MC 498, Senior Seminar Social Relations: The Holocaust in American Memory

Fall 2016

**Instructor:** Amy Simon **Email:** simonamy@msu.edu

**Class meeting time and place:** MW 10:20am-12:10pm, Case Hall N369L

**Office hours:** MW 1:30pm-3:00pm, Case Hall S310

**Course Description:**

This course will examine the ever-changing constructions of Holocaust memory in the United States, from the revelations of the horrors of the concentration and death camps in the spring of 1945, through the challenge of Holocaust remembrance in personal testimony, literature, film, and physical memorials in the present day. During the course of this class, we will discuss questions such as: What do we mean by “Holocaust,” and how has the debate over definitions and issues of inclusion/exclusion become politicized? How does the Holocaust live on in American remembrance? Why should the United States be so invested in the memory of a European genocide? What kinds of stories do Americans tell about the Holocaust? What role does the Holocaust play in American pop culture, politics, and identity? What does Holocaust memory mean to different social groups, and how has it been negotiated in the public realm?

Students will read seminal texts on the creation of Holocaust memorials and memorial events as well as those addressing the politics of Holocaust memory and its uses and abuses more broadly. In addition to participating in discussions about the shared readings, students will explore different types of official and unofficial Holocaust memory in the United States using digital media including the USC Shoah Foundation's archive of oral testimonies and new online resources being produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

This class will begin by introducing you to knowledge about Holocaust history including some of the most important debates in the field. We will discuss the question of definitions, focusing on the importance of the Jewish experience during that event.After this introduction, we will move into a discussion about Holocaust memory in the United States. We will focus on the role of American Jewish communities and survivor communities in the creation of this memory. We will also begin a class-long discussion about the politicization of Holocaust memory. Important to this section of this class is understanding a timeline of important sea-change events. To this end, we will talk about the debates surrounding something as simple as constructing this timeline and the issues at stake for a variety of groups. Even with all of the controversy, we will be able to establish a general development of events and will discuss why and how the Holocaust became such a ubiquitous part of both Jewish and non-Jewish American memory and culture and continues to hold such a place of importance to this day.Over the course of this class, you will also hone your writing and research skills including the ability to formulate and successfully answer historical questions.Finally, you will become more nuanced and careful in dealing with controversial and difficult issues involving the uses and abuses of Holocaust memory in the United States since the Second World War.

**Requirements:**

* *Mandatory attendance,* This is a discussion seminar that relies on your attendance and participation for its and your success. As such, you will have **2** excused absences over the course of the semester. After that, I will begin deducting points off your participation and reading grades for missed classes. You may miss no more than 8 classes over the course of the semester to receive a passing grade.
* *Reading*, *15%* You will be required to turn in **10** one-page reading reactions throughout the semester. By 9:00am before each of those class periods, you will turn in, on D2L, a reaction to the reading assigned for that class. **It must be a minimum of 500 words and include 2 discussion questions**. The requirement here is that the reaction be honest and thoughtful and reflect that you have read and analyzed the material; the questions should serve to give the class a meaningful way to start discussions. You will earn credit for each entry you turn in that fulfills the requirements above, and I will deduct ten points per each assignment you miss during the semester (I will calculate on a 100 point scale). You will turn in ten altogether—you may choose when. The only exception is that all students will have one reaction paper (though not on the readings) due on October 26 on the topic of the Detroit Holocaust Memorial Center which we will visit on Sunday, October 23.
* *Participation, 15%* I will keep track of your participation every meeting and grade you accordingly. I expect you to contribute thoughtful comments on the readings and discussion several times during class each meeting. You will receive credit for each class in which you contribute meaningfully, and you will not receive credit when you do not participate or participate in disruptive ways. You are always welcome to check in with me about how you are doing on your participation.
* *Discussion leader, 10%* One time during the semester you will be required to serve as discussion leader. You will construct a 15-minute presentation of the readings, making sure to both summarize and provide critical analysis. You will also be required to serve as discussion leader throughout the class. You will have to plan how to organize the discussion including which questions to ask and when and how to further discussion across the various topics relevant to the readings. You should meet with me well in advance of the class so I can help you with your planning.
* *Research Paper,*

This is the culmination of this class, and likely of your undergraduate career. You should think of this assignment of a place for you to show off everything you’ve learned over your undergraduate years, and particularly your deep understanding of the course materials in this class. You will choose your own topic within the scope of this class and will be responsible for creating a well-developed and analytical research paper. It will be graded in stages to help you stay organized and so as to provide you with feedback every step of the way. I will always be available to meet and discuss any issues you are having with your paper. I will also always read drafts of each aspect of this assignment up until 24 hours before the assignment is due. Each assignment will be due on D2L **by the start of class** on the due date. Late assignments will incur penalties of .5 per day.

Paper proposal *5%*

Annotated bibliography (with 15 sources) *5%*

Draft of your thesis and introduction *5%*

First draft of your entire 25-35 page paper *10%*

20 minute presentation of your paper at the end of the semester *10%* Part of this grade will also be dependent on your written responses to other students’ presentations.

Final paper *25%*

**Readings:**

You will need to purchase several books for this class. These are all available in paperback for reasonable prices. They will be available at the MSU Bookstore. You may also be able to find less expensive copies at amazon.com or abebooks.com.

I will also be posting shorter excerpts on D2L as noted in the “Readings and Calendar” section below.

**Books for purchase:**

Robert Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl, The Definitive Edition*. New York: Bantam Books, 1997.

Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: the Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum.* New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

Alvin Rosenfeld, *The End of the Holocaust.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011.

