

History 1049: Nazi Germany and the Holocaust

Spring 2020

Tues./Thurs. 1:30-2:45 p.m.

Sever 213

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*This course is cross listed in Germanic Languages and Literatures, NELC (Jewish Studies), and European Studies.

Course Description:

Over seventy years after its defeat, Nazi Germany remains a touchstone in debates about democracy, human rights, and historical memory around the world. This course sets the history of the National Socialist regime (1933-45) against the backdrop of global trajectories of antisemitism, colonialism, racial science, and economic crisis. We will locate the culmination of Nazi rule in the Holocaust: the annihilation of six million Jews during the Second World War, which occurred alongside the murder of millions more targeted as Soviet POWs, Roma, homosexuals, disabled people, political opponents, and Polish elites. We will confront some of the most intractable questions surrounding this period: Why did the Nazi Party come to power in Germany? What were the sources of Nazi ideology? Was Nazi Germany a “totalitarian” dictatorship that controlled every aspect of life, or did the regime seek to accommodate popular opinion? What roles did antisemitism, racism, homophobia, and ableism play in politics and everyday life before 1939? When, why, and how did Nazi leaders decide to annihilate European Jewry? What motivated the killers who carried out the Holocaust? What constitutes “collaboration” or “resistance” in the context of total war and genocide? How did gender, sexuality, class, disability, and nationality shape victims’ experiences of Nazi persecution? What is the relationship between justice and reconciliation after mass atrocities?

The magnitude of the events has led some observers to suggest that the Holocaust defies explanation, and therefore the human capacity for reason and understanding. The premise of this course, however, is that Nazi Germany and the Holocaust can—indeed, must—be studied historically. While the eliminationist ideology, systematic implementation, and sheer scale of Nazi genocide may have been unprecedented, this need not mean that the Holocaust was without historical causes. We will interpret a variety of primary sources to uncover the Holocaust’s origins and evolution, including decrees of the Nazi regime, diaries of victims, and testimonies of survivors. These sources enable us to consider both “top down” and “bottom up” perspectives: how power was gained and exercised by Nazi elites, but also how “ordinary” individuals perpetuated, abetted, or subverted the regime’s priorities.

Course Books:

The following books are available for purchase at the COOP (<https://tinyurl.com/300-W20-HIST-1049-1>) and placed on reserve at Lamont Library:

- ❖ William S. Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945*, revised edition. (Brattleboro, VT: Echo Point Books, 2014). ISBN: 9781626548725.
- ❖ *Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). ISBN: 9781442242289.
- ❖ Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2017). ISBN: 9780062303028.
- ❖ Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Touchstone, 1996). ISBN: 9780684826806.
- ❖ Edith Sheffer, *Asperger's Children: The Origins of Autism in Nazi Vienna* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018). ISBN: 9780393609646.

*The textbook by Doris Bergen is also available online through Hollis.

Course Requirements:**1. Attendance and Participation**

Attendance at lectures and weekly discussion sections is required. In addition, you are expected to participate actively in section meetings, and to engage in group work and discussions of primary sources during lecture. Occasionally, we will collect written feedback to course material at the end of lectures. Of course, we understand that not everybody will be able to participate during every lecture. You will have a free pass to miss one section meeting, for any reason. Beyond that, please inform your TF in advance if you need to miss section due to illness or a personal emergency. Unexcused absences will lower your participation grade. Remember that the quality of your contributions to discussions is as important as the quantity, and that asking a well-informed question also counts as participation. We are happy to meet during office hours to discuss strategies for participating in class.

2. Four Posts to the Canvas Discussion Board

Each student will also be expected to post four responses to the Canvas discussion board, at least twice before Spring Break. Posts should be approximately 250-300 words, addressing a question related to that week's readings. (Questions to consider will be available on Canvas each week.) Posts are due by Thursday at 9 a.m. the weeks the readings will be discussed.

