

# HIS 392: The Holocaust: History and Meaning

Spring 2018

TR 6:30 - 7:45 p.m.

Instructor: Joseph A. Ross

Office: MHRA 2108

Office Hours: By appointment only

Email: [jaross@uncg.edu](mailto:jaross@uncg.edu) (This is the best way to contact me. I check email at least once every day Monday through Friday. I rarely check email on the weekends. Please be patient as it may be **48 hours** before I can respond.)

History Department Website: <https://his.uncg.edu/>

History Department Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/>

## I. Course Description - - What is this course about?

The Holocaust is central to our political, moral, and cultural world in twenty-first century America, yet we struggle 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, as well as the challenge this event poses to the study of history. Topics include 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.

## II. Learning Goals (LGs) - - Why am I in this course?

Students who spend at least **two** hours a day outside of class completing all reading and writing assignments, who actively engage in the material, and are *thinking* about and *reflecting* on the material will be able to fulfill the following:

1. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods. (**Historical Comprehension**)
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. (**Historical Analysis**)
3. Chronicle the history of anti-Semitism and pre-conditions for the Holocaust
4. Challenge previous knowledge and assumptions about the Holocaust
5. Examine different approaches to the study of the Holocaust
6. Explore the relationships between personal experience and historical events
7. Analyze possibilities and limitations of comparing the Holocaust to other genocides

## III. Required Materials - - What do I need to buy?

1. Bergen, Doris. *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd edition. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. ISBN: 978-1442242289. (Also available through the library website as an eBook).
2. Schleunes, Karl A. *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews, 1933-1939*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990. ISBN: 978-0252061479.
3. Gross, Jan T. *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne Poland*. Penguin, 2002. ISBN: 978-0142002407. (Also available through the library website as an eBook).
4. Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York: Touchstone Books, 1995. ISBN-13: 978-0684826806.

**\*\*\*Other readings will be posted online.**

**Not having the readings will not excuse students from completing assignments on time.\*\*\***

#### IV. Teaching Strategies - - How is this course different from others?

##### **Teams**

In order to improve student learning and build community, students will complete many discussions and in-class assignments in teams. In general, every member of the team earns the same grade. However, I also rely on student feedback to adjust individual scores to reflect each student's level of participation. Please get to know each other as best you can, as it will make our course more enjoyable for everyone.

##### **Technology**

In an effort to eliminate distractions in the classroom, technology is **not permitted**. Please put away all cell phones, tablets, laptops, and other electronic devices at the beginning of class. These items can be very distracting to other students, the instructor, and even yourself. Students who do not abide by this policy may be dismissed from class and counted absent.

#### V. Rules & Policies - - How do I respect myself and my classmates in this course?

Be respectful and professional while in this class. Show respect toward yourself, your classmates, and the instructor by coming to class prepared. Demonstrate your professionalism by turning in assignments on time, following all rules and procedures, and taking your education seriously.

##### **Attendance**

Students should attend every class unless illness or unforeseen circumstances prevent them from doing so. **Please do not come to class if you are sick.** Students should also log in to Canvas regularly to check the Announcements & the Discussion Board.

Students may miss 2 classes for any reason (I do not keep track of "excused" vs. "unexcused" absences. You are either present for class, or you are not). After 2 absences, each additional absence will result in a drop of 1/3 of a letter grade from your overall course average.

Also, students must attend the entire class in order to be counted present. Habitually arriving late or leaving early—without adequate justification—will affect your attendance grade. If you arrive to class after I have taken roll, then you are tardy. Two tardies will count as one absence. ***If unfortunate circumstances, such as illness or death in the family, prevent you from attending class or arriving on time, then please email the instructor.***

##### **Make-up Work**

There is no make-up work or extra credit in this course. All assignments and due dates are listed on the syllabus. Students must plan ahead in order to manage the workload and complete all assignments. Anyone asking for special treatment will be referred to this policy.

##### **Late Work**

No late work will be accepted. All deadlines are on the syllabus. Failure to turn in work on time will result in a failing grade. Please do not wait until the last minute to submit assignments that are due online, as technical problems can arise at any time. Students with special circumstances preventing them from turning in an assignment on time should, whenever possible, contact the instructor **before** the deadline.

##### **Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to abide by the university's Academic Integrity Policy. Please visit the following link: Academic Integrity Policy: <http://sa.uncg.edu/dean/academic-integrity/> ***Students who violate this policy not only disrespect themselves, their classmates, and this university, but they also risk receiving a grade of F on an assignment, an F for the course, or being expelled.***

##### **E-mail**

I will reply to student e-mails within **48 hours**, Monday through Friday. In order to ensure a reply, students must only use university e-mail accounts, and they should utilize email in a professional manner. To that end, make sure your message includes:

- the course number in the subject line with a clear description (HIS 392 -- Family Emergency)
- a formal greeting ("Dear Mr. Ross,") and a formal closing ("Sincerely,")
- your first and last name

### **Accommodations**

UNCG seeks to comply fully with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodation based on a disability must be registered with the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services in 215 Elliott University Center, 334-5440, <http://ods.dept.uncg.edu/>. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.

