

## Course Title: Representing the Holocaust: Memory, History and National Identity

**Faculty Name:** Prof. Sharon Gillerman

**Institution:** University of Southern California

**Semester Taught:** Fall 2007

Since World War II, three generations of artists, scholars, and writers have reflected on the meaning and legacy of the Holocaust. The narratives, or “collective memories” that have emerged, have changed considerably over time. In this class, we will look at the memory of the Holocaust as a culturally constructed artifact, the ever-changing product of a particular time and place. Beginning with a brief historical overview of Holocaust history, we will focus primarily on postwar Germany and the United States, analyzing how the Holocaust has been represented through a variety of media: literature, film, and museums and memorials. Using Pierre Nora’s notion of “sites of memory,” we will concentrate on “sites” which have served to create and purvey distinct national memories of the Holocaust: survivor memoirs and testimony, film and literature, and museums and memorials. We will also look at an example of “second generation” literature — the comic book *Maus*-- through which the artist, himself a child of Holocaust survivors, tries to come to terms with his own past.

### Required Texts:

Art Spiegelman, *Maus. A Survivor's Tale*. New York: Pantheon, 1997

Art Spiegelman, *Maus II A Survivor's Tale: "and Here my Troubles Began,"* New York: Pantheon, 1991.

Anne Frank, *Diary of a Young Girl*

Bernhard Schlink, *The Reader: A Novel*, translated by Carol Brown Janeway. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Course Reader is available by contacting [www.universityreaders.com](http://www.universityreaders.com).

### Course Requirements:

1. Students are expected to read in advance the assigned readings for each class. If I find that students are not doing assigned reading in preparation for class, I will begin giving unannounced quizzes in class. In that case, there will be no opportunity for make-ups.

2. **Class attendance is a required part of the course. Participation in class discussion will constitute 10% of the final grade.** More than two unexcused absences will lower your course grade by a half (from A- to B+ for example). More than four unexcused absences will cause your grade to be lowered an entire grade. Participation will be evaluated on the basis of preparation and taking active part in class and small group discussions.

3. **Writing Assignments.** Since this course is writing intensive, three essays will be required. The first essay is a short three-page paper that will be based on one videotestimony from the Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive accessible at computer terminals in Leavey Library (15%.) The second and third essays are each five pages. (25% each) The second essay will be on the comic book *Maus*. In the third essay, you will be asked to compare and evaluate two Holocaust museums in Los Angeles. Together, these writing assignments will constitute 65% percent of your grade. Submitting drafts of papers is not required, but certainly encouraged.

4. **Final Exam.** A cumulative final exam in essay format will be given on

**Tuesday December 18, from 11:00-1:00.** It will count for 25% of the grade.

**5. At least one scheduled meeting with the professor.**

The grading scheme thus appears as follows:

- a) One three-page essay (15)
- b) Two five-page essays, 25 points each (50)
- c) Preparation and participation (10)
- d) Final Exam (25)

**Academic accommodations:**

Students requesting academic accommodations due to disabilities must register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) as early in the semester as possible (STU 301, tel. 740-0776). Please bring me your letter of verification for approved accommodations early in the semester, and let me know if you need any assistance with this process.

**A Word on Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another individual. Most simply, plagiarism can be characterized as "academic theft."

As defined in the University Student Conduct Code, plagiarism includes:

"The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near verbatim form;" "The submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style;" and improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers."

Because of the serious penalties for plagiarism, you should ensure that any writing you submit represents your own assertions and abilities and incorporates other texts in an open and honest manner. In academic assignments, writing is assumed to be the original words and thoughts of the student unless otherwise noted (i.e. material from other sources is clearly and properly cited). The best way to avoid plagiarism is to be careful to document your sources, even when you are only making use of data or ideas rather than an actual quote.

Students who violate academic standards as outlined above will receive a failing grade in the course and be reported to the appropriate authorities.

**Course Schedule:**

**Part I—Introduction**

**August 28 Introduction**

**August 30 History of the Holocaust—an overview**

Reader: Karl Schleunes, "Revisiting the Twisted Road to Auschwitz,"

Reader: Marion Kaplan, "The Jewish Response to the Third Reich. Gender at the Grass Roots," pp. 70-87

**September 4 History of the Holocaust – continued**

Reader: Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*, pp. 147-150, 183-208, 209-227.

## Part II—Survivor Testimonies

### September 6 Meet at Leavey Library for introduction to USC Shoah Foundation Institute archive

FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT

### September 11 Survivor Memory

Reader: Primo Levi, "Preface," *The Drowned and the Saved*. New York: Vintage International, 1989, pp.11-21

Reader: Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen and Other Stories*. New York: Viking Press, 1959, pp. 9-29.

Reader: Charlotte Delbo, "Thirst," *Auschwitz and After*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 70-75.

Reader: Olga Lengyel, "The Arrival," in eds. Carol Rittner and John K. Roth, *Women and the Holocaust. Different Voices*. St. Paul: Paragon House, 1993, pp. 69-72.

### September 13 No class for Rosh Hashanah

### September 18 The Memory of Trauma in the Postwar Writing of Survivors

Reader: Primo Levi, "Shame," *The Drowned and the Saved*, New York: Vintage International, 1989, pp. 70-87.

Reader: Charlotte Delbo, "The Return" & "Mado," *Auschwitz and After*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 235-239; pp. 257-267.

