

SYLLABUS

JS203/RS211 Jewish Responses to the Holocaust

Instructor: Prof. James Diamond
Chair-Jewish Studies

Location: AL 105

Time: 9:30-10:50

Day: Tues. & Thurs.

Office: HH324

Office Hours: *Tues. 11- 12:20PM; Thurs. 11:00-12:20PM; or by appointment. If you can't make these times you can always contact me by email or phone and we can arrange a mutually convenient time. I am always available to address your concerns even outside of office hours if necessary.*

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DESCRIPTION

The catastrophe and devastation of the Holocaust and the radical nature of its evil demanded responses within contemporary Jewish thought, identity and experience. This course will explore philosophical, theological (Jewish law, rabbinic), literary (novels, poetry, memoirs, plays) and artistic (comics, drawings, memorials) attempts to deal with the issues the Holocaust raises.

NOTE ON AVOIDANCE OF ACADEMIC OFFENSES:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline,

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4,

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals,

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>

Academic Integrity website (Arts): http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Academic Integrity Office (UW): <http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

Required Texts:

(1) *A Holocaust Reader: Responses to Nazi Extermination*, Michael L. Morgan (HR)

(2) *Out of the Whirlwind: A Reader of Holocaust Literature*, ed., Albert H. Friedlander (OW)

Course Requirements

- Attendance and participation in all course sessions throughout the semester .
- All reading assignments
- One minor term paper (5-6;typed, double spaced pages) analyzing and responding to one of the class readings (25%).
- One major term paper (10 typed, double spaced pages) comparing and contrasting responses to a particular issue raised during the course (30%).
- Final Exam – Take home (on all class lectures and discussions and readings) (45%).

Submissions of Assignments

-Assignments are expected to be handed in, in class on the date due. If you can't make the class on that date an alternative drop off location will be designated on the assignment .

Penalty for Late Submissions

Any late submissions without legitimate medical excuse will be subject to a penalty of a 25 percentage reduction in grade for each day it is handed in past the deadline.

There will be no exceptions to this rule.

Week #1:

Introduction to course. What is the “Holocaust”?

Uniqueness and radical evil.

Philosophical and theological questions raised by the Holocaust.

Questioning God- Absence, indifference, impotence or non-existence?

Back to the beginning- Book of Job and Biblical responses to innocent suffering.

Early Rabbinic responses to evil and suffering.

Readings:

pp. 3-19 (OW)

Handout

Weeks#2-3:

The concentration camp ‘universe’ - the “demolition of humanity”.

The motivations of the perpetrators

Readings:

Hannah Arendt, *The Concentration Camps*, pp. 47-63 (HR)

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, pp. 19-27 (HR)

Daniel Goldhagen, pp. 569-574 (OW)

Week #4:

**** (First Assignment Due second class of week #4) ****

Impossibility of rationalizing the Holocaust

Is silence the only legitimate response?

Why continue being Jewish?

Readings:

Elie Wiesel, *A Plea for the Dead*, pp. 67-77 (HR)

Jean Amery, *On the Necessity and Impossibility of Being a Jew*, pp.27-42(HR)

Week #5-6:

How can the Holocaust be represented?

Film as response- *Shoah* and the documenting of relentless death

Readings:

Omer Bartov, *Intellectuals on Auschwitz*, pp.301-311 (HR)

Michael Bernstein, *Narrating the Shoah*, pp. 337-349 (HR)

Kenneth Seeskin, *What Philosophy Can and Cannot Say About Evil*, pp.321-337 (HR)

Week #7:

The Diary and survivors memories as resistance

Readings:

Ann Frank, pp.26-34 (OW)

Chaim Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, pp.181-191 (OW)

Elie Wiesel, *Night*, pp.400-411 (OW)

Josef Bor, *The Terezin Requiem*, pp.68-78 (OW)

Week #8-9:

**** (Second Assignment Due First Class of Week #9) ****

Faith after the Holocaust.

Where was God? Where was humanity?

God is dead vs. 614th commandment not to allow Hitler a posthumous victory

Readings:

Richard Rubenstein, *The Making of a Rabbi*, pp.90-95, (HR)

Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust*, pp. 96-115, (HR)

Emil Fackenheim, *Jewish Faith and the Holocaust*, pp.115-130 (HR)

Irving Greenberg, *Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire*, pp.102-115 (HR)

Week #10-11:

Shame and guilt as response

Comic as response

State of Israel as response

Readings:

Primo Levi, *Shame*, pp. 560-565 (OW)

Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, pp.579-586 (OW)

Emil Fackenheim, *The Holocaust and the State of Israel*, pp.131-138 (HR)

Week #11-12:

Orthodox Jewish responses.

Challenging and struggling with God

Readings:

Zvi Kolitz, *Yossel Rakover's Appeal to God*, pp.390-399 (OW)

Handout.