### **VI. Grading Policies - - How will my performance be assessed?**

Students earn grades based on the work they submit. UNCG defines the grading system for undergraduates as follows:

<b>A = Excellent</b>	Achievement of distinction in several if not all of the following aspects: 1) completeness and accuracy of knowledge; 2) intelligent use of knowledge; 3) independence of work; 4) originality.
<b>B = Good</b>	General achievement superior to the acceptable standard defined as a letter grade of C. It involves excellence in some aspects of the work, as indicated in the definition of A.
<b>C = Average</b>	The acceptable standard for graduation. It involves such quality and quantity of work as may fairly be expected of a student of normal ability who gives to the course a reasonable amount of time, effort, and attention
<b>D = Lowest passing grade</b>	work falling below the acceptable standards defined as a letter grade of C but which is of sufficient quality and quantity to be counted in the hours of graduation, if balanced by superior work in other courses.
<b>F = Failure</b>	indicates failure that may not be made up except by repeating the course

### **Grading Scale (point system)**

A+ 100-97	B+ 89-87	C+ 79-77	D+ 69-67	F = 59 and below
A 96-93	B 86-83	C 76-73	D 66-63	
A- 92-90	B- 82-80	C- 72-70	D- 62-60	

**\*\*\*Note: While there is no extra credit in the course, students whose final research papers demonstrate an advanced level of analysis at the undergraduate level can earn up to 5 additional bonus points.\*\*\***

### **Types of Assignments & Grade Breakdown for the Course**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Learning Goals</b>
<b>Discussion / Participation</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</b>

Students should participate in all discussions (either in class or online) by carefully reading and annotating the texts (annotation examples and instructions are available online). I base this grade on my evaluation of your contributions to discussion. I look at how often you contribute to the conversation, but I also evaluate the quality of what you have to say. If you say a lot but add little substance to the dialogue, then your grade will be lower. Make your comments meaningful and thought-provoking.

Below is the rubric I use to evaluate each student's participation grade:

5	Contributes readily to the conversation without dominating it, makes thoughtful comments and/or asks provocative questions that are relevant and advance the discussion, shows interest in and respect for others students' views by responding to them, incorporates information from course readings and outside sources, makes comments that are a joy to hear and respond to
4	Frequently makes useful and relevant comments (though they could be more original or sophisticated), shows interest in and respect for other students' views by responding to them (though may occasionally dominate the conversation), attempts to incorporate information from course readings and may even reference outside sources
3	Participates minimally, follows instructions but does little more, may dominate the conversation, may not show interest in or respect for other students' views, may make token references to course readings that give the appearance of critical thinking/analysis
2	May not participate consistently, may not follow instructions, comments may be off topic, distracting, and/or nonsensical, may not interact directly with the instructor or other students
1	Does not participate in any meaningful way, fails to follow instructions or does not submit work on time, may violate the university's academic integrity policy

**Historical Interpretation Paper****20****2,3,4,5**

After reading Karl Schleunes' book, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, students will write a paper in which they weigh in on the functionalist/structuralist vs. intentionalist debate. This will require students to compare Schleunes' argument to another historian's work on the origins of the Holocaust. Students will need to demonstrate a solid understanding of the main points of both historical works, and then create an original argument in which they support one side or the other.

This paper must be no more than 1,500 words (roughly 5 – 6 pages) and formatted using Chicago/Turabian style.

**Reading Responses****20 total (10 pts. each)****2,4,6**

Students will turn in reading responses after completing Jan Gross's *Neighbors* and Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*. These responses are less formal than traditional papers, but students should still demonstrate that they understand the content of these historical works.

For each reading response, students will provide their reaction to the book (such as what they found most significant, insightful, confusing, disturbing), any questions they have about the reading, and—perhaps most importantly—how these sources inform your personal understanding of the Holocaust. Students should also, when possible, make connections between these readings and their paper topics so that they can incorporate these works into their research.

These responses should be no more than 750 words (roughly 2 -3 pages).

