

Religious Studies  
RSOC 76  
Winter 2009  
TTh 9:55-11:40

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## Representing the Holocaust

Description: This course begins by examining traditional Jewish responses to catastrophe and then looks at how these traditions have shaped understandings of the Holocaust. The course explores how various forms of representation (personal narratives, fiction, poetry, history, and film) create different meanings about the Holocaust. It also emphasizes the impact of perspective (nationality, gender, sexuality, language, and age) on these representations.

### Required Texts:

Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*  
Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*  
Elie Wiesel, *Night*  
Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, *Auschwitz: True Tales from a Grotesque Land*  
Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen*  
Art Spiegelman, *Maus I and Maus II*  
Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl*

Other readings will be distributed in class. These include: *Lamentations*; Chaim Nachman Bialik, "City of Slaughter"; selections from the diaries of Chaim A Kaplan, and Ety Hillesum; poetry by Paul Celan, Nelly Sachs, Jacob Glatstein, Charles Reznikoff, Uri Tzvi Greenberg, Yevgeni Yevtushenko, and Dan Pagis; and Naomi Seidman, "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage."

### Requirements:

Class participation 10%  
Two student presentations 20% (10% each)  
Weekly 1-2 page papers on assigned questions 25%  
One 8-10 page paper 25%  
In class final exam 20%

### *Class participation and presentations*

This course places substantial emphasis on student participation. In addition to careful preparation of reading assignments and informed participation in discussion, you will be required to give two five-minute presentations. The presentations should not summarize the material, but explore and respond critically to focused questions, problems, or tensions in the text. Following your five-minute presentation, you will be responsible for raising several questions for class discussion.

*Short weekly papers (1-2 pages)*

You will receive the weekly paper topics each Thursday. Papers may be turned in either on Tuesdays or Thursdays, but must be on the reading discussed that day. Like the presentations, these papers are not summaries, but critical responses to focused questions or issues.

*Long paper (8-10 pages)*

You will receive topics for the longer paper 4 weeks prior to its due date.

*Final Exam*

One week before the final exam, you will receive a list of 10 possible essays questions, six of which will appear on the exam. You will choose four of them (25% each).

### Schedule

Tues. January 5 Course Introduction: Representing the Holocaust: Perspective and Form

#### **1. Pre-Holocaust Responses to Catastrophe in Jewish Tradition**

Thurs. January 8 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Complete this book as background reading by the end of the second week of class.) Background on *Lamentations*, Chaim Nachman Bialik and “City of Slaughter.”

Tues. January 13 The Chain of Tradition and Jewish Understanding of Catastrophe. Discussion of *Lamentations* and Bialik, “City of Slaughter.” Presentation Sign-ups

Thurs. January 15 Have finished Hilberg. Final Solution: Functionalists and Intentionalists. \*\*Receive first short paper topics\*\*

#### **2. Diaries and Memoirs**

Tues. January 20 Jewish Resistance. Diaries of Kaplan and Hillesum

3 Thurs. January 22 Diaries of Kaplan and Hillesum

5 Tues. January 27 Naming the Holocaust. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

5 Thurs. January 29 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

5 Tues. Feb. 3 Elie Wiesel, *Night*

5 Thurs. Feb. 5 Elie Wiesel, *Night*; Seidman, “Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage”

### 3. What is Holocaust Literature?

5 Tues. Feb. 10 Women, Gender and the Holocaust. Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, *Auschwitz: True Tales from a Grotesque Land* \*\*Receive topics for long paper\*\*

5 Thurs. Feb. 12 Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, *Auschwitz: True Tales from a Grotesque Land*

5 Tues. Feb. 17 Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen*

5 Thurs. Feb. 19 Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen*

5 Tues. Feb. 24 Metaphor and the Holocaust Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl*

5 Thurs. Feb. 26 Poetry by Paul Celan, Nelly Sachs, Charles Reznikoff, Jacob Glatstein, Uri Tzvi Greenberg, Yevgeni Yevtushenko, and Dan Pagis

### 5. Children of Survivors

5 Tues. March 3 Art Spiegelman, *Maus I*

5 Thurs. March 5 Art Spiegelman, *Maus II*

Tues. March 10 *The Summer of Avia* (film) \*\*Long paper is due\*\*

Thurs. March 12 Last Day of Class, Discussion of film and *Maus*, Review

Tues. March 17 Final Exam 9:10-12:10