

HISTORY 223 / JEWISH STUDIES 231 (4 CREDITS)

# The Holocaust

Fall 2020

Prof. Amos Bitzan

MWF 11-11:50 AM (online)

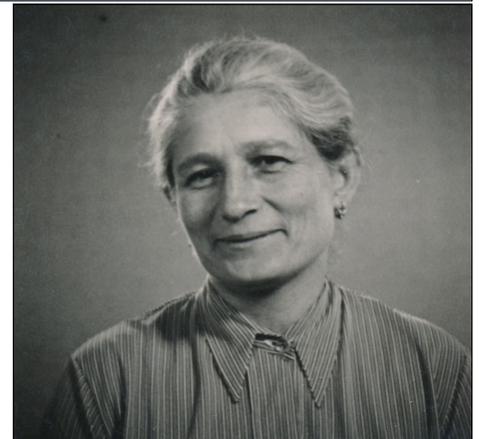
Teaching Assistant: Alex Scheepens

## Course Learning Objectives

References to the Holocaust abound in contemporary political debates and in our popular culture. But most people know very little about the history of the Holocaust, despite the mountains of superb historical scholarship that experts in the field have produced over decades of dedicated research.

Through concentrated reading, analysis of major issues, and explaining your insights in writing, this course will help you build in-depth knowledge of the Nazi genocide of European Jewry during

WWII. You will learn how and why the Nazis and their collaborators were able to carry out a program of persecution and ultimately extermination against the Jewish communities of Europe, leading to the murder of an estimated 6 million Jews. After taking this course, you will know the events, processes, ideas, organizations, and individuals behind these crimes. You will also gain an understanding of the everyday experiences of victims of the Holocaust in order to appreciate the limited options for survival available to them.



This course is dedicated to the memory of Sara Spira (1887-?), who perished in the Holocaust. We know of her experiences through a series of postcards that she sent from Nazi-occupied Poland to her daughter and son-in-law who had fled Europe and settled in Racine, Wisconsin. You will study these postcards and have a chance to talk to Spira's grandson, Michael Stern '65, a Wisconsin alum, who discovered the correspondence. We will use her letters and our study of the larger events around her to reconstruct the experiences of an ordinary family swept up in the Holocaust.

## DISCUSSION SECTIONS

- 301: Th 8:50-9:40 AM in Chamberlain
- 302: Th 7:45-8:35 AM Chamberlain
- 303: Th 12:05-12:55 PM Humanities 2211
- 304: Th 1:20-2:10 PM Humanities 2631

## OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT

**BITZAN:** M 12-1 PM over video conference  
abitzan@wisc.edu

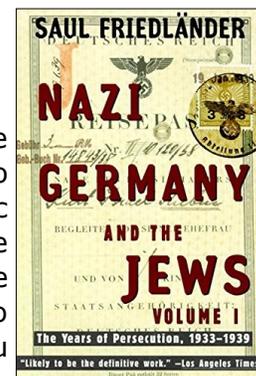
**SCHEEPENS:** W 3-4 PM  
scheepens@wisc.edu

# Requirements

## Paper 1 (20%) DUE October 13 at 9 PM

Thesis-driven paper of 1,050-1,750 words (3-5 pages).

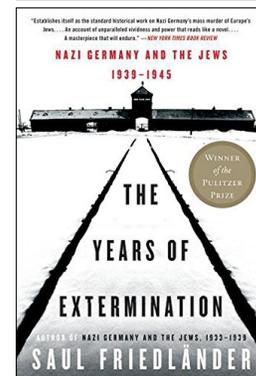
Drawing on lecture, section, and your readings from weeks 1 to 6, explain the mechanics of *how* and the causes for *why* anti-Jewish persecution intensified so radically between 1933 and 1939. Organize your paper around three specific instances or types of anti-Jewish persecution to illustrate your argument and be sure to define “redemptive antisemitism.” Use Chicago Style footnotes to provide citations for all statements requiring a reference. HINT: Read the introduction to Saul Friedländer’s *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. 1, for useful insights before you construct your own argument.



