

HISTORY 600 (3 credits)

DEATH AND SURVIVAL IN THE HOLOCAUST

Spring 2021: Thursdays 11-12:55 (online)

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 12-12:50 pm (online)

Overview

The aim of this course is to study the ways in which individuals and families attempted to cope with, evade, and sometimes resist the anti-Jewish policies enacted by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945 in different parts of Europe. Our goal will be to understand what choices these victims and survivors had and how they acted in the face of a resolute program of persecution and ultimately genocide. We will first learn about those policies and then examine the lives of those whom they targeted.

Your primary task in the course will be to produce a rigorously researched account of one individual ensnared in the web of Nazi anti-Jewish policies, starting with a testimony drawn from the Wisconsin Holocaust Survivors Oral History Collection or from two collections of WWII-era correspondence made available by alumni of the university. To research these you will draw on the tools of general genealogical research as well as databases and digitized archives and specific to the history of the Holocaust, such as those at Yad Vashem, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Arolsen Archives.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you will be able to

- use a range of genealogical tools and sources of information
- assess how particular primary sources can allow us to answer specific questions as well as to determine their limitations
- seek out and draw on high-quality secondary sources to connect the experiences of individuals to larger historical events and processes
- write an effective research paper using primary and secondary sources
- answer historical questions about Nazi policies of persecution and the experiences of those victimized by them

Course Requirements

1. Discussion participation (30%)
2. Short written assignments (20%)
3. Final research paper (40%)
4. Final presentation (10%)

Week 1 (1/28): Introduction

- biography as a model for histories of death and survival
- our primary source collections and other options
- pre-war, wartime experience, and post-war
- variation over geography and time

Week 2 (2/4): Studying Death and Survival

Reading:

Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9912309308602121>, 1-68.

Activity:

- Discussion of Finkel: the pre-war experience and its significance
 - thinking about applications to your projects
- Taking-a-first-stab-at-it presentations round 1

Week 3 (2/11): Cooperation and Coping

Reading:

Finkel, 69-126.

Activity:

- Discussion of Finkel: cooperation and collaboration, coping and compliance
 - thinking about applications to your projects
- Taking-a-first-stab-at-it presentations round 2

Week 4 (2/18): Evasion and Resistance

Reading:

Finkel, 127-198

Activity:

- Discussion of Finkel: evasion (concealment and flight) and resistance, conclusions
 - thinking about applications to your projects

- Taking-a-first-stab-at-it presentations round 3

Week 5 (2/25): Approaching Primary Sources and their Limits

Reading:

- your chosen source

Activity:

- what can you know and what will you need to figure out

Week 6 (3/4): Databases and Secondary Sources

Activity:

- tour of databases and of finding secondary literature

Week 7 (3/11): Pre-War Lives

Activity:

- mini-presentations of pre-war lives and how to approach them

Week 8 (3/18): War-Time Experience

Activity:

- mini-presentations and checking in

Week 9 (3/25): Partial Draft and thinking about Post-War

Activity:

- submit partial draft on Canvas and present thoughts in class about post-war

Week 10 (No meeting - keep writing!)

- I am available for consultations!

Week 11 (4/8): First Draft

Activity:

- submit first draft and discuss remaining questions and concerns

Week 12 (4/15): Consultations

Activity:

- individual consultations about drafts

Week 13 (4/22): Workshopping

Activity:

- present one remaining issue/question to others in class

Week 14 (4/29): Final Draft and Presentations

Activity:

- submit final draft and give presentation based on your paper

Grading Scale

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

Credit Hours and Student Workload:

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

Rubric for Participation in Discussions

A	You regularly take initiative in answering and posing questions during discussion. Your contributions show that you listen to your peers as you articulate your own ideas. The comments you make in discussion and the questions you ask demonstrate careful preparation in reading and ongoing engagement with the material presented in lectures. You demonstrate awareness of how the week's themes relate to other parts of the course.
B	Your participation indicates that you have read the material, but your contributions are less thoughtful than those of an A-level participant. You consider how the reading fits into wider themes that we have been discussing but more superficially. You participate in classroom discussions, listening to your peers and articulating your own ideas but not with the consistency or depth of an A-level participant.
C	Your contributions to discussions demonstrate that you have not prepared carefully and that you have only a partial grasp of the material studied thus far. You do not link the discussion of the day to previous parts of the course. Your contributions to the class are rare and indicate that you are only superficially acquainted with the reading and the course.
D	You participate very infrequently in discussion and your comments do not demonstrate understanding of the material or prior preparation.
F	You do not attend discussions consistently.

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 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.