# **HISTORY 392—THE HOLOCAUST: MEANING AND MEMORY**

Spring Semester 2020



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

History Department Facebook Page: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/">https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/</a>

# **INSTRUCTOR**

Dr. Peter N. Gengler

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Office hours: TR, 1-2 pm and by appointment

Office: TBD

# **COURSE MEETING TIMES**

Time: TR, 2pm-3:15pm Room: Bryan Building 216

# **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The Holocaust is central to our political, moral, and cultural world, even as the survivors are passing away and the genocide recedes into the past. Despite its firm fixture in school curricula, movies and television, literature, and historical memory, the Holocaust still confounds efforts to understand the perpetrators' motivations, the victims' experiences, and scope and scale of devastation. How did "ordinary" Germans respond to the Nazi regime's annihilationist fantasies?

Why did special units commit murder so efficiently and ruthlessly, while seemingly comprised of "ordinary" men? What role did other countries—the US and the Soviet Union—play? How did victims survive, and what agency did they have? How do historians interpret these events, and where do disagreements arise? Lastly, what is the lasting legacy of the most notorious genocide in human history? In this course we will attempt to find answers to these challenging questions, as well as study the origins and implementation of the Holocaust. Among the topics to be covered are the centrality of the "Jewish Question" and the long history of anti-Semitism in Germany and the Third Reich; the role of the Holocaust within the larger context of World War II in Europe; debates about Germany's aims; the diverse experiences of victims; and how postwar societies remembered and recalled the horrors of the war.

# A NOTE OF CAUTION:

By its very nature, studying the Holocaust is traumatic, unsettling, and emotionally difficult. We are studying unimaginable cruelty and horrors, an inconceivable scale of suffering, and personal tragedies that defy understanding. I will try as best as I can to put the information you encounter into context, but must issue a warning that you will be exposed to very difficult material. Please prepare yourself for this, and consider carefully why you want to learn more about the Holocaust and what you hope to gain from this course. Furthermore, if you are struggling with the course content, please remain in contact with me and share your reactions to the materials.

# **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

General Education Global Perspectives Student Learning Outcomes (GL):

- 1. Interpret or evaluate information on diverse cultures, polities, and/or intellectual traditions.
- 2. Describe interconnections among regions of the world.
- 3. Use diverse cultural frames of reference and alternative perspectives to analyze issues.

History Department Student Learning Outcomes (HLG)

- 1. *Historical Comprehension*. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures.
- 2. *Historical Analysis*. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view.
- 3. *Historical Research*. Conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary and secondary sources.
- 4. *Historical Interpretation*. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing.

Beyond UNCG university and history learning goals, this course seeks to help you:

- **A.** Understand how historians "do" history. By analyzing primary sources within their historical contexts, you will learn how to evaluate what they tell us about that context, the author's worldview, and intended audiences. You will also be introduced to academic debates, and how scholars interpret and use evidence to make claims about the past.
- **B.** Cultivate the need to consider historical subjects on their own terms. The temptation may arise to view modern history as nothing more than the prehistory of our contemporary world, and to project our understandings, political views, and expectations onto the past. While the present is important to consider, this course will urge you to ponder the world around you as subject to historical processes, and a product of various historical accidents that the actors we encounter in the course navigated and responded to.
- **C. Practice** critical thinking. Through close examination of primary documents, memoirs, film, and images, you will encounter the views, ideas, impressions, fears, and desires of people from a time and culture different from your own. By analyzing the texts they left behind, you will be challenged to think more deeply about humanity and history and, hopefully, develop critical and nuanced thinking skills.
- **D. Improve** writing skills. Through course assignments, you will practice formulating research questions, marshalling evidence to support your thesis, and improve on your skills of synthesizing the evidence into an argument.
- **E. Participate** in a lively and respectful atmosphere. Rigorous academic debate is also about difference of points of view, the aggregation of which enhances classroom experiences. All students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, orientation, background, or any other identity should feel welcome to participate. If you feel that this goal is not being met, please let me know in private how this can be remedied.
- **F. Promote** citizenship. That is the goal of liberal arts. "Liberal" arts doesn't refer to a political orientation, but rather to the idea that universities should cultivate the skills required of citizens who will partake in civic life. The humanities train critical thinking and communication, skills you will need in your life and careers. But more than produce competent employees, I want to provide you with the abilities to help understand and contribute to your communities and society as an informed citizen.