## Sara Spira Annotation (20%) DUE November 3 at 9 PM

Historical analysis using pin-point outside research 1,050-1,750 words (3-5 pages)

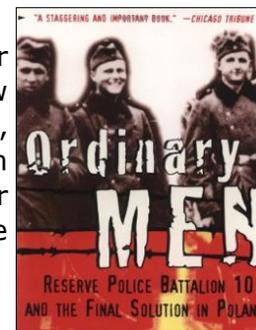
Drawing on exploration of the Sara Spira postcards in section (see “Section Participation below”), you will write one historical annotation of the postcards that uses your analysis of the primary sources and outside research to illuminate a research question raised by Sara Spira’s letters.



## Paper 2 (25%) DUE DECEMBER 15 at 9 PM

Thesis-driven paper of 1,400-2,100 words (4-6 pages).

How did the middle-aged men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 and countless other Holocaust perpetrators become killers of innocent men, women, and children? Draw on Christopher Browning’s *Ordinary Men*, Friedländer’s *The Years of Extermination*, and the Byelaya Tserkov documents to make your case, informed by material from lectures and our discussions of these texts in lecture and section. Organize your paper around 3-5 key events, policies, or sites of mass murder. Use Chicago Style footnotes.

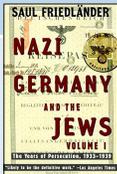


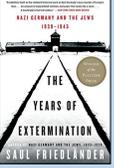
## Lecture Discussions and Q&A (15%)

On the days marked as “Discussion on ...,” we will discuss the assigned selection from Friedländer’s *Nazi Germany and the Jews* or *The Years of Extermination* in lecture. You should prepare by figuring out the central arguments and answers to specific question that I have sent out ahead of class. I may call on you to participate without advance notice. I will also occasionally pose questions and open a discussion in other synchronous lectures. In Week 12, we will discuss the Case of Byelaya Tserkov. In reading the assigned primary source documents, you should focus on trying to reconstruct the events depicted there.

## Section Participation (20%)

In sections, you will discuss the Sara Spira documents, Christopher Browning’s *Ordinary Men*, and a document related to the Case of Byelaya Tserkov. The discussion of the primary source Sara Spira documents will be very different from discussion of the respective books by Friedländer and Browning. The goal in the Sara Spira documents will be to do a historical analysis of the sources. For each postcard, you should write down in advance one research question raised by the letter (for example: what was the food supply like in Gorlice, where Sara Spira was writing from? Who are the relatives she mentions? Was Gorlice a closed ghetto? How did postal communications work?).

<b>Week 1</b> W 9/2 T 9/3 F 9/4	<b>Introduction</b> Course Overview Section - Introduction Lecture: Hitler's Early Life (1889-1918)	Complete each reading BEFORE the day indicated.	
<b>Week 2</b> M 9/7 W 9/9 T 9/10 F 9/11	<b>The Nazis' Rise to Power (1918-1933)</b> NO CLASS (Labor Day) Lecture Section: Discussion on <i>Nazi Germany and the Jews</i> : Ch. 1, pp. 9-40. Discussion on <i>Nazi Germany and the Jews</i> : Ch. 2, pp. 41-72.		
<b>Week 3</b> M 9/14 W 9/16 T 9/17 F 9/18	<b>The Nazis' First Steps in Power (1933)</b> Discussion on <i>Nazi Germany and the Jews</i> : Chapter 3, pp. 73-112. Lecture Section: Sandy Spira, "Family Story." Lecture		
<b>Week 4</b> M 9/21 W 9/23 T 9/24 F 9/25	<b>Exclusion Enshrined in Law (1933-1935)</b> Discussion on <i>Nazi Germany and the Jews</i> : Chapter 4-5, pp. 113-173. Lecture Sara Spira Documents 1-3. Lecture		
<b>Week 5</b> M 9/28 W 9/30 T 10/1 F 10/2	<b>Radicalization in Peacetime (1935-1938)</b> Lecture (pre-recorded) Discussion on <i>Nazi Germany and the Jews</i> : Chapter 6-7, pp. 177-240. Section: Sara Spira Documents 4-6. Lecture		
<b>Week 6</b> M 10/5 W 10/7 T 10/8 F 10/9	<b>Expropriation &amp; Emigration (1938-1939)</b> Discussion. <i>Nazi Germany and the Jews</i> : Chapter 8-10, pp. 241-305. Discussion: <i>Nazi Germany and the Jews</i> : Ch. 10, pp. 306-333. Section: Paper Prep Lecture		

