

The Holocaust in American Culture Undergraduate Honors Seminar

Prof. David Greenberg
Spring 2006

Class Time: Monday 6.10-9.00
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Office Hours: Mon. 10.30 a.m.-12 p.m.
Course No.: 12:090:286

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Syllabus

Description. When the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. opened in 1993, people asked why a “European” catastrophe was being memorialized alongside shrines to Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln. One answer is that in the years since World War II, the experience and memory of the Holocaust have deeply affected American culture. This course looks at a few of the ways the Holocaust and Nazism changed America: by fostering a distrust of the masses among intellectuals; by promoting civil liberties and religious toleration; by encouraging a view of the Soviet Union as equivalent to Nazi Germany; by making the imperatives of protecting human rights and stopping genocide central to foreign policy; and by providing a new focus for American Jewish identity. Through these and other topics students will analyze the role that the Holocaust still plays in American life.

Course Requirements.

- Regular attendance and active participation. This course meets 2 ½ hours a week. Arriving on time and staying for the duration is essential. Students may miss one class, no questions asked. Students who miss more than one class, or substantial portions of a class, will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each class missed - - even if you inform me in advance. In the event of severe illness or extraordinary circumstances, you must provide documentation. If you have a conflict such as a job or sports that will require you have to come late, leave early, or miss class, you should not take this course.

One of the main purposes of a seminar like this is to teach students to develop and share their own ideas. The very work of the course consists of engaging in a discussion about ideas. Students who abstain from discussion are missing the course’s whole purpose. A class in which you do not contribute (or try to contribute) to discussion is equivalent to a missed class. Proficient spoken and written English is expected.

- Reading. The reading for this class ranges from 150 to 200 pages a week.
- Classroom presentations. Each week one student will prepare a 15-minute presentation framing the main book under discussion. This presentation should *not* summarize the reading. Rather, it should aim to achieve two main goals:

- First, it should *locate the reading in the scholarly literature to which it belongs*. How does this work resemble or differ from other books on the topic? What is its contribution to understanding the topic? What controversies did it respond to or generate?

- Second, the presentation should *offer salient ideas and questions about the reading*. Typically this will involve giving some background: Who is the author? How was the book received upon publication? To answer these questions, of course, it's necessary to read other works on the topic and do some research. (I may be able to furnish suggestions.) As a rough rule, you should plan to read at least three books for the presentation. You will not necessarily be rewarded for reading more books, although doing so will probably make for a richer presentation, and that richness will be rewarded.

- Short paper. Students will write a paper of no more than 5 pages, due Feb. 20.
- Term paper. Students will write a term paper of no more than 10 pages, due May 1.
- A note on Internet research. It is very tempting these days to do all of your research through Google or other search engines. This is not permitted. The websites you discover this way vary widely in their accuracy and reliability. Of course, certain sites found through search engines can contain valuable information, but you must take care to validate them. Also, it is important to distinguish between library databases and Internet search engines. Many universities subscribe to databases that hold various journals. You should use these databases, which agglomerate scholarly journals, newspapers, and the like. They will not turn up random people's home pages. However, even with these databases, you are advised to scrutinize the sources that you dig up; a statement made in the *Journal of American History* is to be read differently from one made in *Human Events*.

Additional Rules and Information.

- Cell phones must be turned off and may not be used in class.
- Laptops may be used for note-taking only. No emailing or Web-surfing during class.
- Students must show up on time and stay for the duration of the class. During class, students should not engage in personal conversations, read newspapers, do crossword puzzles, or undertake other personal diversions unrelated to class activity.
- Academic Integrity. Plagiarism and cheating are forbidden, according to the terms of Rutgers University policy. It is your responsibility to review and obey these policies. The policy is at <http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>.
- On plagiarism, the statement below (from history.rutgers.edu/undergrad/plagiarism.htm) appears in Rutgers University's rules. Like all such rules, it applies to this class.

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be promptly cited in the

text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "to paraphrase Plato's comment ..." and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

Reading List.