**Research Paper****50 (up to 5 bonus pts. possible)****1,2,3,4,5,6,7**

In lieu of traditional exams, students will complete a substantial research paper that addresses a specific aspect of the Holocaust. Possible topics are listed below, though students may choose a different topic with the instructor's approval:

Possible Topics:

- Concentration/extermination camps
- Victims of the Holocaust (including communists, Roma, asocials, homosexuals, etc.)
- Motives of the perpetrators
- Holocaust collaborators
- Resistance movements
- Jewish refugees / survivors
- Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust
- World War II and the Holocaust

- Antisemitism / Jewish persecution / laws against the Jews in Nazi Germany
- Medical experiments / euthanasia / sterilization / scientific racism / Social Darwinism
- Genocide and the Holocaust
- Human rights and the Holocaust
- Gender and the Holocaust
- Holocaust art / photography
- Religious responses to the Holocaust
- Comparing Holocaust-era antisemitism with 21<sup>st</sup>-century antisemitism
- Remembering the Holocaust / Holocaust memorials
- Representations of the Holocaust in pop culture (film, television, video games, comic books, etc.)
- Holocaust denial

This paper will be between 3,000 and 4,000 words (roughly 12 to 16 pages) and utilize at least 10 scholarly sources drawn from books and journal articles, as these are the primary methods historians use to disseminate original research. Some of these sources may include class readings (i.e. Schleunes' *Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, Gross' *Neighbors*, and Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*). We will visit the library to practice searching for and identifying scholarly sources. The course textbook also contains a comprehensive bibliography of Holocaust-related sources that students should consult. The paper must also be formatted using Chicago/Turabian style.

We will tackle the research paper in the following stages:

1. Submit paper topic and a bibliography of at least 5 sources for instructor feedback and approval
2. Submit initial thesis statement, outline, and annotated bibliography of 7 sources for instructor feedback
3. (OPTIONAL) Submit 1<sup>st</sup> draft for instructor feedback
4. Submit final draft

### VIII. Course Calendar\* -- What are the assignments, and when are they due?

The course calendar lists every reading, assignment, and due date for the entire course. There is **a lot of reading in this course**. Please do not feel like you have to understand every person, place, event, or idea. Instead, what did you take away from the readings? What struck you as interesting, odd, or confusing? Focus on what stands out to you, and then please share your unique perspective with the rest of the class when we discuss these readings. **Your point of view matters!**

**\*\*\* I reserve the right to modify the course calendar in order to improve student learning. I will announce any changes in advance.\*\*\***

## WEEK 1

### Tuesday, January 9

#### Introductions -- Problems Studying the Holocaust

#### Readings:

- News Articles on USHMM Opening in Washington, D.C.
- David Irving, "Introduction to the Leuchter Report"

*Useful resources pertaining to Holocaust denial can be found at these sites:*

- *Holocaust Denial on Trial* (<https://www.hdot.org/>)
- *United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum, "Holocaust Denial and Distortion"* (<https://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/holocaust-denial-and-distortion>)

### Thursday, January 11

#### Preconditions

**Readings:**

- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Introduction (1-12)
- Hannah Arendt, Excerpts from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

**Video:**

- The Path to Nazi Genocide (<https://www.ushmm.org/learn/introduction-to-the-holocaust/path-to-nazi-genocide/the-path-to-nazi-genocide/full-film>)

Friday, January 12

Last day to change course(s) or course section(s) without special permission and receive tuition and fees refund

**WEEK 2**

Monday, January 15

Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. No classes.

**Tuesday, January 16****Library Workshop – Finding / Evaluating Historical Sources**

**Meet in the Library, Room 177A**

**Thursday, January 18****A History of Antisemitism****Readings:**

- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 1
- New Testament Accounts of Jesus' Arrest and Crucifixion
  - Matthew 26:57-68
  - Matthew 27:11-31
  - Mark 14:53-65
  - Luke 23:1-25
  - John 18
  - Acts 3:12-15
  - Acts 7:51-53
  - 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16
- Wilhelm Marr, Excerpts from *The Victory of Judaism over Germandom* (1879)
- Antisemites' Petition (1880)

**Students will form teams at the beginning of class.**

**WEEK 3****Tuesday, January 23****Adolf Hitler and Nazi Ideology****Readings:**

- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 2
- Adolf Hitler's Gemlich Letter, 1919
- Adolf Hitler, Excerpts from *Mein Kampf*
- Adolf Hitler, Speech on Jan. 30, 1939

**Thursday, January 25****The Third Reich in Power****Readings:**

- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 3
- Reichstag Fire Decree (Feb. 1933)
- Hermann Goering, *Reconstruction of a Nation*

**Video:**

- Leni Riefenstahl, "Triumph of the Will"

**Assignments:****RESEARCH PAPER STAGE 1.**

- **Submit research paper topic and bibliography of at least 5 scholarly sources for instructor feedback and approval**

**WEEK 4****Tuesday, January 30****Laws of the Third Reich****Readings:**

- Excerpts of various Nazi Laws (euthanasia, citizenship, marriage, "Jewishness," etc.)
- Michael J. Bazyler, "The Thousand Year Reich's Over One Thousand Anti-Jewish Laws"

