

University of Wisconsin-Madison

History 310/Jewish 310: The Holocaust

Summer 2023 (June 19-August 13)

Online Asynchronous

3 credits

Instructor: Ludwig Decke

Office hours: Wednesdays, 12-2 pm (virtual) or by appt (virtual)

Contact: decke@wisc.edu

Course Designation: Humanities; Intermediate; Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S

Requisites: Sophomore standing

Course Description

Why did the Holocaust happen? What were the experiences of its victims? And what lessons can we draw from it for the 21st century? Explore the history and legacy of the Nazi genocide in this eight-week summer course. By using a variety of sources, including memoirs, testimonies, poems, paintings, videos, and graphic novels, we will try to understand the Holocaust within the broader European history of racism, war, and colonialism and as an event of global proportions that includes the United States. The weekly thematic modules explore topics such as the history of antisemitism, the Nazi state, Jewish resistance, the prosecution of perpetrators, and contemporary challenges of memorialization. You will engage with the latest debates in the field of Holocaust Studies. Each module consists of short instructional podcasts, a discussion board, a quiz, and an exercise in which you will engage with a primary source or an artistic representation of the Holocaust. At the end of this course, you will be able to share your own learning experience and use your historical expertise to take a stance in current political debates on race, war, nationalism, and human rights.

Learning outcomes:

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify key concepts, themes, approaches, and debates in the history of the Holocaust.
- Evaluate primary sources to make a historical argument.
- Use historical knowledge to better understand contemporary issues of racism, genocide, and human rights.
- Strengthen your moral compass as an engaged citizen and empathetic human being.
- Become a self-directing learner by identifying your learning-style and best practices.

Workload:

The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include listening of lectures, reading, virtual field trips, writing, and other student work as described in the syllabus. Besides

listening to the weekly podcasts (1 hour), the course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 15 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this course.

Canvas:

The entire course takes place on [Canvas](#). Here you find information about the weekly modules, access the lecture podcasts, assigned materials and assessments, and communicate with your classmates.

Communication in class:

1) **Announcements:** My communication to the class will be done by using the Announcements features on Canvas. Please turn your announcement notification on by going to your Account (upper left side) and then press “notifications.” You should set your alerts so that you receive announcements right away; discussion board threads should be turned on for at least daily notifications. Do it now!

2) **Virtual Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 12-2 PM, or by appointment, on Zoom (use the following link: (<https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/96133142635?pwd=UTNEaWdkaTRQdHE4RUU0QVZVaDRzZz09>)). Please feel free to meet with me as often as you want. Office hours are a great way to get to know each other better and help you to succeed in this course.

3) **Open Q & A:** Please post any and all questions about course content on this pinned discussion board! Are you confused about a certain reading? Don't understand a concept or term? Can't grasp the timeline? If you post your inquiry here, everyone can benefit from the answer. And remember – there's no such thing as a stupid question!

4) **Email:** As mentioned above, share questions and thoughts about the course, the material, and the assignments in the Open Q & A. For private and individual concerns (such as setting up alternative office hours) it is best to contact me by email or private message on Canvas.

5) **Hang Out:** You're encouraged to use this discussion board to meet and chat with your fellow classmates! Feel free to start a conversation about the course material, post movie/music/podcast recommendations, make announcements on behalf of your extracurricular orgs, or share links and memes that seem relevant to our course. Before posting, remember to practice proper online course etiquette! Be respectful and considerate of your classmates. Remember that our words often sound differently online than they do in person, so please err on the side of politeness, and approach any interaction in good faith. :)

Assignments and grades:

Discussion Boards (20 %)
Source Analyses (30 %)
Quizzes (15 %)
Pedagogy Project (15 %)
TED Talk (20 %)

This 3-credit course is offered online and asynchronously, meaning we will not meet together as a group at a set time. This gives you some flexibility to complete the readings and the assignments at your own pace. That said, the course is designed around a fixed eight-week schedule. (There are no assignments on Saturdays in order to accommodate students who are observing Shabbat. You are of course welcome to finish all assignments before Sunday.) Each week, you will be expected to work your way through a weekly module consisting of the following elements:

(1) Lectures: Weekly modules are organized by theme, and each week you will be asked to listen to four short lecture podcasts (ranging from 5-10 minutes each) on a given topic. Modules will “open” Sunday night of each week, and I recommend listening to the lectures by midnight on Monday. The purpose of the Monday lessons will be to set the stage for the week’s topic, and to help you place the readings and primary source materials into context.

