The Holocaust

Portland State University
HST399 – Fall 2013
TTh 1400-1550

Prof. Natan Meir
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Office: Univ. Center Building 465
Office hours: TTh 1100-1300

This course will introduce you to the Nazi-planned and executed genocide of European Jewry that has come to be known as the Holocaust. Although we will of course study the so-called “Final Solution” and the process of mass murder, the course aims to give you a broad and contextualized understanding of many aspects of the Holocaust. These include the German and European contexts for the rise of Nazism; the nature of antisemitism and its links to Nazi ideology and policy; the nature and definition of resistance; the question of the “bystanders”; and types of collaboration. The goal is for you to gain an understanding of the Holocaust as an aspect of many different kinds of history: Jewish history, German history, European history, the history of antisemitism, and perhaps also the history of human civilization (or the absence thereof). As time permits, we will also touch upon how the Holocaust is understood and “used” in contemporary society. At all times we will remain aware of the ethical and moral issues that inhere in the topics we are studying as well as in the academic study of the Holocaust itself. As much of this material is emotionally difficult and often painful, I ask that you remain aware of your emotional state throughout the course and to seek assistance if you feel you need it. Feel free to come to speak with me during office hours or to contact Counseling Services at 503-725-2800.

TEXTS (available at Portland State Bookstore)
Bergen, War and Genocide, 2nd ed. (Rowman and Littlefield)
Niewyk, The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation (Cengage)
Sierakowiak, The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Łódź Ghetto (Oxford)
Recommended: Harvey, The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing (Hackett)

Primary sources gathered primarily from the following sites:
German History in Documents and Images (GHDI): http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/index.cfm
Yad Vashem Holocaust Resource Center (YV):
Jewish Virtual Library (JVL): www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org
Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team (HRP): www.holocaustresearchproject.org

You will also view a number of online exhibits available at the websites of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem.

You will find links to all primary sources on D2L. PLEASE PRINT OUT THE PRIMARY SOURCES AND BRING THEM TO CLASS WITH YOU.

The assigned reading for each class is divided into primary and secondary sources. Primary source readings are marked with a ⬤ symbol.
**Requirements:**

1. **Class attendance, completion of readings, and participation in discussions (10%)**

2. **Reading questions:** Each Tuesday of Weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8, you will turn in a short reading response, answering a question posed on the syllabus (1-2 paragraphs, or 250-400 words). The assignment must be uploaded to the appropriate dropbox in D2L by 9am on Tuesday morning, and should be double-spaced and in 12-point font. You should come to class prepared to answer this question based on your readings for the week, and be ready to discuss your response. This exercise is intended to help you understand some of the major issues covered by the readings and to provide a basis for class discussion. You may miss one of these writing assignments without penalty, but no make-ups will be permitted. If you complete all six response papers, I will drop your lowest grade. These are graded on a ✓+ (A), ✓ (B), ✓- (C), Ø (no credit) basis. (3% x 5 = 15%)

3. **Mid-term exam** (in-class, Oct. 24)

4. **ID Cards Group Project:** a semi-collaborative research project in which you and fellow students will track the lives and experiences of Holocaust victims from throughout Europe. To help you prepare for this project, we will devote part of one class session to the project on 10/8, and your group will meet with me at least once. The project includes the following components:
   1. Preliminary bibliography, due on D2L Nov. 7
   2. Collaborative research paper of about 1500 words per student, with individual components identified by student, due on D2L Dec. 2
   3. Individual reflective paper (500-700 words), due on D2L Dec. 5
   The grading of the project will be as follows: research paper: 75%; reflective paper: 15%; bibliography: 10%.

5. **Final exam:** Mon., Dec. 9, 10:15-12:05, in our usual classroom

**Grading:** Your best piece of work will be worth 30% of your total course grade, and the next highest grade will be weighted 25%. The lowest grade will be worth 20% of the total grade. These three, plus your reading question grades and attendance/participation, add up to 100%.
GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Disabilities: Students with disabilities who need additional consideration for the timely completion of any of the course requirements should speak to the instructor at the beginning of the term, and must be registered with PSU’s Disability Resource Center (drc@pdx.edu).

Laptops and cellphones: Please use your laptop in class for taking notes or reading documents ONLY. Do not use your cellphone (i.e. sending or checking text messages) during class, and make sure to silence it when you enter the classroom.

Grading: I use the letter-grade format for grading, but don’t be surprised if you see a hybrid grade (e.g., C+/B-) which I may assign if I feel that your work does not easily fit into one rung on the grade scale. In paper comments, “AWK” means “awkward phrasing” and “GR” refers to poor grammar.

