

History 310/Jewish Studies 310: The Holocaust

Lecture: MWF, 9:55-10:45am (Humanities 1651)

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Course Description

The murder of six million Jews during the Holocaust remains one of the most challenging events in history, posing questions about human behavior, morality, and justice that continue to occupy us to this day. How did a regime like the Nazis come to power? What motivated the Nazis and their collaborators to murder Jews, Polish elites, Romani peoples, homosexuals, and the disabled? What constitutes justice, reconciliation, and appropriate memorialization in the wake of mass atrocities? While some scholars have argued that the magnitude of such questions defies explanation, this course assumes that the Holocaust can (and must) be understood within the context of history. Through a combination of lecture material, primary source analysis, and the recorded testimony of survivors, this class will examine the Holocaust and its legacy.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Identify key concepts and themes in the history of the Holocaust
- Analyze historical primary sources and understand their significance
- Construct arguments by comparing two or more primary source documents
- Clearly communicate information, both verbally and through the written word

Student Workload

This 4-credit course meets as a group for 4 hours per week (according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy, each 50-minute class counts as 1 hour). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this course.

Grades

Grades are based on the following scale:

100-93 = A
92-88 = A/B
87-83 = B
82-77 = B/C
76-70 = C
69-60 = D
59-0 = F

Final grades will be calculated accordingly:

Source Analysis (500 words) = 5%
Comparative Analysis (1000 words) = 15%
Final Paper (1500 words) = 25%
Final Exam = 30%
Discussion = 25%

Writing Assignments

Students will complete three written assignments: a primary source analysis, a comparative source analysis, and a final paper. These assignments will be based on topics covered in lecture and discussion section and should be written without the aid of outside research. The purpose of the assignments is to familiarize students with the process of constructing historical arguments based on primary source documents. Papers must be submitted on their due date and will be penalized **one letter grade** for each day late. Deadline extensions will be considered for disability accommodation and cases of personal misfortune.

Writing Standards and Assessment

Written assignments will be assessed according to the following criteria:

A = your paper has a cogently argued position with a clear thesis statement; your argument follows a logical progression; your paper demonstrates a superior understanding of the source and its historical significance; your paper is clearly written and free of basic errors in grammar and punctuation; your paper meets the appropriate word limit

A/B = your paper has a cogently argued position with a clear thesis statement; your argument follows a logical progression but may wander slightly; your paper demonstrates a firm understanding of the source and its historical significance; your writing is generally clear, despite a few minor mistakes in grammar and punctuation; your paper meets the appropriate word limit

B = your paper has reasonably strong arguments, but lacks a clear thesis statement; your argument follows a logical progression but wanders off topic; your paper demonstrates a moderate understanding of the source and its historical significance; your writing is unclear at times, with occasional mistakes in grammar and punctuation; your paper does not meet the appropriate word limit

B/C = your paper lacks a strong argument or clear thesis statement; your argument wanders on occasion; your paper demonstrates some understanding of the source and its historical significance; your writing is often unclear, due to mistakes in grammar and punctuation; your paper does not meet the appropriate word limit

C = your paper lacks a strong argument or clear thesis statement; your argument wanders; your paper demonstrates only the most basic understanding of the source and its historical significance; your writing is often unclear, due to major mistakes in grammar and punctuation

D = your argument has major flaws; your paper demonstrates a lack of understanding of the source and its historical significance; your paper is incomprehensible at times

F = Your paper is incomplete, entirely incomprehensible, or plagiarized

Exams

The final exam for this course will be a take-home test, distributed on Friday, May 06 (05/06). The exam must be **submitted via Canvas by 11:59pm on Thursday, May 12 (05/12)**. This examination will consist of short answer and/or essay prompts with questions drawn directly from lecture.

Discussion

Discussions will take place on Thursdays and will be based on the assigned readings for the week.

Discussion grades will be calculated according to the following standards:

A = you frequently volunteer to speak; you demonstrate a superior understanding of the assigned readings; you are able to clearly articulate the connection between the readings and the larger themes of the course; you make insightful contributions to discussion

A/B = you occasionally volunteer to speak; you demonstrate a solid understanding of readings; you are able to articulate the connection between the readings and the larger themes of the course; you occasionally make insightful contributions to discussion

B = you seldom volunteer to speak; you demonstrate some understanding of readings; you make basic connections between the readings and the larger themes of the course; you rarely make insightful contributions

B/C or C = you do not speak unless called upon; you demonstrate only the most superficial understanding of readings; you contribute very little to discussion

D or F = you do not speak; you demonstrate no understanding of the assigned readings; you make no contribution whatsoever to discussion

Required Readings (available for purchase on Amazon.com)

Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution*
Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*
Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limitations of Forgiveness*

Required Readings (free)

Unless noted above, all readings for this class will be posted in pdf format on Canvas and will be available to students free of charge.

