

**The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
HIS 392- The Holocaust: History and Meaning**

Fall Semester 2018

Instructor: Dr. Emily J. Levine

“Here there is no why.”

- Primo Levi

**DESCRIPTION**

The Holocaust is central to our political, moral, and cultural world in twenty-first century America. Yet the Holocaust still confounds efforts to understand the perpetrators’ motivations and the victims’ experiences. How did “ordinary” Germans respond to the Nazi regime? Why did special units commit murder so efficiently and ruthlessly? What role did other countries—the US, the Soviet Union, and Poland, for example—play? In this course, we will study the origins and implementation of the Holocaust, and the challenge this event poses to the study of history. Among the topics to be covered are the long history of anti-Semitism in Germany and debates about Germany’s aims; the role of the Holocaust within the larger context of World War II in Europe; and the difference between the Holocaust in the East and the West. We will pay close attention to how the Holocaust has been remembered and memorialized, and how memory aids and differs from the work of professional historians. We will also consider what lessons can be drawn from this historical episode, and the possibilities and limitations for history as a tool in assessing our current moral obligations.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- understand the history of anti-Semitism and pre-conditions for the Holocaust
- challenge received knowledge and assumptions about the Holocaust
- introduction to different approaches to the study of the Holocaust
- explore their relationship between personal experience, historical events, and forms of representation
- explore possibilities and limitations of global and historical comparisons
- aesthetic, literary, and religious responses to the Holocaust

**REQUIRED READINGS**

Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide*. NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. 3rd edition. ISBN: 978-1-4422-4228-9. Also available as an Ebook here:

<https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg.edu/lib/uncg/detail.action?docID=4403275>

Gross, Jan T. *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne Poland*. Penguin, 2002. ISBN: 978-0142002407.

Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*. St. Martin's Griffin; Reprint edition, 2009. ISBN: 0230617573.

Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York: Touchstone Books, 1995. ISBN-13: 978-0684826806

## SYLLABUS

*Please note that readings and due dates are subject to change. For the most current version of the syllabus see the electronic version in Canvas.*

### Week 1

#### I. Preconditions

W, 8/15: **Introduction to the course— The Holocaust as History and Personal Responsibility**

**View: Joachim Prinz, March on Washington Speech, 1963**  
<http://www.joachimprinz.com/civilrights.htm>

### Week 2

M, 8/20: **One the eve of the Holocaust: Jews in Western Europe**

#### **Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 1 (1–28).  
Fritz Stern, “The Burden of “The Burden of Success: Reflection German Jewry,” 97–114.\*

**View (Trigger Warning: recommended for an idea of the difficult material that will come up in this class): “The Path to Genocide”** (38 min short film—aftermath of WWI through liberation):

online at <http://www.ushmm.org/learn/introduction-to-the-holocaust/path-to-nazi-genocide>

*Last day to change course(s) or course section(s) without special permission*

*Last day to withdraw from a course for tuition and fees refund; course withdrawal policy in effect after this date.*

W, 8/22: **One the eve of the Holocaust: Jews in Eastern Europe**

**Reading:**

Jeffrey Veidlinger “The Jewish Question in the Soviet Union.”\*

**Week 3**

M, 8/27: **Modern Political Antisemitism**

**Reading:**

Gavin Langmuir, “Toward a Definition of Antisemitism,” in *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, 311–352.\*

**In class:**

Dostoevsky *Memoirs from the House of the Dead*, IX.\* (1860).  
Wilhelm Marr, *The Victory of Jewry over Germandom* (1879).\*  
Edouard Drumont, “The Jews Against France” (1899).

W, 8/29: **Adolf Hitler and Anti-Semitism**

**Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide* Chapter 2 (29–50).  
Adolf Hitler and the discovery of Anti-Semitism in Vienna.\*  
Adolf Hitler’s Gemlich Letter, 1919.\*  
Adolf Hitler, excerpt from *Mein Kampf*.\*

**Week 4**

**II. Nazi State**

M, 9/3: No class – Labor Day

W, 9/5: **The Nazi Rise to Power and Ethnic Fundamentalism, 1933–1935**

**Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide* first part of Chapter 3 (51–70).  
Michael Bayzler, “The Thousand Year Reich’s over one thousand anti-Jewish laws,” in *Routledge History of the Holocaust*, 82–89.\*  
Reich Citizenship Law, 1935.\*

**View, in class:** excerpt from Leni Riefenstahl’s “Triumph of the Will” (1935)

## Week 5

### M, 9/10: **Class Cancelled—Online Assignment**

Map: Europe, 1939: [http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media\\_nm.php?MediaId=7827](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?MediaId=7827) and on Canvas.