3. Two Primary Source Analyses (due Mon. Feb. 24 and Wed. March 11 at 5 p.m.)

You will be asked to create two primary source analyses using Omeka to gain practice with the site before beginning the final project. For the first, you will choose one piece of Nazi visual propaganda from a set of online archives, and post it to Omeka along with an annotation of 750-

800 words. For the second, you will create a one-page Omeka exhibit analyzing a video testimony of a survivor of Nazi persecution, selected from the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Your exhibit should incorporate a text of approximately 1200 words and at least two images representing the survivor's story. For both assignments, you may wish to draw on course readings to support your analysis. We will discuss these assignments in more detail during the first weeks of class.

4. Final Project: Exhibit on a Site of Persecution

For the final project, each student will create an exhibit on a site of Nazi persecution or genocide using the digital platform Omeka. Researchers at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) have identified over 44,000 camps, ghettos, and detention centers created by the Nazi regime across Europe, of which major killing centers such as Auschwitz are only the best known. Your exhibit will focus on one of these sites, analyzing its place in the Holocaust as well as the experiences of its victims. Your exhibit should incorporate a text of approximately 3500-4000 words, alongside other media such as images, documents, maps, and timelines. Your key sources for this project will include the USHMM's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*; videotaped survivor testimonies collected in the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive; and online collections of documents and photographs held by the USHMM, Yad Vashem (the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem), and the International Tracing Service (a German archive that has preserved millions of documents from the Nazi period). All of these resources are available online. A list of possible sites to choose from will be made available, and we will review in class how to locate relevant sources. We will also show you how to build an exhibit with Omeka. You will have the option of publishing your exhibit at the end of the semester; it is an opportunity to create a work of public history that will reach readers beyond the classroom.

The class meeting on Thurs. March 12 is reserved for a discussion of this project. For now, you should note that this assignment has several sub-components:

- Selection of site: **Mon. April 6 at 5 p.m.**
- One-paragraph topic description and annotated bibliography (at least 4 primary and 2 secondary sources with a short description of how each will contribute to your project): **Mon. April 13 at 5 p.m.**
- Partial draft of exhibit (including at least 1000 words of text): **Mon. April 27 at 5 p.m.**
- Project presentation (5 min.): **Tues. May 5-Wed. May 6**
*The class will be divided into two-hour blocks for presentations, scheduled during the last two days of reading period. You need only attend the block when you are presenting.
- Final Omeka exhibit: **Mon. May 11 at 5 p.m.**

Evaluation:

- Attendance and participation: 25%
Four posts to Canvas discussion board: 5%
Nazi propaganda analysis: 10%
Testimony analysis: 15%
Final project: 45%
- Preliminary assignments: 5%
 - Presentation: 5%
 - Omeka exhibit: 35%

The grading scale is as follows:

90-100=A-range

80-89=B-range

70-79=C-range

60-69=D-range

Late Work:

Late work will be excused in cases of a documented medical or personal emergency. Otherwise, assignments will lose 3 points (out of 100) per day late. Please note that we are not able to accept any written work for this course after Saturday, May 16 without permission from the Harvard College Administrative Board.

Collaboration Policy:

The exchange of ideas is essential to academic scholarship. You may find it useful to discuss your approach to assignments with your peers. *You must, however, ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own thinking and writing and that it reflects your own insights and interpretations.* You must also adhere to standard citation practices in the discipline of history and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, and/or conversations with classmates (or anyone else) that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

We will discuss expectations for citing sources in your written work during the first weeks of class. If you have questions about how to cite a particular source, or whether a citation is required, please ask us before the assignment is due. There is no penalty for checking, and we will let you know if you need to make adjustments.

Students enrolled in this course are expected to abide by the Harvard College Honor Code:

Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations,

and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.

Further information about Harvard's policies on academic integrity is available in the Harvard College Handbook for Students (<https://handbook.fas.harvard.edu/>).