(2) Weekly Readings: In addition to the mini-lectures, you are also assigned weekly readings. These will typically include primary and secondary source readings or videos that expand upon the material presented on Monday. The readings/videos should take you typically between two and three hours, so make sure you leave enough room in your schedule on Tuesday to complete them.

(3) Weekly Quizzes: To keep you on track and to evaluate your comprehension, you will be required to take a short quiz (no more than 30 mins of work) after you complete the weekly lectures and readings. Quizzes will open on Sunday, and will focus on lecture and readings content. You have 3 attempts, only your best score is recorded in your grade book. You must complete the quiz no later than midnight Thursday.

(4) Discussion Posts: Each week, you will also be expected to participate in an online seminar discussion. The prompts will vary, but broadly speaking, each written assignment will ask you to reflect on a particular primary or secondary source. Your response should be 150-200 words in length.

Discussions will “open” on Canvas at 11:59 pm on Sunday, and you are expected to post your initial response by Wednesday midnight. You will see your classmates’ posts after you submit yours. In addition, you will always be asked to respond to two of your classmates' posts sometime between Friday and Sunday midnight in which you say if and why you agree or disagree (100-150 words per post, about an hour of work).

(5) Source Analyses: In addition to your discussion posts, you will engage each week with a primary source (or a collection of primary sources) related to the Holocaust. Please answer the question(s) in a short response paper (250-400 words). If not stated otherwise, your paper should include a thesis statement and at least three examples of evidence to support your argument.

(6) Learning Portfolio: You will track your learning progress at the end of each module in a short survey form. This allows you to reflect on the respective week’s content, the main takeaways, problems, and challenges. You can also use it to share any concerns you might have about the course. The portfolio is mandatory, but I will not grade it. It will help me to accommodate your needs as a student. Moreover, it will serve as an important basis for your Pedagogy Project assignment (see next section).

Thus, the weekly flow for the course will look something like this:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Warm-Up	Review weekly lesson plan		Optional: Attend office hours (1-3 pm)		Review course materials		
Lecture	Listen to lecture podcasts						
Readings		Complete readings					
Discussion Board		Start drafting discussion post	Discussion post due by 11:59 pm		Read classmates' discussion posts		Response due by 11:59 pm
Quiz				Quiz due by 11:59 pm			
Source Analysis			Start drafting source analysis		Source analysis due by 11:59 pm		
Learning Portfolio							Learning portfolio due by 11:59 pm

In addition to the weekly course flow, there are two major assignments which allow you to creatively engage with questions raised in this course:

(1) Pedagogy Project (due by July 23 midnight): In 2021, the Wisconsin state legislation has made teaching about the Holocaust mandatory in all schools. While many teachers have welcomed this decision, it also comes with certain challenges due to the complexity of the topic, as well as its emotional and moral implications. In this project, you put the learning portfolio you have compiled so far into action: What is your advice for teachers who have never taught the Holocaust before? Write a short guide (600-700 words) in which you share essential take-aways of your own learning experience. It should include insights about potential challenges and best practices for high school-level Holocaust education. With your permission, I will turn some of your anonymized recommendations into an online guide for teachers.

(2) TED Talk (due by August 13 midnight): What is, in your opinion, a central lesson of the Holocaust for today? How can the history of the Holocaust illuminate an important problem of the 21st century? (Possible issues could be human rights abuses, the role of propaganda and “fake news,” the relationship between war and genocide, antisemitism and racism, the role of bystanders.) For this final project, you record a short TED Talk-style video (4-5 minutes). (For inspiration, see the Lipstadt TED Talk of the first module.) Your argument should be informed by historical rather than moral concerns. (“You must not be a racist!” is an important and noble demand but not very helpful to ameliorate the problem of racism.) Think about how specific historical events, developments, or dynamics in the history of the Holocaust can help us to gain a better understanding of a contemporary issue. Refer to at least 3 sources from the course to support your argument. Preparation: Submit an outline on Canvas by July 30. You and one of your peers will evaluate each other’s outlines by August 4.

Final Grade Scale:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| A 94 to 100 % | C 70 to <78 % |
| AB 88 to <94 % | D 61 to <70 % |
| B 84 to <88 % | F 0 to <61 % |
| BC 78 to <84 % | |

Disabilities and Accommodations

If you have a specific disability that may impact your work or need special accommodations to facilitate your work in the class, please feel free to inform me as soon as possible. You can also get support through the McBurney Disability Resource Center. You can contact them through their website: <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/>. Email ID: mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu, phone number: (608) 263-2741.