**Due:** Complete map assessment at URL on Canvas.

#### **Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, Chapter 4, (79-100); Chapter 5, 101–133.  
Extract from the speech by Hitler, January 30, 1939\*  
The Madagascar Plan, July 1940\*

### W, 9/12: **Anti-Jewish Persecution and Jewish Responses, 1935-1939**

#### **Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide* first part of Chapter 3, 70–78  
Marion Kaplan, “Persecution and gender: German-Jewish responses to Nazism, 1933-39,” in *Routledge History of the Holocaust*, (90–102).\*

## III. World War II

## Week 6

### M, 9/17: **The German Conquest of Poland, 1939–1941**

#### **Reading:**

**Book:** Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne Poland*, xv-xxii, 1–56.

**In class:** Thesis Workshop

### W, 9/19: **Class Cancelled – Online Assignment**

#### **Reading:**

**Book:** Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne Poland*, 56–124.

**View online:** “The Legacy of Jedwabne.”

**Due:** Film questions

## Week 7

M, 9/24: **Jedwabne as history and memory, Part I**

**Reading:**

Finish Jan Gross's *Neighbors* if you have not already and locate secondary source about "Neighbors Debate" to include in your paper.

**Due:** Post Paper Prospectus; in class peer review

W, 9/26: **Jedwabne as history and memory, Part II**

**Due:** Bring two drafts of paper in hard copy to class; in class peer review

**Due: Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup> Paper, online by 5pm**

**Week 8**

M, 10/1: **War on the Western Front, 1940–1941**

**Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide*, first part of Chapter 6, 135–149.

**Book:** Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*, xvii–xx; 1–50.

**In class:** De Gaulle, "The Flame of Resistance" (1940)

W, 10/3: **The Invasion of the Soviet Union, 1941**

**Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide*, second part of Chapter 6 (150–165).

**Book:** Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets*, 51–98.

**In class:** Einsatzgruppen situational reports 80 and 81

**Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup>**

*Last day to withdraw from a course without incurring a WF grade (withdraw failing)*

**UNCG FALL BREAK BEGINS**

**Week 9**

M, 10/8: NO CLASS- UNCG FALL BREAK

W, 10/10: **Killing on the Eastern Front, 1941–1942**

**Reading:**

**Book:** Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets*, 99–end.  
Vasily Grossman, Kiev: Babi Yar and the Murder of the Jews in Berdichev from the *Black Book of Communism*\*

**Watch online lecture (begins at 5:20; lasts about 90min):**

Tim Snyder, “The Origins of the Final Solution: Eastern Europe and the Holocaust.”\*

**Week 10**

M, 10/15: **Toward the Final Solution**

**Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, first part of Chapter 7, 167–182.

**Book:** Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*, 9–55.

**In class:** Wannsee Protocol, January 1942\*

W, 10/17: **Liquidation of the Polish Ghettos, 1942-43**

**Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, middle part of Chapter 7 182–203; Chapter 8 (215–232).

**Book:** Levi, Primo, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 56–100.

**In class:** Stroop Report: “The Warsaw Ghetto is No More” (May 1943)\*

**IV. Memory and Representation**

**Week 11**

M, 10/22: **Survivor Testimony, Memory, and Trauma**

**Reading:**

**Book:** Levi, finish *Survival in Auschwitz*, 101–end.

Zoe Waxman, “Testimony and Representation,” *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. by Dan Stone, pp. 487-507 (chapter 22).\*

**In class: Testimony as Archive**

W, 10/24: **Varieties of Jewish Resistance**

**Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, last part of Chapter 7 (203–214).

Sarah Bender, “From Underground to Armed Struggle: The Resistance Movement in the Bialystok ghetto,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 23 (1993), pp. 145–71.\*

**In class:** Chaim Rumkowski “Give me your children” (1942).\*

## **Week 12**

**M, 10/29: Collaboration, Complicity, and Accommodation**

### **Reading:**

Robert Ericksen, “Christian Complicity: Changing Views on German Churches and the Holocaust.”\*

David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism*, pp. 101–156 (chapter 6).\*

**W, 10/31 NO CLASS: Work on Survivor Testimony Report**

**Due, online by 5pm: Progress report.**

**Due: Friday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, Paper by 5pm**

## **Week 13**

**M, 11/5: Responses around the World and Displaced Persons and Refugees**

### **Reading:**

Doris Bergen, review: 194–5 (Jews in hiding); 222–226 (Hungary);

**View:** “Confronting the Holocaust: American Responses” (17 min. video)\*

**W, 11/7: History Lab: Displaced Persons and Refugees**

### **Reading:**

**Book:** Doris Bergen, 194–5 (Jews in hiding); 222–226 (Hungary); Conclusion (233–243).

Richard Breitman and Allan T. Lichtman, “Perspectives,” Chapter 16 from *FDR and the Jews* (315–329).\*

