

SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Political Science, Philosophy and Religion

UI-440
The Holocaust
Section 01
Fall 2002

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SYLLABUS

Catalog Description (including prerequisites):

A critical analysis and examination of some of the fundamental political philosophical questions, normative concepts and ethical problems of the Holocaust. (3)

Course Content

This course consists of a critical examination of the intellectual, cultural, philosophical, political and historical origins and development of the Holocaust. Extensive analysis of several major philosophical, political, intellectual historical, literary and autobiographical works that have made a contribution in providing deep insights and raising significant questions on the Holocaust. In particular, analysis of key normative concepts and issues that stimulated such writers: anti-Semitism, intentionalism v. functionalism (i.e., the origins of the Holocaust), the "uniqueness" of the Holocaust, the political ideology of Nazism, Jewish resistance, the articulation of experiences of the Holocaust, the problems of memory and representation, theological and religious consequences of the Holocaust, the ethical issue of choices, Nazi propaganda, the plight of victims, and the roles and motivations of bystanders and perpetrators. This particular course will analyze political philosophical concepts, normative principles and issues from the interconnected perspectives of politics (political systems), culture, religion, and social philosophy (social systems), and ethical theory (behavioral systems). This course is designed to demonstrate to students the linkage between diverse political philosophical systems of thought and various forms of social and political behavior, public policies and political institutions. However, the subject of the Holocaust is too complex, vast and sensitive to be fully articulated in any one particular course or discipline. This course does **not** attempt to focus on **all** of the pertinent literature, history, politics, sociology, philosophy, psychology and theology of the Holocaust. Instead, it provides an intellectual context for raising serious questions, and provides an analytical frame of reference for insights on the significance, background, evolution, and practice of antisemitism and the complexities of the Jewry Holocaust. The unique nature of the Shoah, the attempted genocidal destruction of all European Jewry, and other groups by the Nazis and their collaborators is one of profound moral importance, and absolutely merits critical philosophical scrutiny.

Nature of Course

The Holocaust defies literature. ... We think we are describing an event, we transmit only its reflection. No one has the right to speak for the dead. ... Still, the story had to be told. In spite of all risks, all possible misunderstandings. It needed to be told for the sake of our children.

Elie Wiesel

This course consists of a conceptual analysis of the most significant political philosophical, moral, and intellectual historical ideas, issues and themes of the Holocaust. Students will be encouraged to develop competency working in the area of ethical justification by applying moral principles and logical arguments to normative problems and issues in conjunction with the political theories of the Holocaust. Students will be encouraged and required to participate in an active Socratic dialogue with the instructor and with other students. At the end of each session, a series of analytical questions will be posed to students. Students will be **required** to respond orally to such questions in the following

session. Consistent oral participation is not only a particular requirement of each individual student, but a necessity for the intellectual progress and understanding of the Holocaust for the entire class.

Required Books:

Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction Of The European Jews*. Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985. (Textbook Rental).

Donald L. Niewyk, ed., *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*. Houghton Mifflin, 1997. (University Bookstore).

John K. Roth & Michael Berenbaum, eds., *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications*. Paragon House, 1989. (Textbook Rental).

Elie Wiesel, *The Night Trilogy: Night, Dawn, The Accident*. Hill and Wang, 1990. (University Bookstore).

This course consists of lectures, readings, and discussions. Each part is meant to complement the others.

Examinations and Course Requirements:

The grade which a student receives will be based upon three major exams (one of which is the final), a major research paper, and brief oral presentation in conjunction with the paper. The exams will be composites of objective questions (multiple choice and/or identification) and analytical essays. Examination questions will have as their source: class lectures, discussions, and required readings. It is the student's responsibility to take the exams when they are scheduled. Students are responsible for **all** the work covered in **each** session.

Evaluation

Grading System:

1st Midterm Exam:	20%
2nd Midterm Exam:	20%
Research Paper:	35%
Oral Presentation:	5%
Final Exam:	<u>20%</u>

Total: 100%

Grading Scale:

100-90 = A
89-80 = B
79-70 = C
69-60 = D
59-0 = E

Following each exam, students must perform an evaluation of their grade progress. **Those students who are doing poorly should make it their business to meet with the instructor.** Each student is encouraged to make use of scheduled office hours, or to make an appointment if those hours are inconvenient. Occasionally throughout the semester, additional articles will be assigned for class reading.

Research Paper:

A **15-20** page paper involving a highly focused substantive investigation of some of the complex themes and issues of the Holocaust is required.