Papers:
- Papers must be uploaded to D2L.
- Chicago/ Turabian citation style is preferred, but MLA style is also acceptable.
- Wikipedia and the Jewish Virtual Library are fine for background reading, but may not be used as a source in papers. (Note that many of the articles on VJL are from Encyclopedia Judaica, which our library holds.)
- Material taken (quoted, paraphrased, summarized) from other sources must be properly cited, and the sources properly documented; failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarized work will automatically receive a grade of “F” and may result in your failing the course. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please consult PSU’s Code of Conduct (http://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct) or come to office hours to discuss it with me.

Late work: Late work will automatically be marked down one grade step per day. Example: a term paper handed in three days late that would have received a B+ will receive a C- instead. If you have a legitimate excuse (e.g. illness), please get it documented, and make sure to let me know about your problem as early as possible and not on the day the assignment is due.

E-mail policy: I am happy to correspond with you via e-mail and to answer your questions and concerns that way. However:
- E-mail is not ideal for urgent matters. I consider 24-48 hours to be a reasonable period in which to respond to inquiries. I am usually much faster than this, but not always.
- I will not, in general, respond to student e-mails sent after 5:00 on Friday until Sunday afternoon or, at times, Monday morning. Please plan accordingly.
- Please remember to identify yourself and state your query as clearly as possible, and write in a style appropriate to correspondence between student and teacher (i.e., do not begin with “Hey!”).

I will not fill in students who miss class on the details of a particular lecture or discussion. Please seek that information from your fellow students.

Please note that this syllabus is subject to change.
## COURSE SCHEDULE

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<td>Oct. 1-3</td>
<td>Introduction; historiographical, terminological, moral, and ethical issues in this course European Jewish history and the history of anti-Semitism</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Oct. 8-10</td>
<td>European Jewry between the world wars <em>Group project session</em> World War I, Weimar Germany, and Nazi ideology</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Oct. 15-17</td>
<td>The Nazis in power: policy and practice Jewish life in Nazi Germany; the November Pogrom</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Oct. 22-24</td>
<td>The “Final Solution,” I: The emergence of genocide 10/24: MIDTERM EXAM</td>
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<td>Oct. 29-31</td>
<td>Ghettoization The “Final Solution,” II: Mass murder in the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Nov. 5-7</td>
<td>Collaboration, I: allies and conquered states The Jewish experience in central and western Europe; the “Final Solution,” III: Industrial mass murder 11/7: ID CARDS BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Nov. 12-14</td>
<td>Life and death in the camps; discussion of <em>The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak</em> Collaboration, II: local populations</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Nov. 19-21</td>
<td>Jewish responses: resistance; the Jewish Councils <em>Survivors’ testimony</em></td>
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<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>Rescue and the question of the bystanders 11/28: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Dec. 3-5</td>
<td>12/2: RESEARCH PAPERS DUE The end of the war and its aftermath Memorialization and uniqueness; a genocide to end all genocides? 12/5: REFLECTIVE PAPERS DUE</td>
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<td>Dec. 9</td>
<td>FINAL EXAM</td>
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**Week 1**

**Tuesday 10/1**
- Introduction; historiographical, terminological, moral, and ethical issues in this course

**Thursday 10/3**
- European Jewish history and the history of antisemitism

Bergen, chap. 1
Weiss, “Anti-Semitism Through the Ages,” in Niewyk, *The Holocaust*

- Bavarian petition opposing equality for the Jews, 10 Jan. 1850 (from *Sources of the Holocaust*, ed. Hochstadt, pp. 23-25)

- Martin Lövinson Recalls Jewish Emancipation and Enthusiasm for the German Wars of Unification (early 1870s)

- Wilhelm Marr, *The Victory of Judaism over German* (1879)


**Week 2:**

**Tues., 10/8**
- European Jewry between the world wars


- Images (photo, caricature) of Ostjuden in Germany from Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (1982)

**W2 RESPONSE QUESTION:** To what extent were European Jews integrated into the societies in which they lived? Give examples of Jews in at least two countries.
**Thurs., 10/10**

- World War I, Weimar Germany, and Nazi ideology
- Group project informational session

Bergen, chap. 2

- Extracts from Hitler, *Mein Kampf* and *Zweites Buch* [Second Book], from *Documents on the Holocaust*, ed. Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot (1981), pp. 22-30
- J. Goebbels, “Why Do We Want to Join the Reichstag?” (1935), German Propaganda Archive

View USHMM exhibit: [State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda](#)

**Week 3**

**Tues., 10/15**

- The Nazis in power: policy and practice

Bergen, chap. 3

- George Messersmith’s Report to the State Department on the "Present Status of the Anti-Semitic Movement in Germany" (September 21, 1933): Introduction (p. 1); p. 2 (last paragraph) – 3; p. 7 (last paragr.) – 10 (GHDI)
- Memoir by Dr. Paula Tobias about boycott of 1 April 1933 (*Sources of the Holocaust*, pp. 39-41)
- Report from underground Social Democratic Party on persecution of German Jews, August 1935 (*Sources of the Holocaust*, pp. 42-43)
- “Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor” (1935) (Yad Vashem)
- “Reich Citizenship Law” (1935) (Yad Vashem)
- Speech by Heinrich Himmler to SS leaders on homosexuality, 18 February 1937 (*Sources of the Holocaust*, pp. 49-51)

