

WHY HITLER? HOW AUSCHWITZ?

HIEU 158 Spring 2009 HSS 2250 (Ledden Auditorium)

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Office hours: Tuesday 10-12 pm

This is an upper-division lecture/discussion course on the history of the Holocaust, from Germany's military defeat in 1918 to the downfall of the Third Reich in 1945. Our main focus will be on the twelve pivotal years from 1933 to 1945 when Germany plunged ever deeper into barbarity. Topics covered include the cultural and economic background to the rise of the National Socialist racial state; the role of Hitler in war and genocide; ordinary men and women and the "Lucifer Effect"; survivors' experiences; and the Holocaust in memory and representation.

Course Requirements

OPTION A

- a) Midterm (30 % of your course grade)
- b) Essay (30 %)
- c) Final exam (40 %)

OPTION B

- a) Instead of taking the midterm, students attend a weekly discussion section led by William Skiles (wskiles@ucsd.edu). Sections will be held Tu/Th 11:30-12:20 pm in HSS 4025. Once you sign up, attendance is mandatory (30 %). Space is limited.
- b) Essay (30 %)
- c) Final exam (40 %)

Information on Essay and Exams

Information on exam and essay format will be given at the appropriate time.

Make-up exams will only be given in exceptional situations and in keeping with the dictum that a make-up should be a memorable experience. Students wishing to fulfill their significant writing requirement may do so by expanding on the assigned essay. If you are interested in this option, talk to me early on in the course.

Required Reading

- Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, second ed. [referred to in the syllabus as *WG*]
- Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* [*OM*]
- Sebastian Haffner, *The Meaning of Hitler* [*MH*].
- Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* [*SA*].
- Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale*
- George Steiner, *The Portage To San Cristobal of A.H.* [*PSC*].

Books are available for purchase at the bookstore and on reserve in the library.

Films

The Pianist is an integral part of the course materials. You are required to watch it at your own leisure or to attend the screening TBA. There will be a question pertaining to the film on the final. Film clips shown throughout the course may be part of your midterm and final exam in the form of short identification questions.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

31 March: Why “Holocaust”? Approaches to Studying a Catastrophe

2 April: From Religious to Racial Antisemitism – European Developments up to 1914

Readings: Bergen, *WG*, preface and ch. 1.

Film clips: *Murderers Among Us* and *An American Tail*

WEEK 2

7 April: World War One and Its Consequences

9 April: Who Was Adolf Hitler?

Readings: Bergen, *WG*, ch. 2 and Haffner, *MH*, 1-21 and 73-95.

WEEK 3

14 April: The Third Reich Comes to Power: A National Socialist Revolution?

16 April: The Consolidation of the Racial State

Readings: Bergen, *WG*, ch. 3, Haffner, *MH*, 23-72.

Film clips: *Jud Süss*, *Triumph of the Will* and *Swing Kids*

WEEK 4

21 April: The Failure of Appeasement and “Crystal Night”

23 April: Outbreak of War and the Twisted Road to Auschwitz

Readings: Bergen, *WG*, ch. 4 and 5, Haffner, *MH*, 97-121.

WEEK 5

28 April: Deportations and Life in the Ghetto

30 April: Operation Barbarossa and the Wannsee Conference / The Death Camp Universe

Readings: Bergen, *WG*, ch. 6, Haffner, *MH*, 123-145; begin Browning, *OM*.

Film clips: *Jakob the Liar* and *Conspiracy*

WEEK 6

5 May: How did the Christian Churches Deal with Persecution and Extermination? Talk by William Skiles with following discussion

7 May: **MIDTERM** for students not attending weekly discussion sections

Readings: continue Browning, *OG*, begin Levi, *SA*.

Film clip: *Murderers Among Us* (the Sunflower story: is forgiveness possible?)

WEEK 7

12 May: Victims and Perpetrators I: Primo Levi in Auschwitz: "There is no why."

14 May: Victims and Perpetrators II: Ordinary Men or Hitler's Willing Executioners? The "Lucifer Effect"

Readings: Bergen, *WG*, ch. 7, finish Levi, *SA* and Browning, *OM*.

WEEK 8

19 May: Resistance and Collaboration: Jewish Councils vs. Jewish Rebels

21 May: The Problem of Rescue, Operation Valkyrie, and the Death Marches / War's End

Readings: Bergen, *WG*, ch. 8 and conclusion and Haffner, *MH*, 147-165.

Film clips: *Escape from Sobibor* and *Downfall*

Essays due at the beginning of class on 19 May – NO EXCEPTIONS!!!

WEEK 9

26 May: The Nuremberg Trial – Victor's Justice? / Eichmann and the Banality of Evil

28 May: Visit of a Holocaust Survivor!!!

Readings: Begin Steiner, *PSC*.

WEEK 10

2 June: Remembering and Representing the Holocaust: an Industry? / Steiner Discussion

4 June: Why Study the Holocaust? / The Holocaust in Comparative Perspective

Readings: Spiegelman, *Maus I* and finish Steiner, *PSC*.

Film Clips: *The Producers* and *Life is Beautiful*

Final Exam Monday 8 June, 11:30 am – 2:30 pm, room TBA