Part One

I. Procedure:

- A. Each student will randomly select an "Identification Card" (provided through the courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The cards provide a brief biography of a real person and victim of the Holocaust. Most of the victims identified by the cards perished, and only a small number survived.
- B. Locate, collect, read, and research a variety of scholarly sources (e.g., journal articles, magazine articles, newspaper articles, scholarly essays and books, Web sites etc.) that offer information and critical analysis to help you recreate, as much as is intellectually and ethically possible, the "identity" of the person depicted by your card. An annotated "Webography" will be distributed to students with helpful Holocaust Web sites.
- C. You are expected to write a very detailed commentary and analysis of the context or background of the individual, not of the individual her or himself. Focus on the particular groups or categories the person is identified with. For example, what were the experiences of a Jewish female living in a ghetto in Kaluszyn, (a small rural community), Poland? This particular part of your project should be approximately **six to eight** pages in length. In particular, you should complete several (not necessarily all) of the following:
 - (1) Discuss the historical context of the individual's general life experiences. What specific historical forces or factors shaped the general environment that impacted such individuals?
 - (2) Discuss and analyze the political and legal issues and problems confronting such individuals. For example, what particular political and civil rights were limited or denied? Did your selected individual have any legal rights of property ownership? Specifically, how were civil liberties curtailed? Were there any rights of property engagement or participation?
 - (3) Discuss and analyze the economic context of the individual's general life experiences. What particular occupational or professional experiences did such an individual probably encounter? What type of property did such an individual own? When and how were such property rights and transactions disrupted?
 - (4) Discuss and analyze the most significant social and demographic factors that shaped such an individual's life experiences. For example, what was the nature of the urban or rural environment, in which the individual lived? What was the ethnic and religious composite of the population of that particular community? What voluntary associations or social groups would such an individual have?
 - (5) Discuss and analyze the most significant cultural factors that shaped such an individual's life experiences. For example, what was the nature of the educational system (formal and informal)? What was the intellectual status of the languages used by such an individual? What were the dominant modes of cultural and intellectual enrichment? What was the role of religion upon shaping the intellectual and cultural environment of the individual?

Part Two

I. Procedure:

- A. You are expected to write (approx. **10** pages) detailed substantive analysis and commentary on **two** of the following political philosophical, ethical, or normative political concepts or issues: 1) civil, political, and natural rights of victims; 2) political ideology of Nazism; 3) memory and representation of the Holocaust; 4) unique nature of the Holocaust; 5) Holocaust commensurability and comparative genocide; 6) political obligations/duties; 7) medical experimentation and torture; 8) moral obligations of "ordinary Germans"; 9) moral obligations of bystanders (individuals and nations); 10) the moral and political decision-making of Holocaust rescuers; 11) the role of international law and war crimes; 12) moral and political dilemmas,

options and decision-making of the *Judenrate* (Jewish Councils); 13) internationalism v. functionalism; 14) Jewish resistance; and 15) the multiple theological and religious implications of the Holocaust particularly for Judaism and Christianity. Additional concepts can also be substituted by students upon the permission of the instructor.

- B. You are expected to make a brief oral presentation (10 minutes) based upon the deep insights you have gained through your scrutiny of one the political philosophical, ethical, or normative concepts addressed in your research paper. Additional details will be provided about this assignment during the semester.
- C. The arguments and analysis presented in your paper should be designed from a serious and careful reading of a minimum of **three** articles included in one or more political science, political philosophy, philosophy, intellectual history, sociology, and religion scholarly journals (many of which will be mentioned during the semester) and various critical studies (books) of the topics. You may also integrate a **minimal** amount of material from class discussion and reading assignments into your paper. Every student should submit a paper proposal, including a discussion of specific elements of the paper (topics and normative concepts, preliminary list of scholarly citations, and thematic organization) no later than **September 5, 2002**. However, to receive **any** credit for your paper, it must be submitted no later than **November 21, 2002**. For proper style, refer to: Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*; Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*; Holt, Baker, Begley, Eison, Gaskins, Grebing, and Strickland, *Writing Across the Curriculum, a Student Handbook*; and *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Students will be encouraged to go through various assessment steps at the Writing Center in Kent Library to complete their papers. **Plagiarism**: Consult the University Bulletin (pages 16-17) on **Academic Honesty**.

Assigned Reading

As we will study critically the Holocaust in a topical, thematic, and conceptual manner (instead of a sequential chapter order), each reading selection or book should be read as a systematic and integrated whole. However, students will be consistently alerted to the expected stage of reading progress. Students are required to complete all the assigned readings. Additional readings, theorists, films, and videos will be assigned during the semester. Particular students or student groups will be assigned as lead topic discussants on particular sessions for specific required reading selections primarily from the Roth & Berenbaum, and Niewyk readers. It is the **responsibility** of the topic discussants to be prepared to verbally present to the class the following: 1) an identification of the central question, theme, issue, concept or problem articulated by the article, 2) a detailed summarization of the basic arguments, perspectives and value judgments expressed by the article, 3) a critical assessment or evaluation of the stated or implied arguments and positions contained in the article, and finally 4) a set of analytical, thought-provoking, challenging questions to stimulate further discussion by the entire class of the assigned reading. These assigned topical discussions of reading selections are **critical** for the quality of the learning experience of this class.