**W3 RESPONSE QUESTION:** In what way was Nazi antisemitic policy emblematic of the larger “revolution” that the Nazis were carrying out in German political and social life?
**Thurs., 10/17**

- Jewish life in Nazi Germany; the turning point of the November Pogrom

Bergen, chap. 4


- Instructions for Jewish Public Elementary Schools - A Report of the Central Committee of German Jews for Relief and Reconstruction, January 1934 (YV)

- Documents on the Cultural Association of German Jews (*Documents on the Holocaust*, pp. 67-68)

- Prayer Composed by Rabbi Leo Baeck for all Jewish Communities in Germany for the Eve of the Day of Atonement, October 10, 1935 (YV)

- Report on Kristallnacht by American Consul in Leipzig, David Buffum (from *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, ed. Noakes and Pridham, reprinted at YV History of the Holocaust)

- Regulation for the Elimination of the Jews from the Economic Life of Germany, November 12, 1938 (YV)

**Week 4**

**Tues., 10/22**

- The “Final Solution,” I: The emergence of genocide

Bergen, chap. 5: pp. 101-111 and 127-133

Kershaw, “Hitler’s Decisive Role” and Friedlander, “The Opening Act of Nazi Genocide” in Niewyk, *The Holocaust*

- *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, Introduction and Notebook One, June-Dec. 1939 (pp. 21-74)

- *Signed Letter by Hitler Authorizing Euthanasia Killings (backdated to September 1, 1939)* (GHDI)

- Postwar testimony about the first successful gassing of mentally handicapped on 4 January 1940 ([*Sources of the Holocaust*, pp. 95-97](http://www.yadvashem.org))

View USHMM exhibit: “Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race.” Read through the entire exhibit and examine all 7 artifacts.

**W4 RESPONSE QUESTION**: How did the “euthanasia” program help prepare the ground for genocide?
Thurs., 10/24
MIDTERM EXAM

Week 5
Tues., 10/29
• Ghettoization

Bergen, chap. 5: pp. 111-127

- *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, Notebooks Two and Three, April-Oct. 1941 and March-May 1942 (pp. 77-178)
- Himmler on the Treatment of Ethnic Groups and Jews in the East, in a Secret Memorandum To Hitler, May 25, 1940 (YV)

View USHMM exhibit: The Hidden History of the Kovno Ghetto

W5 RESPONSE QUESTION: What was the goal of ghettoization?

Thurs., 10/31
• The “Final Solution,” II: mass murder in the Soviet Union

Bergen, chap. 6
Bartov, “Hitler’s Army” and Browning, “Ordinary Men” in Niewyk

- *The Wehrmacht and the Einsatzgruppen Aktionen, Sept. 1941* (YV)
- Extract from a Report by Karl Jaeger, Commander of Einsatzkommando 3, on the Extermination Of Lithuanian Jews, 1941 (YV)
- Hermann Graebe: Evidence Testimony at Nuremberg War Crimes Trial (HRP)
- Report on police battalion murder of Jews in Belorussia, 30 October 1941 (from *Sources of the Holocaust*, pp. 124-128)
- Testimony of Rivka Yosselevska, Eichmann Trial (HRP)
- Major General Bruns’s Description of the Execution of Jews outside Riga on December 1, 1941, Surreptitiously Taped Conversation (April 25, 1945) (GHDI)
**Week 6**

**Tues., 11/5**
- Collaboration, I: allies and conquered states

Marrus and Paxton, “Western Europeans and the Jews” in Niewyk “Western and Central Europe: Murder Improvised” in Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (chap. 4) (pp. 65-83) (D2L)

- **French Police Report Concerning the Identification of the Jews in the Occupied Zone (October 26, 1940)** (JVL)

- **Report by Gestapo on French-German cooperation on deportation of Jews, 8 July 1942** (from *Sources of the Holocaust*, pp. 146-149)

- **A Discussion Between the German Foreign Office and the Hungarian Ambassador About the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem in Hungary, October 1942** (YV)

- **Gestapo report on deportation of Jews from France, 6 March 1943** (from *Sources of the Holocaust*, pp. 154-157)

- **Confidential Instructions for the Mayors of the Ghetto Centers Concerning the Deportation of the Hungarian Jews (May 9, 1944)** (JVL)

