RELG 373: Literature and Film of the Holocaust

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Primarily about films-some in the documentary genre, most in the commercial genre. We will view film as a compositional art and each individual film as an attempt at crafted persuasion, asking questions such as: Does the work touch the elusive truth or truths about what actually happened and how it was experienced? Does it tell a big enough "Truth" to excuse its small "lies?" Does it conduct a convincing moral argument, from a useful point of view? Is it emotionally recognizable? Does it successfully instruct while it successfully entertains? Should it "entertain" at all? Together we will think of other pertinent questions.

The course presumes some previous acquaintance with Holocaust/Shoah history, testimony, and visual images (as well as some experience in analyzing works in film and literature). Prolonged exposure to dramatic eyewitness memoirs and fictions, stark photos and seductive film representations can obviously be depressing. We will take this risk for these three weeks in May. Anticipate the temporary effect the course may have on you. But don't guard against these effects. And remember our primary purpose is not to grapple long and personally with the daunting religious, philosophical, political dimensions of this notorious evil. This "grappling" is of course important-it goes on forever in sentient beings. But here it is secondary to the course aim of critically appraising meaning and method in films meant to stir reflection on potent material.

Capsule description: The death camps of the Holocaust and Nazi terror generally (1933-45) as this prompts eyewitness survivors and subsequent film-makers (and writers) to communicate artfully and persuasively experiences and lessons of the Holocaust/Shoah. The rhetorical challenge facing all who attempt to convey its disconcerting, unlike truths in the medium of film. Memoir, poetry, fiction, music, and visual art considered where helpful.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:
- identify and discuss the cultural impact and significance of several major works of film and literature.
- think critically about film and literary representations of the Holocaust

REQUIRED READING:
Lawrence L. Langer, *Art From Ashes* (a reader)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (tentative; to be determined May 8)

(We will discuss in class the nature of these assignments and of the exam.)

Two film critiques - 45% of course grade
Exam - 45%
Class attendance and participation -10%

Grading scheme
Grading will be on a 100-point scale as follows:
A = 90-100 / B+ = 87-89/ B = 80-86 / C+ = 77-79 / C = 70-76 / D+ = 67-69 / D= 60-66 / F = 60
or less

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Read the authors assigned in the Langer textbook for discussion on the days indicated.

Day	
1	Introduction. Video: *Seared Souls: Voices from the Holocaust* (SC Council on the Holocaust, approx. 80 minutes)
2	Langer's Introduction and introductory prefaces to sections "The Way It Was," "Journals and Diaries," "Fiction," "Drama," and "Poetry." Video: *The Lodz Ghetto* (PBS documentary, approx. 55 minutes). *Shoah* excerpts
3	Langer (Charlotte Delbo, Avraham Tory). *Shoah* excerpts
4	Langer (Primo Levi, Eli Wiesel). Video: Slides of Auschwitz. Video: *Night and Fog* (approx 30 minutes)
5	Langer (Tadeusz Borowski). Video: *Triumph of the Spirit*
6	Video: *Shoah* excerpts. Tape: Hendryk Gorecki's "Symphony in C," Steve Reich's "Trains" / CRITIQUE DUE
7	Langer (Dan Pagis, Paul Celan, Nelly Sachs). *Schindler's List*
8	Video: *Europa, Europa*
9	Langer (Ida Fink, Sara Nomberg-Prztyk). Video: *The Night Porter*
10	Video: *The Pawnbroker*
11	Video: *Seven Beauties* / CRITIQUE DUE
12	Langer (Adolf Rudnicki, Jakov Lind). Video: *Life is Beautiful*
13	Langer ("Painters of Terezin"). Video: *The Nasty Girl*
14	Summary discussion, review. Video: *Nuremberg* (Tinberger Archive)
15	EXAM