**Thursday, February 1****Twisted Road to Auschwitz, Part I****Readings:**

- Schleunes, *Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, (Chapters 3, 4)
- Julius Streicher, Appeal for the Boycott of all Jewish Enterprises (March 31, 1933)

**WEEK 5****Tuesday, February 6****Twisted Road to Auschwitz, Part II****Readings:**

- Schleunes, *Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, (Chapters 5, 6)
- Madagascar Plan (1938-1940)

**Thursday, February 8****Twisted Road to Auschwitz, Part III****Readings:**

- Schleunes, *Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, (Chapters 7, 8)
- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 4
- Various sources on *Kristallnacht* (November 1938)

**WEEK 6****Tuesday, February 13****A Matter of Interpretation: Functionalists vs. Intentionalists****Readings:**

- Lucy Dawidowicz, Excerpts from *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*

**Thursday, February 15****Writing Workshop**

***Bring laptops to work on Historical Interpretation Paper***

**WEEK 7****Tuesday, February 20 at 7:30 p.m.****NO CLASS****Readings:**

- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 5

**Assignment:**

- **DUE:** Historical Interpretation Paper (submit online)

**Thursday, February 22****German Conquest of Poland****Reading:**

- Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne Poland* (Read through “The Murder”)

**WEEK 8****Tuesday, February 27****Jedwabne as History and Memory, Part I****Reading:**

- Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne Poland* (Read to “Postscript”)

**Thursday, March 1****Jedwabne as History and Memory, Part II****Video:**

- *The Legacy of Jedwabne* (<https://uncg.kanopystreaming.com/video/legacy-jedwabne>)

**Assignments:**

- **DUE:** 1-2 page reaction paper on *Neighbors* (submit online)

*Friday, March 2**Last day to withdraw from a course without incurring a WF (withdraw failing) grade***WEEK 9***Monday, March 5 – Friday, March 9**Spring Break. No classes.***WEEK 10****Tuesday, March 13****Mid-semester Evaluation****Videos:**

- Milgram Experiment (<https://youtu.be/mOUEC5YXV8U>)
- Stanford Prison Experiment (<https://youtu.be/oAX9b7agT9o>)

**Assignments:****RESEARCH PAPER STAGE 2.**

- **Submit initial thesis statement, initial outline, and annotated bibliography of 7 sources**

**Thursday, March 15****“Ordinary” Germans and the Final Solution****Reading:**

- *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in World History* – The Holocaust, pp. 181-201

**WEEK 11****Tuesday, March 20****IN-CLASS DEBATE – Evaluating Daniel Goldhagen & Christopher Browning**

- “Was German antisemitism responsible for the Holocaust?”

**Thursday, March 22****World War II on the Western Front****Readings:**

- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 6, 167-186
- Charles De Gaulle, *The Flame of Resistance* (1940)

**WEEK 12****Tuesday, March 27****Invasion of the Soviet Union****Readings:**

- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 6, 186-206
- Einsatzgruppen Operational Situation Reports

**Video:**

- Tim Snyder, “The Origins of the Final Solution: Eastern Europe and the Holocaust” (<https://youtu.be/fxyHV90ESIY>)

**Thursday, March 29****The Final Solution****Readings:**

- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 7
- Testimony of Nurse Berta Netz (1962)
- Wannsee Conference (January 1942)

*Friday, March 30*

*Good Friday. No classes.*

**WEEK 13****Tuesday, April 3****Auschwitz, Part I****Readings:**

- Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (1-86)
- SS General Jürgen Stroop, “Report on the Destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto” (May 16, 1943)

**Thursday, April 5****Auschwitz, Part II**

**Readings:**

- Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (87-187)

**Assignment:**

- **DUE:** 1-2 page reaction paper on *Survival in Auschwitz* (submit online)

**WEEK 14****Tuesday, April 10****Collaboration and Resistance****Readings:**

- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 8
- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, Chapter 9
- Chaim Rumkowski, "Give Me Your Children" (1942)

**Video:**

- Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War

**Thursday, April 12 (Holocaust Remembrance Day)****University Archives presentation on Laszlo Varga and Lev Aronson**

***Meet in the University Archives (Jackson Library, Hodges Reading Room -- second floor from the library's old entrance that has the giant columns outside)***

**Assignments:****RESEARCH PAPER STAGE 3.**

- **(OPTIONAL) Submit 1<sup>st</sup> draft for instructor feedback**

**WEEK 15****Tuesday, April 17****REVIEW AND RESEARCH PAPER WORKSHOP****Thursday, April 19****RESEARCH PAPER WORKSHOP, Part II****WEEK 16****Tuesday, April 24****RESEARCH PAPER WORKSHOP, Part III***Wednesday, April 25**Last day of classes**Thursday, April 26**Reading Day***WEEK 17****Tuesday, May 1****Assignments:****RESEARCH PAPER STAGE 4.**

- **Submit final draft online by 10:00 p.m.**