View USHMM exhibit: *The Holocaust Era in Croatia 1941–1945: Jasenovac*

**Thurs., 11/7**

* ID CARDS BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE IN D2L DROPBOX TONIGHT (11/7) BY 10 PM *
- The Jewish experience in wartime in central and western Europe
- The “Final Solution,” III: industrial mass murder

Bergen, chap. 7 (to p. 196)

- **The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak**, Notebook Four, June-Sept. 1942 (pp. 181-226)

- **Protocol of the Wannsee Conference, January 20, 1942** (YV)

- **Letter from Gestapo ordering deportation of Jews in Schwerin, 6 July 1942** (from *Sources of the Holocaust*, pp. 143-145)

- **Extract from Written Evidence of Rudolf Hoess, Commander of the Auschwitz Extermination Camp** (YV)

- **Himmler’s “Secret Speech,”** Oct. 1943 (JVL)

- **From Notes Made by Kurt Gerstein, An Engineer Working for the SS, on the Extermination Camp at Belzec**, 1945 (YV)
Week 7
Tues., 11/12
• Life and death in the camps
• Discussion of The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak

Bergen, chap. 7: pp. 196-203

➢ The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak, Notebook Five, Nov. 1942-April 1943 (pp. 229-268)

W7 RESPONSE QUESTION: In what way is The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak, as a primary source, different from memoirs and testimonies by Holocaust survivors? What are the benefits and the dangers (if any) for historians in using the Diary as a source?

Thurs., 11/14
• Collaboration, II: local populations

Gutman and Krakowski, “The Poles Helped Persecute the Jews”; Lukas, “The Poles Were Fellow Victims” in Niewyk

➢ Killing of Jews in the Priet Marshes (August 12, 1941) (JVL)
➢ Extracts from a Report by Einsatzgruppe A in the Baltic Countries, 1941 (YV)
➢ “From Ringelblum’s Diary: As the Ghetto is Sealed Off, Jews and Poles Remain in Contact” (YV)

View USHMM exhibit: Some Were Neighbors: Collaboration & Complicity in the Holocaust

Week 8
Tues., 11/19
• Jewish responses: resistance; the Jewish Councils

Bergen, chap. 7: pp. 203-214
Hilberg, “Two Thousand Years of Jewish Appeasement”; Bauer, “Forms of Jewish Resistance”; Diner, “Why the Jewish Councils Cooperated” in Niewyk

➢ Jewish Self-Help in Warsaw, July 1940 (YV)
➢ Responsa by Rabbi Ephraim Oshry in the Kovno Ghetto, 1941 (JVL)
- Jewish Pioneer Youth Group in Vilna Calls for Resistance, January 1, 1942 (JVL)
- Educational Problems in the Underground Youth Movement in the Ghetto, June 1942 (YV)
- Chaim Rumkowski speech of Sept. 1942 (D2L)
- Last Letter From Mordecai Anielewicz, April 1943 (YV)

**W8 RESPONSE QUESTION:** Evaluate the debate among historians Hilberg, Bauer, and Diner regarding Jewish resistance.

**Thurs., 11/21**
Survivors’ testimony: Eva and Les Aigner (date subject to change)

**Week 9**
**Tues., 11/26**
- Rescue and the question of the bystanders


  - “Communists Call For Strike in Amsterdam in Response to Persecution of the Jews” (February 25, 1941) (JVL)
  - The Farewell Letter of a German Wehrmacht Sergeant Sentenced to Death for Saving Jews
  - Memo Regarding Discussions at the Bermuda Conference (April 20, 1943) (JVL)
  - Protest of the Bishop of Montauban against deportations in France, 26 August 1942 (from *Sources of the Holocaust*, pp. 150-151)
  - Taylor Letter to Cardinal Maglione Describing Holocaust (September 26, 1942) (JVL)
  - Pastoral Letter From His Excellency Monsignor Saliege, Archbishop of Toulouse (1942) (YV)

View Yad Vashem exhibit: *I Am My Brother's Keeper: Marking 50 Years of Honoring Righteous Among the Nations*
Week 10

* RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN D2L DROPBOX ON 12/2 BY 10 PM *

Tues., 12/3

- The end of the war and its aftermath

Bergen, chap. 8 and Conclusion

- Liberation narratives and film (USHMM)
- Survivor’s Speech taken from a Festive Concert Marking the Liberation, Munich 1945 (YV)
- Summary of evidence from defense witnesses at Nuremberg Trial, August 1946 (Sources of the Holocaust, pp. 261-265)
- Survivor’s Haggadah – read excerpts on D2L; we will view original in Special Collections division of PSU Library at end of class

Thurs., 12/5

Concluding discussion: memorialization and uniqueness
A genocide to end all genocides?

* REFLECTIVE PAPER DUE IN D2L DROPBOX TONIGHT (12/5) BY 10 PM *

FINAL EXAM: Mon., Dec. 9, 10:15-12:05