

JUDS 1820: HOLOCAUST LITERATURE: SPRING, 2014

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 Office Hours: Mon., 2:00-4:00, or by appointment

Course Description:

We will read diaries, memoirs, short stories, novels, and poems that portray four aspects of the genocide of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its allies and collaborators during the years 1933-1945, known as the Holocaust: the ghetto, the concentration camp, survival by hiding and/or disguising one's identity, and post-war life. As we discuss these works we will seek to understand how the realities of this horrendous period are portrayed in the writings of those who experienced the Holocaust. Our readings will be supplemented by the viewing of a film based on the autobiography of a Holocaust survivor. We will also view video recordings of testimonies by Holocaust survivors and read stories by children of Holocaust survivors, which portray the impact of the Holocaust on their lives.

Course Goals:

- An opportunity to sample a number of genres of literature written by survivors of the Holocaust.
- A greater understanding of the process in which historical reality is transformed into prose, poetry, and film.
- An examination of a variety of historical, psychological, and theological issues associated with the Holocaust.

Required Texts (available for purchase at the Brown University Bookstore and on reserve at Rockefeller Library):

Lawrence Langer, ed., *Art from the Ashes*
 Isaiah Spiegel, *Ghetto Kingdom: Tales of the Lodz Ghetto*
 Jurik Becker, *Jacob the Liar*
 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*
 Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, *Auschwitz: True Tales From a Grotesque Land*
 Ida Fink, *The Journey*
 Melvin Jules Bukiet, ed., *Nothing Makes You Free: Writings by Descendants of Jewish Holocaust Survivors*

During the first week of the semester, you should read the "Historical Overview" of the Holocaust from *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust*, at the OCRA web site for the course. The course password is: liberation.

1/22 Introduction

I. THE GHETTO

1/24 Isaiah Spiegel, *Ghetto Kingdom*, vii-xxvii, 3-23

1/27 Isaiah Spiegel, *Ghetto Kingdom*, 24-43

1/29 Isaiah Spiegel, *Ghetto Kingdom*, 44-67

1/31 Isaiah Spiegel, *Ghetto Kingdom*, 68-94

2/3 Isaiah Spiegel, *Ghetto Kingdom*, 95-128

2/5 Jozef Zelkowicz, "Days of Nightmare;" Avraham Tory, "Memoir;" Bernard Gotfryd, "The Last Morning" (*Art from the Ashes*, 197-233; 257-262)

2/7 Jurek Becker, *Jacob the Liar*, 1-60

2/10 Jurek Becker, *Jacob the Liar*, 60-125

2/12 Jurek Becker, *Jacob the Liar*, 126-182

2/14 Jurek Becker, *Jacob the Liar*, 182-248

2/17 NO CLASS

II. THE CONCENTRATION CAMP

2/19 Jankiel Wiernik, "One Year in Treblinka;" Jacques Furmanski, "Conversation with a Dead Man;" Charlotte Delbo, "Voices" (*Art from the Ashes*, 17-51; 70-92)

2/21 Elie Wiesel, "A Plea for the Dead;" Tadeusz Borowski, "This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen" (*Art from the Ashes*, 137-152; 342-356)

2/24 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 9-41

2/26 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 42-86

2/28 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 87-122

3/3 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 123-187

3/5 Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, *Auschwitz*, ix-xii; 3-40

- 3/7 Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, *Auschwitz*, 41-78
- 3/10 Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, *Auschwitz*, 79-120
- 3/12 Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, *Auschwitz*, 121-181
- 3/14 MIDTERM EXAMINATION

III. HIDING AND DISGUISE

- 3/17 Aharon Appelfeld, *Tzili (Art from the Ashes)*, 271-300)
- 3/19 Aharon Appelfeld, *Tzili (Art from the Ashes)*, 300-341

SPRING BREAK

- 3/31 Ida Fink, *The Journey*, 3-62
- 4/2 Ida Fink, *The Journey*, 63-129
- 4/4 Ida Fink, *The Journey*, 130-192
- 4/7 Ida Fink, *The Journey*, 193-250
- 4/9 Discussion of film: *Europa Europa*

<p>THURS., APRIL 10: ESSAY ON PERSONAL RESPONSE TO THE HOLOCAUST DUE BY E-MAIL, 12 MIDNIGHT BETWEEN 4/10 AND 4/11</p>
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- 4/11 Discussion of Video Holocaust Testimonies by Leon S. (40 minutes); Helen K. (31 minutes); Edith P. (30 minutes); Rabbi Baruch G. (42 minutes)
View at: <<http://www.library.yale.edu/testimonies/education/singlewitness.html>>.
- 4/14 NO CLASS
- 4/16 NO CLASS

IV. POETRY

- 4/18 Poetry by Abraham Sutzkever: "In the Cell," "For My Child," "Burnt Pearls," "Poem About a Herring"
(*Art from the Ashes*, 577-581)
Poetry by Dan Pagis: "Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway Car," "Draft of a Reparations Agreement," "Footprints"
(*Art from the Ashes*, 588; 592; 593-596)
- 4/21 NO CLASS

- 4/23 Poetry by Paul Celan: "Death Fugue;" "Aspen Tree;" "With A Variable Key;" "Nocturnally Pouting;" "Tenebrae;" "Psalm"
(*Art from the Ashes*, 601-606; 608)
- 4/25 Poetry by Nelly Sachs: "O the Night of the Weeping Children!" "You Onlookers;" "If I Only Knew;" "Chorus of the Rescued;" "Peoples of the Earth;" "Landscape of Screams"
(*Art from the Ashes*, 638; 641; 650; 651-652)

V. HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS

- 4/28 Carl Friedman, "From *Nightfather*;" Ruth Kanfo Setton, "Down These Mean Streets;" Alan Kaufman, "The Purple Jew;" Melvin Jules Bukiet, ed., *Nothing Makes You Free*, 33-47; 94-109; 136-156
- 4/30 J. J. Steinfeld, "Dancing at the Club Holocaust;" Thane Rosenbaum, "Cattle Car Complex;" "Henri Raczymov, "From *Writing the Book of Esther*," Melvin Jules Bukiet, ed., *Nothing Makes You Free*, 182-218
- 5/2 Lily Brett, "Half There;" Alain Finkielkraut, "The Protagonist Introduced;" Melvin Jules Bukiet, "The Library of Moloch," Melvin Jules Bukiet, ed., *Nothing Makes You Free*, pp. 230-244; 357-381

Course Requirements

- **Attendance, Preparation and Participation (20%).**

Attendance is required. Each student is expected to complete the assigned reading for each class session. Be sure to bring the texts of each assigned reading to class. You are expected to be prepared to present at least five (5) passages per reading assignment to the class with comments or questions for class discussion.

- **Midterm Examination (20%)—In class on Friday, March 14, 2014.**
- **Essay (10 pages): Personal Response to the Holocaust (20%)—Due Thursday, April 10, 2014.** In this essay, you will choose an issue (or some related issues) raised by the prose and videos we have discussed in class and explore your response to the ways that the course material deals with this issue.
- **Final Examination (40%)— Thursday, May 8, 2014, at 2-5 pm.**