

Course Title: The Holocaust in Literature and Film

Faculty Name: Wolf Gruner

Institution: University of Southern California

Semester Taught: Fall 2009

The Holocaust is one of the most disputed events in modern history. Through close discussion of literature and film we will explore the origins and the development of persecution and mass murder of the European Jewry during World War II. During the course we will address major questions as: Why did people participate in persecution? Could people resist? Who did help the Jews? Could the Holocaust have been prevented? These questions are still valuable today. Key themes we will explore include: the personalities of the perpetrators, the lives of the victims, the role of the bystanders, and the motives of the rescuers. We will discuss movies by famous filmmakers as Chaplin, Polanski and Spielberg, as well as documentaries, novels and diaries. Using both fiction and non-fictional material we will also touch upon the eternal debate between historians and artists about the interpretation of past events.

Required books (at bookstore or library)

Jurek Becker, *Jacob the Liar*

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

Rutka's Notebook: A voice from the Holocaust

David Engel, *The Third Reich and the Jews, New York: Pearson Education paperback*

Wolf Gruner, *Jewish Forced Labor under the Nazis: Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938-1944 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008 paperback)*

Required movies (also at Leavey Library: reserve shelf)

The Pianist, 2002, Roman Polanski

Schindler's List, 1993, Steven Spielberg,

Sophie Scholl – The Last Days, 2005, Marc Rothemund

Attention:

Some of the movies and documentaries display graphic images; some of the novels describe graphic scenes.

Due to some in-class showing of movies or documentaries, some days the class may take 10-15 minutes longer, which will be cut of the following session.

Course requirements: The assignment encompasses participation, discussion and papers (discussion, midterm exam and research).

Class discussions: Participation in class discussions is vital to the learning process. I expect that you will attend all class meetings, complete the assigned reading and movie watching on time

(you should have finished reading or watching when the discussion on a book or a movie is scheduled), and engage actively with the material in our class discussions.

As a part of your discussion grade, every student will take responsibility for leading the discussion for 20-30 minutes in one class session. A list will be handed out for you to sign in. You should choose the day with the topic you are most interested in. For the discussion you will prepare a set of questions and do some extra research on the author, the book or film, and their history, which you will introduce to the class.

In addition, every other week I will ask you to submit short, informal essays, no longer than one page, in which you have to discuss two or three problems, ideas or developments from the books or the movies for this class. You might also analyze historical or artistic questions. These papers, due on Monday or Wednesday afternoon by e-mail (see schedule), will serve as a basis for discussion, but will not be individually graded.

I will provide guidelines for ways of participating in and leading discussion. The breakdown of your grade is as follows: **class attendance 5 %; leading a discussion 5 %, participation in class discussion 20%; for a total of 30%.**

Examinations: A midterm exam will be given— based on the lectures, the material, and our class discussions – in form four or five questions. **Midterm: 30%.**

Research Paper: You are required to write a research paper of 12-15 pages on a topic of your choice and interest whether related to the topic in general or on specific questions under consideration in this class. The discussion of your research subject should be based on various sources. (No internet sources except primary documents are allowed to use). I will provide guidelines explaining the paper requirements. Please start early to think about a possible subject. After the mid-term you need to provide a research subject and a list of the possible literature you will use to write the paper. Feel free to discuss anything about preparing or writing the paper with me by email or during my office hours. **Research Paper: 40%.**

Schedule

1. Tue, August, 25: Introduction: The Study of the Holocaust

Due on Thursday independent research (given in first class)

2. Thu, August 27: Terms, Interpretations of history, art and history

Watching in class parts of the movie: The Great Dictator, 1940, Charles Chaplin

Required reading: David Engel, pp. 1-14.

3. Tue, Sept, 1: Anti-Semitism, Nationalism, and Racism

Watching in class parts of the documentary: Triumph of the Will, (Nuremberg 1934), Riefenstahl

Required reading: David Engel, pp. 15-37.

