

## **Confronting Genocide: How Germans Remember Their Past**

Death is a Master from Germany (Paul Celan)

This is an upper-division lecture/discussion course that aims to provide students with an overview of the ways Germans in East and West have dealt with their “unmasterable” past. Topics include the trauma of war, destruction, expulsion, and genocide; guilt, punishment, and restitution; cultural representations of the past; and the institutionalization of memory. Alongside the historical instruction, students will be introduced to the *Visual History Archive*, the Shoah Foundation’s archive of about 52,000 interviews with Holocaust survivors and witnesses. They will learn to critically “read” audiovisual sources as a type of text and evaluate interviews for the purpose of research.

Instructor: Susanne Hillman [shillman@ucsd.edu](mailto:shillman@ucsd.edu) or 858-534-7661

Office hours: Wed. 2-4:30 pm or by appointment (SSHL Research Services, behind reference desk)

### Assigned Readings:

- Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading*.
- Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*. [electronic reserves]
- Thomas A. Kovach and Martin Walser, *The Burden of the Past*.
- Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*.
- W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*.
- Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*.
- Peter Weiss, *The Investigation*.

Books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore.

### Films:

- *Führer Ex*, dir. W. Bonengel (2002).
- *Das Leben der Anderen*, dir. F. Henckel von Donnersmarck (2006).

## Course Requirements:

- Attendance and participation: 10 %
- Pop quiz: 10 % of course grade
- Speer quiz: 10 % of course grade
- Film report: 10 % of course grade
- Research paper: 30 % of course grade
- Final exam: 30 %

In addition, you are *required* to attend either one of the two Holocaust survivor talks scheduled on 5 Oct. and 2 Nov. from 5-7 pm!

## CLASS SCHEDULE

- SEPTEMBER 23      Introduction: Germany's Unmasterable Past / Holocaust "Moments"  
*Reading: begin Speer, Inside the Third Reich*
- SEPTEMBER 26      Background: Germany, the Belated Nation (1871-1918)
- SEPTEMBER 28      The Nazis Come to Power (1919-1933)
- SEPTEMBER 30      The Third Reich I: The Racial State (1933-1939)  
*Reading: Borchert, "Generation Without Farewell"*  
*"Railways, by Day and by Night"*
- OCTOBER 3          The Third Reich II: The Twisted Road to Auschwitz (1939-1945)  
*Reading: Borchert, "The Crows Fly Home at Night"*  
*"There are Voices in the Air – at Night"*  
*"Conversations over the Roofs"*

OCTOBER 5           Germany at War: Bystanders, Victims, Perpetrators  
*Reading:* Borchert, “The Skittle Alley”  
“Jesus Won’t Play Any More”  
“The Cat was Frozen in the Snow”  
“The Nightingale Sings”  
“Radi”

**Holocaust survivor talk:** attendance mandatory!

OCTOBER 7           Reaping the Whirlwind: the Trauma of Air War  
*Reading:* Sebald, “Air War and Literature”

OCTOBER 10         Germany’s *Stunde Null*: Blaming Hitler  
*Reading:* Borchert, “The Coffee is Indefinable”  
“The Kitchen Clock”  
“Rats do Sleep at Night”  
“He too had a Lot of Trouble with the Wars”  
“In May, in May cried the Cuckoo”  
“God’s Eye”

OCTOBER 12         The Nuremberg Trial: Victors’ Justice?  
*Reading:* Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*

OCTOBER 14         Germans Outside the Door: POW Homecomings

OCTOBER 17         “The Man Outside” (reading and discussion of play)  
*Reading:* Borchert, “The Man Outside”

- OCTOBER 19           Germany Divided: Rehabilitation and Restitution
- OCTOBER 21           The Auschwitz Trial: Reckonings
- OCTOBER 24           “The Investigation” (reading and discussion of play)  
*Reading: Weiss, The Investigation*  
Kovach & Walser, “Martin Walser: Our Auschwitz” (1965)

- OCTOBER 26           1968: Blaming the Fathers  
*Reading: Langer, Holocaust Testimonies, pp. 1-76*

- OCTOBER 28           Albert Speer: The Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde  
*Reading: Finish Speer*

**Speer quiz at beginning of class!**

- OCTOBER 31           Nazi Children

- NOVEMBER 2           The Bitburg Controversy: Reagan and Kohl  
*Reading: Kovach & Walser, “Martin Walser: No End to Auschwitz” (1979) and “Handshake with Ghosts” (1979)*

**Holocaust survivor talk: attendance mandatory!**

- NOVEMBER 4           The Historians’ Debate: failed *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*  
*Reading: Kovach & Walser, “Martin Walser: Speaking of Germany (A Report)” (1988)*

- NOVEMBER 7           Unification and Its Discontents: Rostock, Solingen, Mölln

**Film report due at beginning of class!**

NOVEMBER 9 Neo-Nazis and Holocaust Deniers: discussion

NOVEMBER 11 Jews in United Germany  
*Reading: Langer, Holocaust Testimonies, pp. 77-161.*

NOVEMBER 14 The Goldhagen Debate: A Nation of Murderers?

NOVEMBER 16 The Wehrmacht Exhibit: Blaming the Grandfathers

NOVEMBER 18 Film: *The Unknown Soldier*, dir. M. Verhoeven

NOVEMBER 21 Memorials: KZs, Memoirs, Museums

**Research paper due at the beginning of class!**

NOVEMBER 23 The Ruins of Memory: Surviving the Cataclysm  
*Reading: Langer, Holocaust Testimonies, pp. 162-205*

NOVEMBER 26 **Thanksgiving holiday – no class!**

NOVEMBER 28 The Walser Moment: Auschwitz as Moral Bludgeon  
*Reading: Kovach & Walser, “Experiences while Composing a Sunday Speech” (1998) and “On Talking to Yourself : A Flagrant Attempt” (2000)*

NOVEMBER 30 The “Silent Majority”: Autobahn and Mother Cross

DECEMBER 2 Humanizing Hitler  
Film and discussion: *Downfall*, dir. O. Hirschbiegel