I am committed to fostering an intellectual environment of mutual respect and inclusion for all students. Please feel free to let me know if you are having any difficulties with the class at any point in the semester.

Academic Honesty Policy

One of the fundamental principles of this university is that “academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the University of Wisconsin system” (Wisconsin Administrative Code 14.01).

Plagiarism is...

- Using someone else’s words or ideas without proper documentation.
- Copying some portion of your text from another source without proper acknowledgement of
- Indebtedness (**NOTE**: This includes AI software such as ChatGTP).
- Borrowing another person’s specific ideas without documenting their source.
- Having another person correct or revise your work. This differs from getting feedback from a writing group, or from an individual, which you then attempt to implement.
- Turning in an assignment written by another person, from an essay “service,” or from a website (including reproductions of such essays or papers).

Of course, you may always talk with me if you have any questions about plagiarism. For more, see here: <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/quoting/sources/>
<https://www.library.wisc.edu/journalism/research-help/plagiarism-resources/>

Attendance and Participation

Since this course is asynchronous, you will have some flexibility with listening to the podcasts and submitting the assignments. To stay on track, you will need to submit, the discussion posts on Wednesdays, the quizzes on Thursdays, the source analyses on Fridays, and the discussion responses and your learning portfolio on Sundays the latest. Please keep up with all assignments.

Late Policy

As a general rule, late assignments will not be accepted, with the exception of an emergency or other crisis for which it was impossible to plan. However, you have 2 “free passes,” one for the discussion board and one for the primary source analysis. After having used your “free passes,” you will receive 0 points for each missed assignment. Please do plan ahead and carefully follow the assignment schedule on the syllabus or on Canvas.

Writing Help

You may be confident or intimidated about your writing abilities. In any case, this class is meant to help you further develop your confidence and ability to engage in academic writing. To improve your chances of writing an excellent final paper, please feel free to visit my virtual office hours. Also check out the websites of the [Writing Center](#) and the [History Lab](#). Both websites have valuable guides to help you improve your writing and consider the various components that go into producing good quality academic writing.

Readings

All readings will be available on Canvas, and it is not necessary to purchase any books for the class. However, you are welcome to purchase or borrow a copy of Ruth Klüger's autobiography which will be a main source of this course: Ruth Klüger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2001).

For further background information, I recommend the following excellent course books on the Holocaust:

- Doris L. Bergen: *War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd edition (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).
- Peter Hayes, *Why? Explaining the Holocaust* (New York/London: Norton, 2017).

Module 1) Between Promise and Tragedy: Jewish Life in Europe before 1933 (June 19-June 25)

Do:

Read the Welcome & Orientation page on Canvas and take the required steps.

Listen:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The Diverse World of European Jews
- 1.3 The "Jewish Question" and Its Answers
- 1.4 Jewish Renaissance in Weimar Germany

Watch:

*[Deborah Lipstadt, TED Talk "Behind the Lies of Holocaust Denial" \(15 min.\)](#) For background, watch [this short video](#) on Lipstadt and the trial; optionally ["Denial" trailer](#).

Read:

*Mendele Mocher Sforim (S.Y. Abramovich), *Shem and Japhet on the Train* (1890; 14 pp.).

Read or Listen:

*Jay H. Geller, "The Scholem Brothers and the Paths of German Jewry, 1914-1939," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 2012), pp. 52-73; or: ["The Scholems: Considering German Jewry's History and Legacy with Jay Geller," Jewish History Matters, Vol. 63, 14th February, 2021 \(55:11 min.\)](#).

Module 2) From Revolution to Routine: Nazi Germany, 1933-1939 (June 26-July 2)

Listen:

- 2.1 Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Revolution
- 2.2 The Total Enemy: Jews in Nazi Ideology
- 2.3 Creating the *Volksgemeinschaft*
- 2.4 Jewish Life in Nazi Germany

Read:

*Ruth Klüger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (New York: Feminist Press, 2003), 9-60.

Explore:

*Leo Baeck Institute, [1938 Projekt: Posts from the Past](#).