Students with Disabilities:

Students with a Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) are encouraged to present this to the course instructor as soon as possible. All discussions regarding accessibility will remain confidential, although instructors may contact the AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.

Laptop Policy:

You are welcome to use laptops for course-related activities (e.g. taking notes and referencing readings). Checking email or social media during class can be distracting to your peers. If necessary, you may step out of the classroom to answer a call or text.

A Note on Sources:

It goes without saying that this course addresses violent and graphic material, including sources that depict antisemitism, racism, misogyny, sexual violence, homophobia, and violence against disabled people. It is crucial that we remain respectful of one another's viewpoints in class discussions. If you disagree with a classmate (and debate and disagreement are encouraged!), then be sure to direct your comments at the idea, not the person. It is often helpful to summarize a peer's idea before disagreeing, to ensure you have really understood it. Certain readings and discussions will deal with especially difficult photographs or film footage, and we will alert the class in advance. Please do not hesitate to meet with us if you have concerns about particular aspects of the course content.

Schedule of Readings and Lectures:

All readings, except those in the course books, will be available as pdf documents on Canvas. Readings marked with (#) are primary source documents that will be discussed in lecture, and these should be completed by the lecture date for which they are listed. Doris Bergen's *War and Genocide* provides a helpful overview, and is recommended reading as a supplement to the lectures. Other readings are required and will be discussed in weekly section meetings.

Tues. Jan. 28 (Lecture 1): Introduction**Thurs. Jan. 30 (Lecture 2): Precursors (I): Antisemitism****Tues. Feb. 4 (Lecture 3): Precursors (II): Racism and Imperialism**

- ❖ A. Dirk Moses, "Colonialism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies* (2010)

Thurs. Feb. 6 (Lecture 4): Precursors (III): World War I

- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, intro, ch. 1
- ❖ Excerpts from Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, on WWI and the November Revolution (1925)

Tues. Feb. 11 (Lecture 5): The Nazi Party in the Weimar Republic

- ❖ #Primary Source Document: NSDAP, "Propaganda" (1927)

Thurs. Feb. 13 (Lecture 6): Fall of the Weimar Republic and Creation of the Hitler Cabinet

- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, ch. 2
- ❖ Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, pp. 3-147

Tues. Feb. 18 (Lecture 7): Popular Violence and Bystanders: Germany, 1933-34

- ❖ #Primary Source Documents: "Proclamation of the Reich Government to the German People," February 1, 1933; "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service," April 7, 1933
- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, ch. 3

Thurs. Feb. 20 (Lecture 8): Making the Nazi "Racial State"

- ❖ #Primary Source Documents: "Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring," July 14, 1933; "Nuremberg Laws," September 15, 1935; Emilie Müller-Zadow, "Mothers who give us the future," 1936
- ❖ WATCH: Leni Riefenstahl, dir., *The Triumph of the Will* (1935)
- ❖ Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism" (1975)

****First Canvas post due by Feb. 20 at 9 a.m.***

****Nazi Propaganda Analysis due Mon. Feb. 24 at 5 p.m.***

Tues. Feb. 25 (Lecture 9): Jewish Life in Nazi Germany

- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, pp. 107-127
- ❖ Marion Kaplan, “Keeping Calm and Weathering the Storm: Jewish Women’s Responses to Daily Life in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939,” in *Women in the Holocaust*, ed. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (1998)
- ❖ Willy Cohn, *No Justice in Germany: The Breslau Diaries, 1933-1941*, ed. Norbert Conrads, pp. 1-14, 178-195
- ❖ WATCH: Testimony of Lea Fanarof, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (first two videotapes/60 minutes)

Thurs. Feb. 27 (Lecture 10): Economic Mobilizations

- ❖ #Primary Source Document: Hjalmar Schacht, “Germany’s Colonial Demands,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 1937