Reading Assignments and Conceptual Outline for Class Discussions

I. Methodological Context

- A. The Language and Purpose of Political Philosophy and Theory in Conceptualizing the Holocaust.
- B. The languages and Techniques of the Social Sciences in Studying the Holocaust.

Recommended Readings: (Reserve) (R), George Kateb, *The Main Characteristics of Political Theory*; (R), Milford Q. Sibley, *Politics and the History of Political Ideas*; (R), Thomas Spragens, Jr., *Politics and Political Theory: An Introduction*. (R), Sheldon S. Wolin, *Political Philosophy and Philosophy*; and (R), Lawrence Herson, *Introduction to Politics of Ideas*. Required Readings: Hannah Arendt, *Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps*; Alan Rosenberg, *The Crisis in Knowing and Understanding the Holocaust*; Dan Magilrshak, *The "Incomprehensibility" of the Holocaust: Tightening up Some Loose Usage*; and Alice L. and Roy Eckardt, *Studying the Holocaust's Impact Today: Some Dilemmas of Language and Method*. These required reading selections will either be distributed in class or placed on Reserve in Kent Library. Viewing of the film, *Nuit et Brouillard (Night and Fog)*.

II. Cultural, Intellectual, and Historical Context

- A. The Deep Western Roots of Antisemitism.
- B. Jewish Emancipation, Acculturation, and Assimilation.
- C. German Antisemitism: Hitler's and the Nazis *Weltanschauung* (Worldview).

Donald Niewyk, *Introduction*; Michael Berenbaum and John K. Roth, *Who, What, Where, When, How?* and Raul Hilberg, *Chapter One: Precedents*.

III. The Political Philosophical Context

- A. The Unique Nature of the Holocaust.
- B. The Political Ideology of Nazism.
- C. The Problematic Issue of the Origins of the Holocaust: Internationalism v. Functionalism.

Niewyk: Gerald Fleming, *"It is the Fuhrer's Wish"*; Hans Mommsen, *There Was No Fuhrer Order*; Christopher R. Browning, *A Product of Euphoria in Victory*; Berenbaum and Roth: All of *Part One*; and Raul Hilberg, *Chapter Two: Definition by Decree*. Selections from *Mein Kampf*. Viewing of the films, *Triumph of the Will*, *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew) and *Jud Suss*.

IV. The Role of Perpetrators: The Issue of Power and Powerlessness

Niewyk: Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*; Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*; and Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*; Raul Hilberg, *Chapter Three: Concentration*; *Chapter Four: Mobile Killing Operations*; *Chapter Five: Deportations*; *Chapter Six: Killing Center Operations*; and *Chapter Seven: The Nature of the Process*. Viewing of the film, *Conspiracy or The Wansee Conference*.

V. The Role of Bystanders: The Issue of Power and Powerlessness

Niewyk: David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*; Yehuda Bauer, *Negotiating for Jewish Lives*; Walter Laquer, *The Failure to Comprehend*; Raul Hilberg, *Chapter Eight: Rescue*. Viewing of the films, *Weapons of the Spirit* and *They Risked their Lives: Rescuers of the Holocaust*.

VI. The Role of Victims: The Issue of Power and Powerlessness

Niewyk: Bruno Bettelheim, *The Helpless Victims*; Terrence Des Pres, *The Will to Survive*; Richard Glazer, as told to Gitta Sereny, *Surviving Experiment Camp Trelinka*; Alexander Donat, *Surviving Slave Labor at Maidanek*; and all of *Chapter V, Gentiles During the Holocaust*; Berenbaum and Roth: All of *Part Two*; and Elie Wiesel, *The Night Trilogy* (entire text). Viewing of the film, *Night and Fog*. Recommended: *Europa, Europa*, and *Schindler's List*.

VII. Is Closure Conceivable?

- A. Jewish Resistance.
- B. Gentile Resistance.
- C. Remaining Religious Implications and Questions.

Niewyk: Raul Hilberg, *Two Thousand Years of Jewish Appeasement*; Yehuda Bauer, *Forms of Jewish Resistance*; Isaiah Trunk, *Why the Jewish Councils Cooperated*; Berenbaum and Roth: All of *Part Three* and the *Epilogue*. Viewing of the film, *The White Rose*.

LINKS TO OTHER COURSE MATERIALS:

- [Course proposal](#)

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