

Seminar on the Holocaust

Sociology 344, Spring 2008

Hamilton College

Thursdays 1-4 PM, LIB 215

Instructor

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Office Hours: Drop-in hours Tuesday 1-4; appointments available Tuesday and Thursday 10:30-11:30; Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday after 4; and other times if necessary.

Website: <http://academics.hamilton.edu/sociology/marthur/classes.html>

The Holocaust was an extreme and a unique event in human history. But it was hardly a “historical accident.” Over a period of little more than a decade, Jews, homosexuals, Roma, political adversaries, and mentally and physically disabled people were systematically marginalized and later murdered. This immense act of destruction required the co-ordination of millions of peoples’ actions. How could this happen in the twentieth century, at the height of modern western civilization, in a country respected for its achievements in the arts, in literature and in philosophy?

This question remains challenging to us today. Have we fully understood what made this event possible? What are the implications of the fact that this happened for our assumptions about modern society? How can we as citizens learn lessons from the Holocaust and how do we include them in our everyday practice? The course asks systematically over the course of a semester: how could this happen and what can we learn about modern social life—including contemporary U.S. society—by looking at evidence about the Holocaust?

Required Materials:

Arendt, Hannah. 2006. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Penguin Classics. (Other editions are acceptable).

Browning, Christopher R. 1998. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. Harper Perennial.

Douglas, Lawrence. 2005. *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust*. Yale University Press.

Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. 1997. *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. Vintage.

Todorov, Tzvetan. 1996. *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camp*. Henry Holt and Company.

Wyman, David. 1998 -or- 2007. *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*. The New Press.

A series of articles and selections is also available on e-reserves—these are marked with an E in the reading list below. The required course texts will also be made available on reserve. In some cases, readings may also be available on websites. A few selections are available on Blackboard under “Course Documents” and are marked with a “B” on the syllabus; please read these on Blackboard even if e-reserve copies are also available.

Grading:

1. **PARTICIPATION (20%).** This is a 300 level seminar—a small class in which the contribution of each member of the class is crucial for the success of the course as a whole. In order to do well in this course, you must regularly attend class and come prepared by having done the required course readings. Regular participation in class is required and will count towards your final grade. What counts is not that you are always right but that you engage with the materials and other students' thoughts with serious intellectual effort and with respect for each other's feelings, backgrounds, opinions, and ideas. If you have serious difficulty speaking in class, please meet with me early in the semester to develop an alternative plan for fulfilling this requirement, such as regular office hours visits.
2. **PAPERS (60%).** There are three required papers in this course. The first two are analytical papers that ask you to engage with the arguments of the texts; the third is a more creative assignment. As a rule of thumb, you should expect each paper to be approximately 6 to 8 pages in length. Details about these papers will be distributed as the semester progresses.
3. **ANALYTICAL READING RESPONSES (15%).** You will choose five weeks spread across the semester on which to write short (1-2 page) reading responses; at least two of these must be completed prior to spring break. Questions to focus your responses will be posted on the course website early in the semester; however, papers will only be accepted on the indicated dates. With prior approval only, you may choose to write on a topic you have come up with yourself. These papers have two purposes: first, to help you engage with the difficult theoretical material we cover in this course, and second, to help you prepare for full participation in seminar discussions. These analytical reading responses can not duplicate content covered in longer course papers.
Option: Those students who are interested in writing an essay for the Ralph Lemkin Essay Prize may submit that essay in lieu of three of the reading responses; if you are interested in this option you must see me prior to February 28th to discuss it.
4. **FINAL ESSAY (5%).** During the final exam period, you will write a short final essay. A set of 2-3 questions covering the entire course will be distributed at the end of the semester, and you will choose one to write about in 3-5 pages. Students who submit final essays that do not evidence mastery of the course material and serious engagement with the assignment will not be eligible for a grade above a B in the course, no matter how good their prior work over the course of the semester.
5. **READING.** Do be aware that some of the reading for this course is emotionally and/or theoretically difficult; it is normal to struggle with it, but you should come to class prepared to discuss it anyway. I reserve the right to lower your semester grade if it comes to my attention that you have not been faithfully completing all reading assignments for the course.
6. **ATTENDANCE.** This course is a small seminar that meets only once a week and your attendance is required. Because of the few class meetings we have, coming late is like missing an entire class and missing a class is like missing an entire week of another course. Therefore, students who miss more than one class meeting or who are repeatedly late without documented excuses will experience a significant grade penalty; this penalty will compound with additional absences or lateness.

Schedule of Classes

Readings must be completed prior to the course date for which they are assigned. The schedule of readings is tentative and may be changed at any time; outside events such as film screenings (including the film *Imaginary Witness*) and guest lectures may be added.