Tues. March 3 (Lecture 11): Nazi Foreign Policy and the Origins of World War II

- ❖ #Primary Source Document: “Hitler’s Reichstag Speech,” January 30, 1939
- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, pp. 101-107
- ❖ Karen A. Fiss, “In Hitler’s Salon: The German Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition Internationale” (2002)

Thurs. March 5 (Lecture 12): Racial Cleansing in Nazi-Occupied Poland

- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, pp. 129-145
- ❖ #Primary Source Document: “Re-Germanization of Lost German Blood,” December 1940

**Second Canvas post due by March 5 at 9 a.m.*

Tues. March 10 (Lecture 13): Disability and the Origins of Mass Killing

- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, pp. 159-165
- ❖ Sheffer, *Asperger’s Children*, intro, chs. 2-4, 6, 8-9, pp. 244-48

**Testimony Analysis due Wed. March 11 at 5 p.m.*

Thurs. March 12 (Lecture 14): Discussion of Final Project

****SPRING BREAK**

Tues. March 24 (Lecture 15): Decisions for the Holocaust

- ❖ #Primary Source Document: “Minutes of the Wannsee Conference,” January 20, 1942
- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, pp. 186-210

Thurs. March 26 (Lecture 16): Holocaust Perpetrators

- ❖ Browning, *Ordinary Men* (skip chs. 16-17 and afterword)

Tues. March 31 (Lecture 17): Ghettos and the Jewish Councils

- ❖ Anna Hájková, “Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Negotiating the Sexual Economy of the Theresienstadt Ghetto,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (2013)
- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, pp. 145-159

Thurs. April 2 (Lecture 18): Labor Camps: Life and Death in the Lager

- ❖ Christopher Browning, “Jewish Workers and Survivor Memories: The Case of the Starachowice Labor Camp,” in *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (2000)

**Third Canvas post due by April 2 at 9 a.m.*

**Selection of site for final project due Mon. April 6 at 5 p.m.*

Tues. April 7 (Lecture 19): The Killing Centers

- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, pp. 237-260
- ❖ #Primary Source Documents: “Report of Police Reserve Lieutenant Fischmann on escorting a transport of Jews from Vienna to Sobibór on 14-20 June 1942”; “Report of Police Lieutenant Westermann on two transports of Jews from Kolomea to Bełżec on 7-10 September 1942”
- ❖ WATCH: Claude Lanzmann, dir., *Shoah* (1985), First Era, Part One

Thurs. April 9 (Lecture 20): Collaboration and Puppet States

- ❖ Bergen, pp. 167-186, 223-234

**One-paragraph topic description and annotated bibliography for final project due Mon. April 13 at 5 p.m.*

Tues. April 14 (Lecture 21): Varieties of Resistance

- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, pp. 211-213, 260-273
- ❖ Zivia Lubetkin, *In the Days of Destruction and Revolt*, trans. Ishai Tubbin (1946), pp. 35-61, 91-130, 145-159, 178-189, 199-210, 229-242, 266-283

Thurs. April 16 (Lecture 22): The German “Home Front”

- ❖ *Primary Source Document: “Student Resistance: Leaflets of the White Rose” (Fall 1942-Jan. 1943)
- ❖ Bergen, ch. 9

Tues. April 21 (Lecture 23): “Liberation” and the *Endkampf*

- ❖ Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

Thurs. April 23 (Lecture 24): Postwar Justice and Injustice

- ❖ #Primary Source Document: Bishop Theophil Wurm, “To the Christians of England,” December 14, 1945
- ❖ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, conclusion

**Fourth Canvas post due by April 23 at 9 a.m.*

**Partial draft of Omeka exhibit due Mon. April 27 at 5 p.m.*

Tues. April 28 (Lecture 25): The Globalization of Holocaust Memory

**No sections April 30-May 1*

**Presentations of final projects: May 5-6 (The class will be divided into two-hour blocks for presentations during reading period. You need only attend the block when you are presenting.)*

**Final project due Mon. May 11 at 5 p.m.*