, M., “Denying the Holocaust where it Happened: Post-Communist East Central Europe and the Shoah” in R. Lentin (ed.), *Re-Presenting the Shoah for the Twenty-First Century*, Berghahn Books: Oxford, 2004, 195-226.

Steinlauf, M., *Bondage to the Dead*, Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, 1997.

Film: Jolanta Dylewska’s *Po-lin* (documentary)

Supplementary sources:

Browning, C., *Ordinary Men : Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

Browning, C., *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010.

Chalk, F., Jonassohn, K., *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, Yale University Press: New Haven, 1990.

Davies, N., “The Jewish Strand in European History” in S. Kapralski (ed.), *The Jews in Poland: Volume 2*, Judaica Foundation & the Center for Jewish Culture: Kraków, 1999, 87-100.

Ellis, M.H., *Ending Auschwitz: The Future of Jewish and Christian Life*, 1994, ch. 4.

Furet, F. (ed.), *Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews*, 1989.

Goldhagen, D.J., *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, 1997.

Hartman, G.H., *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1994.

Hoffman, E., *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, 2004.

Irwin-Zarecka, I., *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*, Transaction Publishers: New York, 1994.

Kaplan, H., *Conscience and Memory*, University of Chicago Press: London, 1994.

Kenrick D. (ed.), *In the Shadow of the Swastika*, University of Hertfordshire Press: Hatfield, 1999.

Marrus, M.R., *The Holocaust in History*, Penguin Books: London, 1989.

Zych, A. (ed.), *The Auschwitz poems: An Anthology*, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum: Oswiecim, 1999.

internet sources:

- <http://www.auschwitz.org/>
- <http://www.ushmm.org/>
- <http://www.yadvashem.org/>
- <https://www.ehri-project.eu/>
- <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/>
- <http://www.hdot.org/>