**In class,** Jan Karski, Joachim Prinz, Oscar Schindler, Raoul Wallenberg et al.

## **Week 14**

**M, 11/12: History Lab and Case Studies: Who was/is a Hero and Who was/is a Victim?**

### **Reading:**

Dan Stone, “Memory, Memorials, and Museums,” *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (Chapter 23 from ebook online, 508–532).\*

**In class:** Work on Group Presentations

W, 11/14: **History Lab**

**Location TBD: Presentation Workshop**

**Week 15**

M, 11/19: **No Class—History Lab**

W, 11/21: **No Class- Thanksgiving Week**

**Week 16**

M, 11/26: **Group Presentations**

W, 11/ 28: **Group Presentations**

**Final Exam: Monday, December 3rd, 3:30–6:30.**

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Reading assignments:** There will be approximately one reading assignment per week. These might take the form of take-home short answer questions, in-class quizzes, or online work. These assignments are designed to help you keep pace with the reading, identify where we might need further review, and to prepare for the final exam.

**Map assessment, Europe, 1939 (*Due September 10th*):** There will one map assessment that will require you to familiarize yourself with a “mobile” map of Europe in 1939 using both a video and a stationary map. You may watch the video as many times as you want until you feel you have mastered the material. An online quiz will assess your knowledge of the geography of the Holocaust and World War II from 1938–1945.

**Paper Assignment (*Due September 28th*):** There will be one 4-5 page paper (12pt font, double spaced) that will focus on the historical questions concerning the motivations of perpetrators in the Holocaust. You will be presented with paper prompts in preparation for this paper. The text that will be addressed in these papers will be **Jan Gross’s *Neighbors***.



**Survivor Testimony (Due November 2nd):** There will be one report on survivor testimony that will be due on Wednesday April 12th by the end of class. You will use the reading from Week 11, including Primo Levi's memoir together with one online interview with a survivor that you have selected from a database provided, and write a one-page report in the style of a museum exhibition on how we might understand this testimony historically. The best reports will explain how the testimony both enriches and challenges historical accounts of the Holocaust.

**Group Research Projects: Would you hide a Jew? Would you stay silent? (November 26<sup>th</sup> and November 28<sup>th</sup>)** In this final group research project you will examine the theme of personal responsibility in the face of enormous political and military oppression, social pressures, and cultural biases. Together with your group you will select an individual, community, or institution whose reaction to their exceptionally difficult predicament you will assess. In your assignment, you will want to address the following questions: How did your subject come to their response to their challenge? What were the overriding principles or causes in their decision making? And what lessons might we draw from this historical example for our contemporary world? How useful is history as a guide for the present? This assignment will involve group research in which every member of the group must participate, and individual methodology papers, explaining the overall concept of the presentation and your participation in it, due at the time of your group presentation. The group presentations will receive a separate grade from the methodology paper, which will count among your "reading assignments."

**Final Exam (December 5th):** There will be a final exam for this class with definitions of key terms and events mentioned in lectures, identification of passages from texts, images (film/stills) discussed and viewed in class, and one short essay on themes traced throughout. Each of these sections will be weighed equally.

### GRADING

Attendance and participation is an essential part of this class. Class time will be divided between the instructor's lectures, which will provide crucial historical context and thematic overview, discussions of the texts (reading, viewing, listening) assigned for that week, and workshops of specific historical skills, including thesis writing and paper preparation.

**Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned texts.** The class goals are to engage one another in friendly debate, to express opinions, and to learn from one another.

**Participation will be noted on a daily basis in accordance with these expectations.**

**Grading will be weighed according to the following formula and scales:**

Attendance (including punctuality)

5%

Participation (including online activities)	10%
Reading Assignments	15%
Paper:	20%
Survivor Testimony Report:	15%
Oral Presentation	15%
Final Exam:	20%

59.5	D-
62.5	D
66.5	D+
69.5	C-
72.5	C
76.5	C+
79.5	B-
82.5	B
86.5	B+
89.5	A-
92.5	A

## LOGISTICS AND TECHNOLOGY

The Learning Management Software for this course is Canvas, accessed at [uncg.instructure.com](https://uncg.instructure.com). **PLEASE NOTE: It is your responsibility to seek assistance with Canvas if you have difficulties.** If you have questions about accessing or submitting material on Canvas, please contact 6Tech at <https://6-tech.uncg.edu> or 336-256-TECH (8324) and you will be directed to a Canvas representative. **The professor cannot provide technological assistance. You will be held responsible for missed or late assignments due to technological problems.**

Aside from the books required for purchase, when marked with an \* the course reading is online, in the form of PDFs, word documents, Ereserve excerpts, video, and web links.