Reader: Aharon Appelfeld, "The Awakening," in ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman *Holocaust Remembrance. The Shapes of Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994, pp. 149-152.

Reader: Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen and Other Stories*. New York: Viking Press, 1959, pp. 177-180.

### September 20 Survivor Testimony and Film-- Film Excerpts: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*

Reader: Oren Baruch Stier, *Committed to Memory. Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust*, pp. 95-109.

### September 25 Survivor Testimony and Film (continued)

Film Excerpts: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*

### September 27 No class—First day of Sukkot

FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE

## Part III—Second Generation Testimony

**October 2 The Comic Book as Testimony?**

Spiegelman, *Maus I*

SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT

**October 4 *Maus*--continued**

Spiegelman, *Maus II*

**IV Perpetrator Testimonies and Postwar Justice**

**October 9 The Memory of the Holocaust in Postwar Germany**

Film: "Death Mills"

Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity After the Holocaust*, pp. 59-78

**October 11 Nuremberg War Crimes Trials**

Reader: Michael Marrus, *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial 1945-1946. A Documentary History*, Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1997, pp. 22-28, 57-70, 258-261.

**October 16 Perpetator Testimony: the Case of Franz Stangl**

Film: Excerpts from "Shoah"

Handout: Gitta Sereny, *Into that Darkness*

**October 18 The Trial of Adolf Eichmann**

Film: Excerpts from "The Eichmann Trial"

SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE

**October 23 On the Relationship Between Perpetrators and the Second Generation in Germany:**

**Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader***

Schlink, *The Reader*

**October 25 *The Reader***

Schlink, *The Reader*

**Part IV—The Americanization of the Holocaust**

**October 30 The Anne Frank Phenomenon**

Anne Frank: *The Diary of a Young Girl*

**November 1 Film: "Schindler's List"**

**November 6 Film: "Schindler's List"**

**November 8 Americanization: The Case of Schindler's List**

Reader: Omer Bar Tov, "Spielberg's Oskar: Hollywood Tries Evil" in ed. Yosefa Loshitzky, *Spielberg's Holocaust. Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*. Bloomington: Indiana, 1997, pp. 41-61.

**\*\*\*Sunday November 11 Trip to Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, 3:00-5:00**

**November 13 Museums and Memorials**

Reader: James Young, *The Texture of Memory*, pp. 203-209.

Reader: Timothy Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," *The New Yorker*, Nov. 15, 1993, pp. 68-81

Jonathan Rosen, "The Trivialization of Tragedy," in ed. Katharine Washburn and John F. Thornton, *Dumbing Down: Essays on the Strip Mining of American Culture*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1996, pp. 230-240.

**November 15—Class cancelled**

**\*\*Sunday, November 18 Trip to the Museum of Tolerance, 3:00-6:00.**

**November 20 Discussion on the Los Angeles Holocaust Museum vs. The Museum of Tolerance**

**November 22 Happy Thanksgiving!**

**November 27 Class cancelled**

**November 29 Is Humor Permissible?**

**Film Excerpts—"The Great Dictator," & "The Producers"**

THIRD PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE

**December 4 Denying the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide**

Reader: Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History. Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why do they Say it?* Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, pp. 99-142.

**December 6 Summing up**

Assignment 1  
ARLT 100g, Fall 2007  
Due Date: September 27

Just as Primo Levi, Charlotte Delbo, and Tadeusz Borowski employed different writing styles and literary forms by which to convey their experiences during and after the Holocaust, survivors who give videotestimony also struggle to find appropriate language, generate a narrative structure, and create coherence out of traumatic memories and experiences. After viewing two videotestimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, write four pages about the videotestimonies and analyze them by addressing the themes discussed below.

Before you write your analytical essay, however, write up a factual summary of each testimony. Each should be no more than a paragraph or page. The point of writing this descriptive summary is so that you will *avoid* writing a summary of the testimony in your paper. Your paper should offer an analysis of how testimony/autobiography is shaped—this is contrary to assumptions we may have that telling one’s life story is “natural,” and that there is only one way of telling it. Just like other literary and filmic works, the life story is shaped by certain narrative strategies.

The key question, then, to address in your paper is:

*How do these two survivors narrate their story?*

- How is the testimony structured? That is, where does the story begin, where is its central core, how does it end? What are some of the key moments as the story unfolds?
- Holocaust survivors have not witnessed *all* of the Holocaust. From what particular perspective (refer to Levi’s comments in the preface to *The Drowned and the Saved*) does this survivor speak? Primo Levi, for example, makes his observations from the vantage point of a privileged prisoner; Delbo writes as a non-Jewish communist incarcerated in Auschwitz.
- Do you see any evidence of the mixing of first-hand observations with information gleaned after the Holocaust period or “stylized” memories?
- Do you observe any blurring of the lines between past and present? (pay attention to tense of language, moving back and forth between past and present)
- What role does the interviewer play in shaping the narrative? How does s/he guide (does s/he interrupt, interpret, lead the survivor in certain directions, put words in the survivor’s mouth?)
- How do the conclusions of the testimonies serve to frame the entire testimony? What is the tone and what result do you think is produced by its framing in this way?
- How do these videotestimonies compare to some of the Holocaust literature you have read for class? (you may want to compare themes, structure, or language)

Note: Since the paper you are writing is short, you will have to choose only certain aspects of the testimonies to compare. A well-written essay will consist of making thoughtful comparisons that are

supported by evidence from the testimonies. In other words, make sure to cite examples and supply evidence for your claims.