<p><b>Week 7</b></p> <p>M 10/12 W 10/14 T 10/15 F 10/16</p>	<p><b>Racial Policy and Terror (1939-1940)</b></p> <p>Discussion on <i>The Years of Extermination</i>: Ch. 1, pp. 3-64.</p> <p>Lecture</p> <p>Section: Sara Spira Documents 7-9</p> <p>Lecture</p>	
<p><b>Week 8</b></p> <p>M 10/19 W 10/21 T 10/22 F 10/23</p>	<p><b>Expulsion as "Final Solution" (1940)</b></p> <p>Discussion on <i>The Years of Extermination</i>: Chapter 2, pp. 65-128.</p> <p>Lecture</p> <p>Section: Sara Spira Documents 10-13</p> <p>Lecture</p>	
<p><b>Week 9</b></p> <p>M 10/26 W 10/28 T 10/29 F 10/30</p>	<p><b>The Ghettos (1940-1941)</b></p> <p>Discussion on <i>The Years of Extermination</i>: Chapter 3, pp. 129-194.</p> <p>Lecture</p> <p>Section: <i>Ordinary Men</i>, Chapters 1-6.</p> <p>Lecture</p>	
<p><b>Week 10</b></p> <p>M 11/2 W 11/4 T 11/5 F 11/6</p>	<p><b>The Invasion of the Soviet Union (1941)</b></p> <p>Discussion on <i>The Years of Extermination</i>: Chapter 4, pp. 197-260.</p> <p>Lecture</p> <p>Section: <i>Ordinary Men</i>, Chapters 7-13.</p> <p>Lecture</p>	
<p><b>Week 11</b></p> <p>M 11/9 W 11/11 T 11/12 F 11/13</p>	<p><b>Mass Killing on the Eastern Front (1941)</b></p> <p>Discussion on <i>The Years of Extermination</i>: Chapter 5, pp. 261-328.</p> <p>Lecture</p> <p>Section: <i>Ordinary Men</i>, Chapters 13-18 and Afterword.</p> <p>Lecture</p>	
<p><b>Week 12</b></p> <p>M 11/16 W 11/18 T 11/19 F 11/20</p>	<p><b>The Case of Byelaya Tserkov</b></p> <p>Lecture (Read Byelaya Tserkov Documents #1-3)</p> <p>Discussion on Byelaya Tserkov Documents #4-6</p> <p>Section: Byelaya Tserkov Document #7 and Gudrun Moore Docs.</p> <p>Lecture</p>	

<b>Week 13</b>	<b>The Final Solution Formulated (1941-1942)</b>
M 11/23	Discussion on <i>The Years of Extermination</i> , Chapter 6, pp. 329-395
W 11/25	Lecture
T 11/26	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)
F 11/29	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>The Extermination Camps (1942-1944)</b>
M 11/30	Discussion on <i>The Years of Extermination</i> : Chapter 7, pp. 399-468.
W 12/2	Discussion on <i>The Years of Extermination</i> : Chapter 8, pp. 469-538.
T 12/3	Section: <i>The Years of Extermination</i> : Chapter 9, pp. 539-600.
F 12/4	Lecture
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Relentless Destruction (1944-1945)</b>
M 12/7	Discussion on <i>The Years of Extermination</i> , Chapter 10, 601-663.
W 12/9	Lecture.
T 12/10	Section: <i>Years of Extermination</i> , Introduction, xiii-xxvi. <i>Ordinary Men</i> , Afterword.