To access readings, locate the “Modules” section of the course site to find links to each week's online reading material. You may need to configure your browser to allow Canvas to display information from external websites. Please see tips on Canvas about the optimal browser to use.

## GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATIVE WORK

For each module or unit you will be assigned a discussion partner (or group) next to whom you should sit and who will be your point-person for all exercises assigned both in and out of class for the duration of the unit. Discussion with partners, in groups, and online is a critical part of assignments and assessments in this course.

Students should not expect to be passive participants in a “traditional” lecture course. Rather, students are required to come prepared having answered the guiding questions (see above) provided along with each assignment reading and to bring questions of their own for discussion. Discussion with partners and in groups will be integrated into class time.

Your partner (or group) is your point person for that unit. That means that if you have a question about the syllabus, the reading, or the assignment, the first person that you write is *not* the professor, but your partner. You can access your classmates email addresses in Canvas to facilitate email communication between partners and groups. All technological problems should be addressed to 6-TECH. Only after you have gone through these steps should you reach out to the professor. Most problems can be solved on your own and partners and groups become an excellent source of learning, exam review, and success in the course.

Participation is equally important in the online forum. To be prepared students must read and prepare the guiding questions or participate in the online forum per the weekly instructions. If it becomes apparent that the student is not prepared or has not completed online assignments, this will impact his/her participation grade negatively.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Office hours will be held on Mondays, 1–2pm. Appointments recommended. This is an open time when students are welcome to come visit the professor with questions about the readings and class discussion. If you cannot make the regularly scheduled office hours, please contact the professor to inquire about another time either in person or over the phone.

### **EMAIL GUIDELINES**

Emails are to be used in general to set up in-person face-to-face meetings with the professor. For points of clarification please consult the syllabus, ask the professor before or after class, or email your partner/group members, *before* emailing the professor your question. For technological help please consult the help information on the home syllabus page or call 6-TECH. Once you send an email to the professor, please be patient. I generally aim to respond within 24 hours but do not respond to email in the evenings or over the weekend.

All emails sent to the professor should conform to the following guidelines:

- come from your uncg address and clearly state who you are and what class you are in (i.e. not “hotswimfan@aol.com”)
- have a salutation (i.e. “Dear Dr. Levine” not “hey”) and conclude with your name
- clearly state the purpose of writing (i.e. “I write to ask/inquire/request”)
- be written in full sentences with punctuation and capitalization
- not include “urgent” “asap” or demanding language

- generally avoid emoticons and shorthand (i.e. no :))

## **RULES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Late Work**

**No late work is accepted.** All students are required to complete all assignments for the course on the due date specified.

### **Attendance**

**Attendance at class is mandatory.** You may miss up to three classes throughout the semester without penalty. After you miss three classes, you lose a point for every class missed from your participation grade (see below). **I reserve the right to withdraw you from the course if you miss six or more classes.**

In accordance with new statewide regulations, students are permitted a minimum of two excused absences due to religious observance. If you plan to be absent due to religious observance, please notify me in advance by email.

### **Punctuality**

It is imperative that you come to class on time. The lecture starts at the beginning of the hour and ends ten minutes before the hour on the dot. If you arrive late, you miss vital information about assignments given at the beginning of class. Similarly, it is also appreciated if you do not pack up your things until after the lecture is complete. **In an effort to encourage punctuality, three late arrivals will constitute one absence, and therefore, the removal of one participation point, as described above.**

### **Cell phones & Laptops**

**There are no laptops permitted in this classroom.** Unless the class is marked with “History Lab,” in which case students are required to bring some device to conduct research and work in groups in class, students are encouraged to take notes on paper and transfer your notes to laptops during your exam preparation.

Your cell phone must be turned off before class begins and remain out of view. **If your phone is viewable or goes off in the classroom, you will receive a failing grade for participation/attendance on that day and you will be asked to leave.**

**Students who abuse technology in the classroom risk earning a failing grade for participation/attendance and being removed from the course.**

### **Name Cards**

You will receive a name card on the first day of class. It is your responsibility to keep the name card and bring it to class. You must keep the name card in front of you at all times and should expect to be called on for discussion.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

All students are expected to abide by the UNCG Honor Code. Please visit the following link: Academic Integrity Policy: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>. Depending on the severity of the offense, students risk receiving a zero for the assignment, an F for the final grade of F for the course and/or having an academic violation placed on their record.

**Adverse Weather Conditions**

If you think that the university might be closed due to weather, either call the UNCG Adverse Weather Line at (336) 334-4400 or check the university's website ([www.uncg.edu](http://www.uncg.edu)). If the university is open, I will hold class. Please note, in accordance with new university guidelines, if the university closes for adverse weather you will still be responsible for your work. Be prepared for class to have an online component on that day.

**Have a great semester!**