Expectations

Attendance:

Students are expected to arrive to class on time. Persistent tardiness (five times or more) will result in a reduction of one's discussion grade, up to 10%. Likewise, persistent unexcused absences (three or more) will also result in a reduction of the discussion grade, up to 50%. Students should make every effort to inform me of an expected absence prior to class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to contact me in order to obtain any missed assignments and contact a classmate to obtain lecture notes. CoVid19-related absences will be treated with greater flexibility.

Classroom Etiquette:

Laptops, tablets, cellphones, and all electronic equipment that is not related to disability accommodation must be shut off, silenced, or put away during class. Additionally, please refrain from bringing food to class. Drinks are fine!

Contacting Me:

I encourage all students to visit me during office hours. If you are unable to meet during the times that I have set aside each week, please contact me about setting up an alternative meeting time (this can include video conference). I check my email at least once a day, however, the exact time varies according to my schedule. As a rule of thumb, you can expect a response from me within 24 hours. That said, I will not respond to email questions that can be answered by consulting the course syllabus.

Resources

It is my hope that this class will help you become a better writer. For additional guidance in this regard, including individual consultation, please visit the UW Writing Center (www.wisc.edu/writing) or the History Lab (<https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/the-history-lab/>)

Most academic historians cite sources according to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For a simple guide to Chicago-style citation, visit www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's words or ideas. For a description of the University of Wisconsin's policy on plagiarism and academic misconduct, see: <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/docs/UWS14.pdf>

A statement from the McBurney Disability Resource Center (www.mcburney.wisc.edu):

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Statements from the University of Wisconsin regarding COVID-19

Students' Rules Rights, & Responsibilities

During the global COVID pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community.

UW-Madison [Badger Pledge](#)

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

Students 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.

Students 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.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

01/26: Introduction to History 310

01/28: Jewish History to the Enlightenment

Readings: Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness Study

Week 2: The Jewish Experience in Europe, 1789-1933

01/31: Autonomous Communities in Eastern Europe

02/02: "Assimilation" in Western Europe?

02/04: Weimar Germany

Readings: Joseph Roth, *The Wandering Jews*, 25-79

Week 3: Ideological Antecedents

02/07: Racial Anti-Semitism

02/09: Nationalism, Imperialism, and World War I

02/11: Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party

Readings: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (excerpts)

Week 4: The Nazi State

02/14: The Nazi "Revolution"

02/16: Creating the Nazi Racial State

02/18: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany

Readings: Kaplan, "Keeping Calm and Weathering the Storm"; "Proclamation of the Reich Government to the German People"; "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service"; "Law for the Prevention of Diseased Offspring"; "Nuremberg Laws"

02/20: SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE (submit on Canvas by 11:59pm)

Week 5: World War II as Catalyst

02/21: Nazi Foreign Policy and the Outbreak of War

02/23: Nazi Medicine and the Euthanasia Program

02/25: Racial Cleansing in Occupied Poland

Readings: Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 177-222

Week 6: Jewish Life in Occupied Territory

02/28: Jews in Hiding

03/02: The New Ghettos

03/04: Jewish Resistance

Readings: Valerie Wolfenstein and Erich Hopp, *We Survived*, 77-118

Week 7: Toward the "Final Solution"

03/07: Operation Barbarossa and the Einsatzgruppen

03/09: Non-German Perpetrators

03/11: The Wannsee Conference

Readings: Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 1-87, 159-89

Week 8: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Week 9: Death Camps

03/21: Operation Reinhard

03/23: Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah*

03/25: Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah* (part 2)

Readings: Jan Gross, *Neighbors*, 14-32, 72-125, 132-137, 143-173

03/27: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS DUE (submit on Canvas by 11:59pm)

Week 10: Labor Camps

03/28: Forced Labor and Private Business

03/30: Auschwitz I, II, and III

04/01: Life and Death in the Lager

Readings: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 13-100

Week 11: Camp Experiences

04/04: Women and Women's Camps

04/06: Non-Jewish Victims of Nazi Violence

04/08: Collaborator States and the Final Deportations

Readings: Anna Hájková, "Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide"

Week 12: *Endkampf*

04/11: Forced Marches and Final Atrocities

04/13: Liberation and Displaced Persons

04/15: Failures of the Western Allies

Readings: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 101-173 and *The Reawakening* (excerpts)

Week 13: Postwar Justice and Injustice

04/18: The Nuremberg and Auschwitz Trials

04/20: Adolf Eichmann and the "Banality of Evil"

04/22: Christian Churches and the Holocaust

Readings: Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Chapters II, XV, and Epilogue

Week 14: Restitution

04/25: Germany and the State of Israel

04/27: Memorializing the Holocaust

04/29: NO CLASS - Final Paper Work Day

Readings: Ruth Kluger, *Still Alive*, 60-112, 171-202

04/30: FINAL PAPER DUE (submit on Canvas by 11:59pm)

Week 15: Interpreting the Holocaust

05/02: *Historikerstreit* and *Sonderweg*

05/04: Documentary film, *The Last Survivors*

05/06: The Holocaust and the Present

Readings: Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower*, 1-98

05/12: FINAL EXAM DUE (submit on Canvas by 11:59pm)