- January 24 **Introduction to the Course—Why Study the Holocaust in Sociology?**
Weissmark, *Justice Matters*, “Introduction” (3-22) E
Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*, “Prologue” (3-46)
- January 31 **Theoretical Orientations: Modernity, Bureaucracy, and Racism**
Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (409-426) E
Baumann, *Modernity & Ambivalence*, “The Scandal of Ambivalence” (18-54) E
Browning, “The German Bureaucracy and the Holocaust” from *Genocide* (145-149) E
Weber, “Bureaucracy” (196-244 in Gerth and Mills) E
Gilman, *The Jew’s Body*, “The Jew’s Nose” (169-193) E
Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, “Elements of Anti-Semitism” (168-208) E
- February 7 **Why Did the Holocaust Happen in Germany?**
Goldhagen, pages 3-131, 239-283, and 375-463
Elias, *The Germans*, “Introduction” (1-20) E
- February 14 **Why Not Germany?**
Browning, pages xv-224
- February 21 Class Cancelled
FIRST PAPER DUE February 26th
- February 28 **State Citizenship and the Refugee Problem**
Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, “The Perplexities of the Rights of Man” (290-302) E
Wyman, pages 3-58 and 209-353
- March 6 **Capitalism and Profit**
Marx, “Wage Labor and Capital” from *The Marx-Engels Reader* (203-217) E
Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews*, “Aryanizations” (92-132) E
Pross, *Paying for the Past: The Struggle Over Reparations for Surviving Victims*, “Taking Stock” (165-183) E
Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: I.G. Farben in the Nazi Era*, “Commerce and Complicity” (325-376) E

March 13

Science, Medicine, and Technology

Aly and Roth, *The Nazi Census: Identification and Control in the Third Reich*, “Introduction” (1-8), “Statistics on Jews” (56-93) and “The Value of a Human Being” (94-98) **B**

Black, *IBM and the Holocaust*, “France and Holland” (292-332) E

Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, “The Destruction of ‘Lives Not Worth Living’” (177-222) E

Benedict, “Caring While Killing: Nursing in the Euthanasia Centers” from *Experience & Expression* (95-111) E

Misterlich, *Doctors of Infamy*, Excerpts from the Doctor’s Trials (55-90 and 146-167) E

Cohen, “The Ethics of Using Medical Data from Nazi Experiments,” available online at <http://www.jlaw.com/Articles/NaziMedEx.html>

April 3

The Concentration Camp

Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*, “Neither Heroes Nor Saints” and “Neither Monsters Nor Beasts” (47-198)

Neiberger, “An Uncommon Bond of Friendship: Family and Survival in Auschwitz” from *Resisting the Holocaust* (133-150) E

April 10

Obedience and Resistance

Arendt, pages 21-111, 135-150, and 234-298

Todorov, “Nonviolence and Resignation” & “Forms of Combat” (197-228)

Glass, “Two Models of Political Organization: Collaboration Versus Resistance,” *ABS* 43:2 (278-300) E

Tec, “Jewish Resistance in Belorussian Forests: Fighting and the Rescue of Jews by Jews” from *Resisting the Holocaust* (77-94) E

SECOND PAPER DUE

April 17

Retelling and Remembering

Adorno, *Never Again! The Holocaust’s Challenge for Educators*, “Education After Auschwitz” (11-20) E

Segev, *The Seventh Million*, “Prologue: Ka-Tzentnik’s Trip” (3-14) E

Spiegelman, *Maus II*, “Auschwitz (time flies)” (39-74) **B**

Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, “Theorizing Remembering” (50-74) and “Memory and Trauma” (139-145) E

Young, *The Texture of Memory*, “Introduction” (1-16) E

April 23

Guest Lecture by James Young

Dwight Lounge, Bristol Campus Center, 7:30 PM

Preceded by dinner with Professor Young

Young, *The Texture of Memory*, Excerpts E

Young, *At Memory’s Edge*, Excerpts E

Segev, *The Seventh Million*, “Holocaust and Heroism” (421-445) E

Visit the websites of various Holocaust museums and memorials (links on course website)

- April 24 **Memorializing**
Discussion of readings and Professor Young's visit
- May 1 **Law and Denial**
Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, 1-10 and 64-262
Douglas, "The Shrunken Head of Buchenwald," *Representations* 63 (39-64) E
Shermer and Grobman, *Denying History*, "How Deniers Distort History"
(99-122) E
(Attendance at Hamilton Yom HaShoah Ceremonies Strongly Encouraged)
- May 8 **Course Review and Summary**
Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*, "The Perils of Judgment," "Telling, Judging,
Understanding," and "Notes on Morality" (229-296)
THIRD PAPER DUE
- May 15 **Final Essay Due**
The final essay must be handed in to my mailbox AND emailed to me prior
to 1 pm on Thursday, May 15th.

Course Policies and Resources

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to attend all class meetings. If you must miss class for a legitimate reason, such as illness, a family emergency, religious observance, or required attendance at intercollegiate athletic competition, it is your responsibility to let me know in advance or as soon as possible afterwards. Any time you miss class, you should get notes from another student and you should come see me during my office hours. As this is a course that meets only once a week, more than one non-emergency absence over the course of the semester may result in a significant grade penalty.