Module 3) Experiments in Brutality: Precursors of the Holocaust (July 3-July 9)

Listen:

- 3.1 A Shared Story of White Supremacy? The Nazi Project, Colonialism, and U.S. Jim Crow
- 3.2 Rehearsing Mass Murder: The “Euthanasia” Program
- 3.3 Racial Cleansing in Occupied Poland
- 3.4 Behind Barbed Wire: Ghettos and Deportations

Read:

*Art Spiegelman, *MAUS: A Survivor’s Tale* (New York Pantheon Books, 1986), Chap. 1-4.

Read:

*Leyb Goldin, *Chronicle of a Single Day* (21 pp.).

Module 4) Exporting War and Terror: Towards the “Final Solution,” 1940-1941 (July 10-16)

Listen:

- 4.1 Darkness in the “City of Light”: The Holocaust in Western Europe
- 4.2 Operation Barbarossa and the Holocaust by Bullets
- 4.3 Collaboration across Europe
- 4.4 Forgotten Victims: The Killing of Non-Jews

Read:

*Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2017), xv-xxii; 1-77.

Watch:

- *[“Testimony of Sigrid Quick on First Week of the German Occupation of Liepaja, Latvia”](#) (2:43 min).
- *[“Einsatzgruppen in Liepaja, Latvia”](#) (1:44) [Trigger warning!].
- *[“Testimony of the German photographer Reinhard Wiener”](#) (4:54).
- *[“Testimony of Max Solway, Escaping the Killing Pit in Skede, Latvia”](#) (3:00 min).

Module 5) Total Destruction, 1942-1945 (July 17-July 23)

Do:

Submit Pedagogy Project by Sunday, 11:59 pm.

Listen:

- 5.1 Operation Reinhard and the Wannsee Conference
- 5.2 Behind the Gates of Hell: The Killing Centers
- 5.3 Forced Labor and Economic Gains
- 5.4 The Question of Singularity: Comparing the Holocaust to Other Genocides

Read:

*Ruth Klüger, *Still Alive*, pp. 61-132.

Read:

*Charlotte Delbo, "Arrivals, Departures," in: idem, *Auschwitz and After* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 3-9.

Watch:

*[The Capture and Trial of Adolf Eichmann \(CBS Sunday Morning, 6:38 min.\)](#).

***** Pedagogy Project due July 23 *****

Module 6) Staying Human: Jewish Experiences during the Holocaust (July 24-July 30)

Do:

Submit TED Talk outline by Sunday, 11:59 pm.

Listen:

- 6.1 Hiding and Refuge
- 6.2 Attempting the Impossible: The Many Forms of Jewish Resistance
- 6.3 Gender and Sexuality
- 6.4 Art during the Holocaust

Read:

*Molly Applebaum, *Buried Words: The Diary of Molly Applebaum* (The Azrieli Foundation, 2017), xv-xxix, 17-36.

Explore:

- * Avrom Sutzkever (1913-2010), *For My Child* (Wilna Ghetto, 1943).
- * [Rachel Auerbach \(1903-1976\), *Yizkor, 1943 \(Outside of Warsaw Ghetto, 1943\)*](#).
- * [Felix Nussbaum \(1904-1944\), *The Refugee \(Brussels, 1939\)*](#).
- * [Pavel Fantl \(1903-1945\), *The Song is Over \(Theresienstadt Ghetto, 1942-1944\)*](#).

***** TED Talk Outline due July 30 *****

Module 7) War's End: Between Agony and New Hope (July 31-August 6)

Do:

Submit TED Talk Peer Review by Friday, 11:59 pm

Listen:

7.1 Final Atrocities

7.2 Liberation and Displaced Persons

7.3 "Where Shall We Go?"

7.4 Between Rescue and Abandonment: America and the Holocaust

Read:

*Ruth Klüger, *Still Alive*, 133-160.

Read:

*Harrison Report (August 1945).

Explore:

*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Americans and the Holocaust: Online Exhibition*.

***** TED Talk Peer Review due August 4 *****

Module 8) The Legacies of Genocide (August 7-August 13)

Do:

Submit final version of TED Talk by Sunday, 11:59 pm.

Listen:

8.1 Victims as Witnesses: The Holocaust in Court

8.2 Redemption through Restitution?

8.3 Memorializing the Holocaust

8.4 Between Particularism and Universalism: The Holocaust and the Politics of Human Rights

Read:

*Nora Krug, *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home* (New York: Scribner, 2018), chap. 1 & 2.

Watch:

*[Peter Eisenman's Holocaust Memorial \(4:48 min.\)](#).

***** TED Talk due August 13 *****