Required

Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (Franklin Watts)
Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust* (Plume)
Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Mariner Books)
Ron Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil* (Harper)
Jackson Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany* (Prentice Hall)
Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*. (Columbia University Press)
David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust* (New Press)

Optional

Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Plume).
Hannah Arendt, *The Portable Hannah Arendt* (Viking Penguin).
Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (Picador).
Ira Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment* (Columbia University Press)
Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell* (Harper Perennial).

Weekly Assignments.

- Jan. 23 **Weimar Germany and The Nazi Rise to Power**
Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*, pp. 48-99.
Jackson Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany*, Chapters 1-7.
- Jan. 30 **Hitler and the Holocaust**
Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*, Chapters 5-7, 9, 13.
Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany*, Chapter 9.
- Feb. 6 **The American Reaction**
David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust*.
Chapters 1-5, 15, 16.
*Lucy Davidowicz, "Could America Have Rescued Europe's Jews?"
- Feb. 13 **Totalitarianism Abroad - Communism and Nazism**
*Hannah Arendt, "Total Domination," in *Portable Hannah Arendt*, pp. 119-145.

- * Hannah Arendt, "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility," pp. 146-55.
Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, Chapter 5.
Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, Chapters 5-7.
- * Les K. Adler & Thomas G. Paterson, "Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s-1950s," *American Historical Review*, April, 1970, pp. 1046-1064.
- Feb. 20 **Totalitarianism at Home & the Rise of Civil Liberties**
Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, Chapters 2-4.
* Daniel Bell, *The Radical Right*, Chapters 5 & 13.
* D. F. Fleming, "Are We Moving Toward Fascism?" *Journal of Politics*, Feb. 1954, pp. 39-75.
* Richard Primus, *The American Language of Rights*, Chapter 5.
- Feb. 27 **Totalitarianism at Home & the Rise of Civil Liberties**
Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, Chapters 2-4.
* Daniel Bell, *The Radical Right*, Chapters 5 & 13.
* D. F. Fleming, "Are We Moving Toward Fascism?" *Journal of Politics*, Feb. 1954, pp. 39-75.
* Richard Primus, *The American Language of Rights*, Chapter 5.
- Mar. 6 **Life in the Camps and the Question of Lessons**
* Bruno Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, Chapter 5.
* Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, pp. 81-139.
* Tzvetan Todorov, *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps*, pp. 3-90.
* Lawrence Langer, "Pre-empting the Holocaust."
- Mar. 13 **SPRING BREAK**
- Mar. 20 **The Eichmann Debate**
Novick, Chapter 7.
Arendt, from *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 313-388
* Articles on Arendt-Eichmann affair, from *Partisan Review*, 1963-1964.
- Mar. 27 **Jewish Identity**
Novick, Introduction, Chapters 6, 8-12.
* Jonathan Rosen, "The Uncomfortable Question of Anti-Semitism."
- Apr. 3 **The Foreign Policy Legacy: Human Rights, Genocide, and Intervention**
* Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell*, Preface, Chapters 2, 6.
* Raphael Lemkin, "Genocide," *American Scholar*, March 1946.
* Irwin Cotler, "The Holocaust, Nuremberg, and Human Rights."
* Elie Wiesel, "For the Dead and the Living."
* Robert Wright and Jeffrey Goldberg, *Slate*, debate on Iraq war
- April 10 **Holocaust Denial**
Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, Chapters 1-4, 8-11
film: *Mr. Death*

- April 17 **Search for Answers**
Ron Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler*, Introduction, Chapters 4, 5, 13-16, 19-20
- April 24 **Mainstreaming the Holocaust**
film: *Schindler's List*
* Yosefa Loshitzky, "Introduction."
* Omer Bartov, "Spielberg's Oskar."
* Jeffrey Shandler, "Schindler's Discourse."
* Leon Wieseltier, "Close Encounters of the Nazi Kind."
* Stanley Kauffmann, Review of *Schindler's List* (2 parts)
- May 1 **Present Papers.**