The participation grade in this course is designed to measure the extent to which you are an engaged and active thinker and contributor to the class as a whole. Therefore, students who earn full credit for participation will attend class, contribute to class discussions, and meet with me privately at least once during the semester. Please remember that some of the issues we discuss in this course may be emotional and/or controversial. Respectful course participation means arguing with ideas rather than attacking people. Finally, if you are a person who has difficulty speaking in class, it is your responsibility to find another way to demonstrate your engagement with the material, such as email conversations or coming to office hours more frequently; I also encourage you to go to the Oral Communication Center to work on your skills and confidence so that you can improve your participation.

In addition, all assignments are due at the start of class on the assigned due date. If you can not attend class on the day an assignment is due, please make your best effort to turn it in ahead of time: the assignment must be turned in to my mailbox in the sociology department before noon. If you will be away from campus or have spontaneous printer problems, you may email your paper to me before noon; please save all emailed documents as *.doc, *.rtf, *.html, or *.pdf files (pay particular attention to this if you use Office 2007, as the default file type for your program is incompatible with campus computers). If you don't know how to do this, instructions are available on the ITS website—just go to <http://www.hamilton.edu/college/its/> and search for “Office 2007”. If you do not receive an email from me stating that I have received and opened your paper, it has not been submitted and will be considered late. I will not accept reading responses if you are not present in class unless you have made arrangements with me in advance.

I am always open to reviewing and reconsidering your grade on any written work you complete in this course. If you can not read my handwriting on a comment or if you think I have made a math error, come and see me and I will be happy to take care of it. If you have a more substantial complaint or dispute, you should write a short memo explaining what you believe to be the problem and give it to me with your graded assignment. I will then review your assignment and your memo. Be aware that you may receive no change in grade or a decrease in grade; grade improvements are not guaranteed. If you have questions about these policies or if you want to discuss any of your assignments before or after they are due, please see me in office hours. In addition, please note that this syllabus is provisional and subject to change at any time.

Academic Integrity

I expect all students to adhere to the Hamilton College Honor Code. All violations will be reported; please be aware that I have caught and penalized many students in the past.

Offenses against academic integrity include, but are not limited to:

- ↳ Submitting work that does not use proper attribution of all sources, whether print, internet, or simply a conversation with a classmate or friend. Proper attribution includes a correctly formatted citation and bibliographic entry every time you use an idea that did not come entirely from your own head, whether you quote directly, paraphrase, or merely draw on a text. All standard citation formats are acceptable in this course (such as MLA, Chicago, APA, etc.) though you need to be internally consistent. For those who are not familiar with a particular citation format, here are two links for the citation format used by the American Sociological Association: http://www.skidmore.edu/academics/sociology/resources/writing_citation.html and <http://www.calstatela.edu/library/bi/rsalina/asa.styleguide.html>.
- ↳ Copying work from other students or writing papers as a joint effort, unless specifically directed to do so. This does not prohibit you from discussing assignments with your peers, but the product of your work must be your own. In addition, you may not submit papers written for other courses without my prior approval.
- ↳ Purchasing your papers from a web source, hiring someone to write your papers for you, submitting papers written by other individuals, or downloading or copying all or part of your paper from a website. Be aware that it is easier to detect this sort of dishonesty than you might think and many students have been caught.

Information Technology

You are expected to check your email regularly for any notice I may send out. Though I reserve the possibility of using Blackboard on some occasions, I will primarily use the website associated with this course, with which you should familiarize yourself. It contains an updated syllabus, course assignments, question for the analytical response papers, and links to other resources. The website is available at <http://academics.hamilton.edu/sociology/marthur/classes.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a person with a physical, neurological, psychological, medical, learning, or other type of disability and will need accommodations of any kind to ensure your success in this course, please come and speak with me as soon as possible after the start of the semester so that we can develop an individual plan. For more information about disability student services, contact Allen Harrison in the Dean of Students' office at aharriso@hamilton.edu.

Writing Center

As this is seminar with a significant writing component, all students are encouraged to make use of the writing center for all of the writing assignments you complete this semester, at any stage in the writing process. Information about the Writing Center's services and hours, along with useful information on writing style and on improving your writing, is available on the Writing Center's website at <http://www.hamilton.edu/writing/>. If English is not your first language, I particularly encourage you to make use of the Writing Center and the ESOL program so that your grade in this course will fully reflect your sociological skills.

Support Services

Some of the issues that we discuss in this course will be troubling. While I am always happy to meet with you in office hours to process emotional as well as intellectual issues raised by the course, there may be times when it is more helpful to speak to someone with training in emotional and mental health. If you feel like you would benefit from such assistance, I encourage you to make an appointment with the Counseling Center at x4340. More information about the Counseling Center's services, staff, and confidentiality policies is available on the Counseling Center's website at http://www.hamilton.edu/college/counseling_center/.