# **ACCESSIBILITY:**

The university and myself strive to make the class as accessible as possible. Please let me know if you anticipate or over the semester experience physical, mental, or academic barriers that might interfere with your studies, and so that we can weigh options. Students with recognized disabilities should register with the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS). OARS is located on the second floor of the Elliott University Center (EUC) in Suite 215 and maintains a <a href="webpage">webpage</a>. The mission of OARS is to provide, coordinate, and advocate for services which enable students with disabilities to receive equal access to a college education and to all aspects of university life.

# **POLICIES**

- **A.** Attendance: In order to succeed in this or any course, attendance is crucial. In addition to helping guide you through an intensive course, much of our learning will come from group discussion and interaction. Moreover, it is expected that you participate and come prepared for lectures and recitations, and read the required assignments actively in order to make points or pose questions. I not only expect you to be physically present, but mentally as well. That means that surfing the internet, doing online shopping, playing around on your phone, or sleeping will lead to an ejection from the lecture, and will be marked as an unexcused absence. **If you miss more than three classes, your grade will fall by one full letter grade.** If you have an illness or family emergency, or are a student athlete, your absences may be excused. However, please coordinate with me and keep me in the loop, and I will make sure we catch you up on missed material.
- **B. Late Assignments:** All work must be submitted in hard copy form on the day it is due. If work is submitted past the deadline without prior coordination with me, late assignments will only be eligible for a portion of the full credit. My policy for how many points are docked is the following: 1-3 days—5%; 4-7 days—10%; 8-10 days—25%. Work submitted more than 10 days after the deadline can only receive **a maximum** 50% credit.
- C. Academic Integrity Policy: All assignments and course interactions are subject to UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy. This includes, for instance, procedures disciplining plagiarism. In plain language: Any indication that your work is not your own is an absolutely inexcusable offense that insults me, your peers, and sullies the standards of scholarship. It will be addressed vigorously. The consequences of violating the Academic Integrity Policy are not to be taken lightly, and it is not worth the risk of committing plagiarism just to get a slightly better grade in this course.

# **GRADING**

The assignments (see below) and course grades will conform to the following values:

| A (93–100%) • A- (90–92%)              | Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment; |
|--|---|
| B+ (87–89%) • B (83–86%) • B- (80–82%) | Strong performance demonstrating a high level of              |
|  | attainment;   |
| C+ (77–79%) • C (73–76%) • C- (70–72%) | Acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate              |
|  | level of attainment;  |
| D+ (67–69%) • D (63–66%) • D- (60–62%) | Marginal performance in the required exercises                |
|  | a minimal passing level of attainment;                        |
| F (< 59%)                              | An unacceptable performance.                                  |

# **ASSIGNMENTS**

| Attendance and Participation | 10% |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Website Analysis             | 10% |
| Midterm                      | 15% |
| Final Exam                   | 25% |
| Research Paper Proposal      | 5%  |
| Research Paper Bibliography  | 5%  |
| Research Paper Outline       | 5%  |
| Research Paper               | 25% |

The assignments entail the following components, thought detailed information will follow over the course of the semester:

- A. **Attendance and Participation**: As noted above, both are vital for success in the course. If you regularly attend, participate and are engaged, you will succeed and this should be easy points. (SLO: GL 1, 2, 3; HLG 1, 2)
- B. Website Analysis: We live in an age of two dangerous notions. On the one hand, rising antisemitism and rightwing fascist agitation unsurprisingly has seen an explosion of Holocaust denial. As the survivors pass away, the proliferation of neo-Nazi messages—often cunningly disguised under a veneer of "scholarly" objectivity—increases. On the other hand, we live in an age of "fake news" that, unfortunately, the internet has only complicated. Identifying what constitutes a sound source with evidence is more crucial than ever. In this assignment, you will be asked to analyze a Holocaust-related website in order to practice identifying legitimate resources, and prepare for your research later in the semester. Details, including a prompt, will follow. (SLO: HLG 2)
- C. **Midterm and Final**: The midterm will be a take-home exam responding to questions covering the first half of the course, and which will be emailed to you in a timely manner. The final will take place on the date and time indicated on the schedule (below) and cover the second half of the semester. Both exams will consist of short and long answers. (SLO: GL 1, 2, 3; HLG 1, 2, 4)
- D. **Research Paper**: You will write an 8-10 page research paper on a topic that we will determine together and work toward over several stages. The syllabus denotes the days when individual pieces (e.g. initial proposal, annotated bibliography, and fully-developed paper proposal) are due. The topic is entirely yours to choose, but there is a prohibition on papers on Nazi medical experiments. More details will be provided during the semester. (SLO: GL 1, 2, 3; HLG 1, 2, 3, 4)

For these assignments, the graduate instructors and I are available to help guide you, and we are happy to work with you in improving your writing and comprehension skills. Please be aware, as well, that the university has an excellent <u>Writing Center</u> that can improve individual writing and

impart techniques and skills that will help you succeed at UNCG and in your future careers.

# TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS<sup>1</sup>

This course requires a large amount of reading and reflection. It is impossible to grasp such a large and complex subject without such a workload. Because of the materials and their challenging emotional scope, it is important that you start early and work steadily.

As for the course texts, I remember college and the pain of forking over money for expensive textbooks. So instead of a large and costly tome, I have opted for a combination of articles and novels/memoirs. I will provide you with many of the articles and materials via Canvas.

Some required books that we will spend considerable time with must be purchased, and are available at the Student Store and online. The online route might be cheaper, and I don't care if you find an older edition. The books for the course are:

Marion Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany

Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz.

Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland

Jan Gross, Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland

Nora Krug, Belonging: A German Reckons With History and Home

Lectures will generally take care of the context, but given the breadth of the course cannot cover everything. So please be aware: **The lectures do not replicate the books or summarize the readings, and will not substitute fully for the reading!** My lectures will provide background information to the readings, or expound upon a particular theme or challenge. We will regularly revert to a discussion or source analysis requiring class input, so it is in your interest to be prepared.

Because my lectures do not cover "everything," if you feel you require further background, the following provides a concise and excellent overview that will fill in details for the course:

Doris Bergen, War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Note that the readings fulfill the following learning outcomes: GL 1, 2, 3; and HLG 1, 2.

# **COURSE SCHEDULE**

The schedule outlines the major topics that we will cover. It may (and very likely will) be modified if necessary, with adequate notice.

# Part 1 | Preconditions

# 1. January 14 | Introduction

Reading:

• "Deaths-Head Revisited," 1961—season 3, episode 9 of *The Twilight Zone*, available through Netflix and Hulu

# 2. January 16 | Why the Jews? Origins of Antisemitism

Reading:

- David Winston, "Pagan and Early Christian Anti-Semitism," in *The Holocaust: Ideology, Bureaucracy, and Genocide*, ed. by Henry Friedlander and Sybil Milton (Millwood: Kraus International Publications, 1980), 15-25
- Gavin Langmuir, "Medieval Anti-Semitism," in *The Holocaust*, 27-36

# Documents:

- Excerpts from the New Testament
- Excerpts from Martin Luther, On the Jews and Their Lies, 1543

# 3. January 21 | Modern Antisemitism

Reading:

- Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, "Barbarous Utopias," in Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 23-37
- Saul Friedländer, "Redemptive Anti-semitism," in Friedländer, *Nazi Germany* and the Jews: Years of Persecution (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 73-90

# Documents:

• Excerpts from Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Foundations of the Nineteenth Century (1899)

# 4. January 23 | Why the Germans? Germany, 1871-1918

Reading:

- Richard J. Evans, "German Peculiarities," in Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 2-21
- Robert Paxton, "Introduction" and "Creating Fascist Movements," in Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 24-44

### Documents:

- Excerpts Richard Wagner, Wilhelm Marr, and Heinrich von Treitschke
- The "<u>Tivoli Program</u>" (1892)

# 5. January 28 | Jewish Life and WWI

Reading:

- Friedländer, "Redemptive Anti-semitism," 90-95
- Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, excerpted in Deborah Dwork, ed., *Voices & Views: A History of the Holocaust*, 85-89

### Documents:

- "Henry Buxbaum," in Monika Richarz, ed., *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, 301-306
- Jeffrey Shandler, ed., *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), "Esther" (321-343) and epilogue (404-405)

# \*WEBSITE ANALYSIS DUE JAN 28\*

# Part 2 | Annihilation

# 6. January 30 | Hitler and Nazi Ideology

Reading:

- Friedländer, "Redemptive Anti-semitism," 95-112
- Doris Bergen, War and Genocide (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 45-61

### Documents:

- Excerpts from *Mein Kampf*
- Excerpts from Zweites Buch
- Hitler, Letter to Adolf Gemlich (1919)

# Suggested Reading:

• Volker Ulrich, "The Leap into Politics," in Ulrich, *Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939* (New York: Knopf, 2016), 73-91

# 7. February 4 | The Nazi Rise to Power

Reading:

- Doris Bergen, War and Genocide (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 61-67
- Volker Ulrich, "The King of Munich," in Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939, 92-130

### Documents:

- "The Nazi Party Program"
- Excerpt from the 1920 Nazi party paper article, "Do a Proper Job on the Jews!"