## Books to Purchase

- Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. 1: *The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998). ISBN: 0060928786
- Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. 2: *The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008). ISBN: 0060930489.
- Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998). ISBN: 0060995068.

Please purchase these books used if you can. Print editions only. Do not buy the abridged edition.

## Credit Hours and Workload

This class meets for four 50-minute class periods each week over the fall semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, researching, and writing) for about 2 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes additional information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

## Late Policy

Please contact me in advance if you believe that you might need an extension for an assignment. Unless you have previously arranged an extension with me, grades for late submissions will be lowered by one grade category for each day they are late.

Grading Scheme	
A	≥93%
AB	87-92%
B	80-86%
BC	75-79%
C	70-74%
D	60-69%
F	≤59

# Goals of the History Major

The goal of the history major is to offer students the knowledge and skills they need to gain a critical perspective on the past. Students will learn to define important historical questions, analyze relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing arguments and conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. In History, as in other humanistic disciplines, students will practice resourceful inquiry and careful reading. They will advance their writing and public speaking skills to engage historical and contemporary issues.

To ensure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers breadth, depth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. Broad acquaintance with several geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
2. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
3. In-depth understanding of a topic of their choice through original or creative research.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.

## Skills Developed in the History Major

### DEFINE IMPORTANT HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

1. Pose a historical question and explain its academic and public implications.
2. Using appropriate research procedures and aids, find the secondary resources in history and other disciplines available to answer a historical question.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases of pertinent historical conversations in order to highlight opportunities for further investigation.

### COLLECT AND ANALYZE EVIDENCE

1. Identify the range and limitations of primary sources available to engage the historical problem under investigation.
2. Examine the context in which sources were created, search for chronological and other relationships among them, and assess the sources in light of that knowledge.
3. Employ and, if necessary, modify appropriate theoretical frameworks to examine sources and develop arguments.

### PRESENT ORIGINAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Present original and coherent findings through clearly written, persuasive arguments and narratives.
2. Orally convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.
3. Use appropriate presentation formats and platforms to share information with academic and public audiences.

### CONTRIBUTE TO ONGOING DISCUSSIONS

1. Extend insights from research to analysis of other historical problems.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of a historical perspective to contemporary issues.
3. Recognize, challenge, and avoid false analogies, overgeneralizations, anachronisms, and other logical fallacies.

## **UW-MADISON [FACE COVERING GUIDELINES](#)**

While on campus all employees and students are required to [wear appropriate and properly fitting](#) face coverings while present in any campus building unless working alone in a laboratory or office space.

### **Face Coverings During In-person Instruction Statement (COVID-19)**

Individuals are expected to wear a face covering while inside any university building. Face coverings must be [worn correctly](#) (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. If any student is unable to wear a face-covering, an accommodation may be provided due to disability, medical condition, or other legitimate reason.

Students with disabilities or medical conditions who are unable to wear a face covering should contact the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) or their Access Consultant if they are already affiliated. Students requesting an accommodation unrelated to disability or medical condition, should contact the Dean of Students Office.

Students who choose not to wear a face covering may not attend in-person classes, unless they are approved for an accommodation or exemption. All other students not wearing a face covering will be asked to put one on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements will be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards](#) and will not be allowed to return to the classroom until they agree to comply with the face covering policy. An instructor may cancel or suspend a course in-person meeting if a person is in the classroom without an approved face covering in position over their nose and mouth and refuses to immediately comply.

### **QUARANTINE OR ISOLATION DUE TO COVID-19**

Student should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 [symptoms](#) and get [tested](#) for the virus if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Student should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.