4. Thu, Sept, 3: Jewish life under the Nazis

Watching in class: The Holocaust, TV-Miniserie 1978 Part 1

Required reading: Gruner, prologue.

Due on Monday afternoon: discussion paper 1 on TV miniseries "The Holocaust, part 1"

5. Tue, Sept, 8: Discussion about Jewish life under the Nazis

Attention different location: *Visit of the Lion Feuchtwanger coll., Doheny library*

Required reading: Engel, pp. 38-49

Due on Wed. afternoon: discussion paper 2 on "Kristallnacht" based on individual research

6. Thu, Sept, 10: Discussion about Kristallnacht

Watching in class "Kristallnacht: Testimonies of the Shoah Video Archive"

Required reading: Gruner, chapter 1 on Germany.

7. Tue, Sept, 15: Voices of the victims

Attention different location: *Visit of the Shoah Archive at Leavey Library*

Required reading: Gruner, chapter 4 on Austria.

Discussion of open questions

8. Thu, Sept, 16: Occupation of Poland

Watching in class: The Holocaust, TV-Miniseries 1978, Part 2

Due on Mon. afternoon: discussion paper 3 on TV show "Holocaust" part 2

9. Tue, Sept, 22: Discussion about TV show "Holocaust" part 2

Required reading: Gruner, Chapter 6.

10. Thu, Sept, 24: Discussion about the Movie: The Pianist, 2002, Roman Polanski

Due on Monday, discussion paper 4 about the class so far

11. Tue, Sept, 29: Discussion about Jurek Becker, Jacob the Liar

12. Thu, Oct. 1: Invasion of the Soviet Union

Watching in class documentary of the Shoah institute "Spell your Name"

Due on Monday, discussion paper 5 on "spell your name"

13. Tue, Oct. 6: Discussion about "Spell your Name"

Tentatively: Attention different location: *Holocaust book collection at Doheny library.*

14. Thu, Oct. 8: Mid-term Conclusions and Assessment

15. Tue, Oct.13: Mid-term exam based on required reading up to this date and class discussions

16. Thu, Oct. 15: Watching in class: The Holocaust, TV-Miniseries, part 3

Due on Tuesday in class: Research paper-topic (Please explain your subject and provide a preliminary list of the literature and the primary sources you will use in your paper on one page)

17. Tue, Oct. 20: Discussion in class about the TV miniseries Holocaust, part 3

18. Thu, Oct. 22: The Final Solution

Watching in class parts of the documentary: Shoah (1985), Claude Lanzmann

Required reading: Engel, pp. 50-61.

Due on Mon. discussion paper on Shoah documentary

19. Tue, Oct. 27: Discussion of Rutka's Notebook. A voice from the Holocaust

20. Thu, Oct. 29: Watching in class TV miniseries, Holocaust, part 4

Due on Mon., discussion paper 6 on TV Holocaust, part 4

21. Tue, Nov. 3: Discussion on TV Holocaust part 4

22. Thu, Nov. 5: The Final Solution

Discussion of Primo Levi, "Survival in Auschwitz"

23. Tue, Nov. 10: Forced Labor and Rescue

Discussion of movie: Schindler's list, 1993, Steven Spielberg,

Required reading: Gruner, chapter 9.

Due on Mon, discussion paper 7 on Sophie Scholl

24. Thu, Nov. 12: German Resistance

Discussion on the Movie "Sophie Scholl – the last days", 2005, Marc Rothemund

25. Tue, Nov. 17: tentative: discussion in class with a movie script writer

26. Thu, Nov. 19: Rescue and Abandonment

Discussion of Anne Michaels, "Fugitive Pieces"

27. Tue, Nov. 24: Watching in class: TV show The Holocaust, part 5

Required reading: Engel, pp. 62-77.

28. Thu, Nov. 26: Thanksgiving!

29. Tue, Dec. 1: The Aftermath: Trials and Denials

Watching in class parts of the documentary: The Nuremberg Trial, 2008

30. Thu, Dec. 3: The Assessment: Conclusions and Open Questions