# 8. February 6 | The Racial State

Reading:

• Bergen, War and Genocide, 69-100

Sources:

- Sebastian Haffner, "Street-Level Coercion," in *How Was it Possible*, ed. by Peter Hayes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 118-128
- "Proclamation of the Reich Government to the German People, 1 February 1933"
- "Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring, 14 July 1933"

# 9. February 11 | Nazi Jewish Policy, 1933-1935: Isolation

# Reading:

• Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3-73

### Documents:

- "Appeal for the Boycott of All Jewish Enterprises, 31 March 1933"
- "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, 7 April 1933"
- "Wear it with Pride, the Yellow Badge," article by Robert Weltsch, 4 April 1933
- "Reich Citizenship Law, 15 September 1935"
- "Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, 15 September 1935"

# \*PAPER PROPOSAL DUE FEB 11\*

# 10. February 13 | Nazi Jewish Policy, 1936-1938: Escalation

# Reading:

• Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 74-144

### Documents:

- "Description of the Riot at Dinslaken"
- Excerpt of SS newspaper article, "Jews, What Next?," 24 November, 1938

# 11. February 18 | 1939-1941: War, Mass Murder, Ethnic Cleansing

### Reading:

• Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 145-237

# Documents:

• Jürgen Matthäus and Mark Roseman, eds., *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, vol. 1, selected documents from Mally Dienemann

# 12. February 20 | Decisions for a "Final Solution"

# Reading:

- Christopher Browning, "From 'Ethnic Cleansing' to Genocide to the 'Final Solution'": The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, 1939-1941," in *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers*, 1-25
- *Conspiracy*, 2001 (film available online to rent)

### Documents:

• <u>Protocol of the Wannsee Conference</u>, 20 January, 1942

- Excerpts of notes made by Kurt Gerstein on the extermination camp at Belzec
- Extracts of evidence from Rudolf Höss, commandant of Auschwitz-Birkenau
- "Report by Wehrmacht Officer on Massacre in the Ukraine"

# Suggested Reading:

- Gerald Fleming, "It is the Führer's wish," in Donald L. Niewyk, ed., *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 13-26
- Hans Mommsen, "There was no Führer order," in Niewyk, *The Holocaust*, 27-38

# 13. February 25 | "The Drowned and the Saved": The Concentration Camp Universe

### Reading:

• Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York: Touchstone Book, 1996) (entire book)

### Documents:

- Extract from the postwar evidence of Jacob Wiernik on Treblinka *Suggested Reading:* 
  - Sybil Milton, "Women's Survival Skills," in *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), ed. by Donald Niewyk, 119-125
  - Lawrence Langer, "Gendered Suffering?," in *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), ed. by Donald Niewyk, 126-136

# **14. February 27** | **A European Genocide I: The Cases of France and Romania** *Reading:*

- Jean Ancel, "Romania: Annihilation Aborted," in How Was it Possible, 545-569
- Saul Friedländer, "Vichy France: 'Our' Jews and the Rest," in *How Was it Possible*, 570-587

# \*MIDTERM DUE FEB 27\*

# SPRING BREAK, FEB 29-MARCH 8

(Pssssst...you should do some reading over break)

# 15. March 10 | A European Genocide II: The Cases of Hungary and Italy

Reading:

- Susan Zuccotti, "The Italian Paradox," in How Was it Possible, 588-598
- Randolph B. Braham, "The Hungarian Paroxysm," in How Was it Possible, 599-612

# \*BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE MAR 11\*

# Part 3 | Victims, Perpetrators, Bystanders, Collaborators

# 16. March 12 | Perpetrators I: Banality of Evil?

Reading:

- Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 1010 and the Final Solution in Poland*, preface and chapters 1-13
- Short video on the Milgrim Experiment
- Short video on the Stanford Prison Experiment

### Documents:

• Excerpts from the diary of Felix Landau

# Suggested Reading:

• Thomas Kühne, "Performing Genocidal Ethics: Togetherness in Himmler's Elite," in *Belonging and Genocide: Hitler's Community, 1918-1945*, 55-94