**Academic Integrity**

From the MSU handbook:

**“**The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to the educational process and the academic integrity of the University; therefore, no student shall:

* claim or submit the academic work of another as one’s own.
* procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.
* complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.
* allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.
* alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.
* fabricate or falsify data or results.”

***Plagiarism*** means knowingly, or by carelessness or negligence, representing as one's own in any academic exercise the words, ideas, works of art or computer-generated information and images of someone else. For example:

* Turning in as your own, work done in whole or in part by someone else, or
* Paraphrasing or copying material from a written source, including the Internet, without footnoting or referencing it in a paper, or
* Copying material from a written source, including the Internet, without using quotation marks to indicate wording that is not yours, or
* Turning in a paper obtained at least in part from a term paper “mill” or website, or
* Turning in a paper copied at least in part from another student’s paper, whether or not that student is currently taking the same course.

If I find that you have committed an act of academic misconduct, you will receive a grad of zero for that assignment and will be reported to MSU and James Madison College.

**Students with Disabilities**

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RPCD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation (VISA) form. It is the student’s responsibility to present this form to me at the start of the semester and/or two weeks before the needed accommodation date.

**Readings and Calendar:**

\*Note, the readings listed under each date should be read before class on that date

**Week 1** *W* *Aug. 31*—Introduction

* Discuss the syllabus and all course policies and objectives
* Overview of Holocaust history

**Week 2** *M Sept. 5* NO CLASS, Labor Day

*W Sept. 7* — Overview of Holocaust history

* Read Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide* pp. 1-29, 145-155, 174-193 (D2L)

**Week 3** *M Sept. 12—*The United States during World War II

* Read David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews,* pp. 288-340 (D2L)
* Read Paul Miller, “David S. Wyman and the controversy over the bombing of Auschwitz” in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* 40.4 (Fall 2003) (D2L)

*W Sept. 14--*American Liberators and images from Liberation

* Read Robert Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart*, Ch 1-4
* Watch film on the liberation of Nazi concentration camps

**Week 4** *M Sept. 19—*American Liberators and images from Liberation

* Read Robert Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart,* Ch. 5-Epilogue

*W Sept. 21--*The United States in the immediate postwar period

* Read Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life,* Introduction (library e-book)
* Read Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love,* Introduction (D2L)

**Week 5** *M Sept. 26—*Jewish memorials in the immediate postwar period

* Read Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love,* Ch. 1 (D2L)
* Read Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Memory,* Part 2 pp. 63-103 (library e-book)
* **Paper Proposal Due**

*W Sept. 28—* Creation of individual survivor memory in oral testimony

* Read Read Alessandro Portelli, “Oral memoir and the Shoah” in Literature of the Holocaust, by Alan Rosen. (D2L)
* Meet in the library to investigate the Shoah Foundation archives

**Week 6** *M Oct. 3—*NO CLASS

As an alternative to class this week, you will need to watch *The Diary of Anne Frank*, 20th Century Fox, 1959. It is on reserve at the library.

* Begin reading Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*

*W Oct.* 5—Early Popular Culture in the United States, TV

* Watch "This is Your Life" and "Twilight Zone" episodes
* Listen to NPR story on "This is your Life" episode
* Continue reading Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*

**Week 7** *M Oct. 10--* Early Popular Culture in the United States, Literature

* Finish Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*
* Discuss book
* **Annotated Bibliography Due**

*W Oct. 12* NO CLASS

As an alternative to class this week, we will visit the Holocaust Memorial Center in Detroit on October 23.

**Week 8***—M Oct. 17* Early Popular Culture in the United States, Film

* Discuss *The Diary of Anne Frank* film
* Read Leshu Torchin, “Anne Frank’s Moving Images” pp. 93-105 in Jeffrey Shandler’s *Anne Frank Unbound* (library e-book)
* Read “Hollywood discovers the Holocaust: The Diary of Anne Frank” in Henry Gonshak, *Hollywood and the Holocaust* (D2L)

*W Oct. 19—* Role of survivor memory in creating Holocaust consciousness

* Read Arlene Stein, *Reluctant Witnesses*, pp. 75-131

**Week 9 M Oct. 24***—*Turning Points, Museums

* Read Ed Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* Ch. 1-2

*W Oct. 26--*Turning Points, Museums

* Read Ed Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* Ch. 3
* **Draft of Thesis and Introduction Due**

**Week 10** *M Oct. 31 —*Turning Points, Museums

* Finish reading Ed Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* through p. 191
* Skype interview with Ed Linenthal

*W Nov. 2--*Turning Points, Film

For the following two classes, you will need to watch *Schindler’s List.* It is on reserve at the library

* Read Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America,* pp. 125-158 (on D2L)

**Week 11** *M Nov. 7--*Turning Points, Film

* Readings on recent US Holocaust films TBA (D2L)

*W Nov. 9--*Contemporary Popular Culture

* Read Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *The End of the Holocaust,* Ch. 1, 9

**Week 12** *M Nov. 14*—Contemporary Popular Culture

* Read Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *The End of the Holocaust,* Epilogue

*W Nov. 16—*Contemporary Popular Culture

* Each student will bring in one example, no more than 10 minutes
* Is this the "End of the Holocaust?"
* **First Draft Due**

**Week 13** *M Nov. 21—*The Future of US Holocaust Memory

* Work with the USHMM’s “Experiencing History: Jewish Perspectives on the Holocaust” resource
* Meet in the library

*W Nov. 23*

* Paper Presentations

**Week 14** *M Nov. 28*

* Paper Presentations

*W Nov. 30*

* Paper Presentations

**Week 15** *M Dec. 5*

* Paper Presentations

*W Dec. 7*

* Paper Presentations

*Final Period December 14, 12:45-2:45. Final Revised Paper Due by 2:45pm on D2L through Turnitin*