# 17. March 17, 2020 | Perpetrators II: Ordinary Men?

Reading:

• Browning, *Ordinary Men*, chapters 14-18 and afterword

Documents:

• "From a Speech by Himmler Before Senior SS officers in Poznan, October 4, 1943" (audio available here)

Suggested Reading:

• Daniel Goldhagen, Hitler's Willing Executioners, 1-24

# 18. March 19, 2020 | Jewish Councils: "Lambs to the Slaughter?"

Reading:

- Raul Hilberg, "2,000 Years of Jewish Appeasement," in *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), ed. by Donald Niewyk, 144-149
- Dan Diner, "Why the Jewish Councils Cooperated," in *The Holocaust*, 165-175

# Documents:

• "The Jewish Population Disbelieves Reports of the Extermination"

- Diary entries of Adam Czerniakow, July 1942
- Chaim Rumkowski's address "Give me your children," 1942
- Notes of an observer in the Lodz Ghetto following the deportation of the children, 16 September 1942
- Diary entries of Zelig Kalmanovitch re: deportations, fall 1942

# 19. March 24, 2020 | Jewish Resistance

# Reading:

- Yehuda Bauer, "Forms of Jewish Resistance," in *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), ed. by Donald Niewyk, 150-165
- Bergen, *War and Genocide*, 211-13, 260-73
- Samuel Kassow, Who Will Write Our History?, 1-14

### Documents:

- "They Shall Not Take Us Like Sheep to the Slaughter!"
- Report on the revolt in the Sobibor extermination camp
- "Jews, Prepare for Armed Resistance!"
- Selected documents from the Ringelblum Archive

# 20. March 26 | Workshop Day

# 21. March 31 | Victims or Perpetrators?: Polish-Jewish Relations

Reading:

• Jan Gross, Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland, Introduction and 1-78

# \*PAPER OUTLINE DUE MAR 31\*

# 22. April 2 | Neighbors: The Case of Jedwabne

Reading:

• Gross, *Neighbors*, 79-124

Documents:

• Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War*, 226-245

# 23. April 7 | Bystanders or Liberators? Great Britain and the US

Reading:

- Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret*, 1-15, 65-100, and 196-208
- "Confronting the Holocaust: American Responses" (17 min)

Documents:

• "Decisions Taken at the Evian Conference on Jewish Refugees, July 1938"

# 24. April 9 | "We Didn't Know!" The German People and the Holocaust

# Reading:

• David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism*, 101-156

### Documents:

• <u>Death Mills</u> (1945)

# Part 4 | Aftermath and Legacies

# 25. April 14 | Rescue and Liberation

# Reading:

• Ruth Gay, "Return to the World," in Gay, Safe Among the Germans: Liberated Jews After World War II, 41-94.

# Documents:

- Edward R. Murrow reports from Buchenwald, 15 April, 1945
- American veteran recalls liberating concentration camps (video)

# **26.** April **16** | Justice?

# Reading:

- Norbert Frei, "Coping with the Burdens of the Past: German Politics and Society in the 1950s," in D. Geppert, *The Postwar Challenge. Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945-1958* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), 27-39.
- Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, introduction and 56-95

### Documents:

• Selected testimonies from *The Nuremburg war crimes trial, 1945-1946: A Documentary History*, compiled by Michael R. Marrus

# \*RESEARCH PAPER DUE APR 17\*

# 27. April 21 | Coming to Terms With the Past

# Reading:

- Nora Krug, *Belonging: A German Reckons With History and Home* (Scribner, 2018)
- *Hitler's Children*, 2011 (watch before class)

# 28. April 23 | Poetry After Auschwitz? Memory and Representation

# Reading:

- Dan Stone, "Memory, Memorials, and Museums," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. by Dan Stone, 508-532
- Zoe Waxman, "Testimony and Representation," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. by Dan Stone, 487-507

# Documents:

- "Todesfuge," poem by Paul Celan
- Selection of poems by Avraham Sutzkever, Dan Pagis, Yitzhak Katznelson, and Kadva Molodowsky

# 29. April 28 | Other Times, Other Places: Reflections and Conclusions

# Reading:

- Zygmunt Bauman, "The Uniqueness of the Holocaust," 82-88
- Bergen, War and Genocide, conclusion

# Documents:

- Raphael Lemkin, "Genocide," American Scholar, vol. 15, no. 2 (1946): 227-230
- "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 9 December 1948"

# FINAL EXAM: 3:30-6:30 ON THURSDAY, MAY 7