

Genocide and the Holocaust

Senior Capstone 455.001

M 3-5:30

Knight Hall 206

3 hours credit

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an intensive interdisciplinary examination of the Holocaust, with special attention to its significance for religious faith and ethics. Attention is given to the Holocaust itself, its intellectual and ideological origins, the behavior of Christians and Jews during the Holocaust, and postwar theological, moral, literary, and artistic responses to the Holocaust.

You are finishing your careers as undergraduates at Mercer. This course is intended to help you reflect on the studies of the past few years and to think cogently and critically about difficult issues. You will bring to bear the knowledge and insight gained through your major subjects, as well as other academic and personal experiences, and through your fresh reading of the required texts. My task is to guide you through some of the material and try to keep the discussions focused and productive. I am looking forward to a rich experience for all of us.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

A. To develop a sound historical and moral understanding of the Holocaust, and from this understanding gain a greater ability to function as a morally responsible person.

B. To become familiar at an introductory level with the interdisciplinary and interfaith body of literature that has emerged in response to the Holocaust, and to grow in the ability to research, analyze, and discuss this literature.

C. To explore the historical phenomena of anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism, and other racial/ethnic hatreds--especially where these have involved Christians--their significance in preparing the way

for the Holocaust, and their implications for contemporary Christian relations with the Jewish people and other religious minorities.

D. To consider the way in which the German churches responded to the Nazi regime, and the lessons to be learned by contemporary Christianity and other faiths from this particular test of Christian integrity.

E. To examine the full spectrum of gentile/Christian behavior toward Jews during the Nazi era and the Holocaust and to consider seriously the implications of this behavior today.

F. To achieve personal moral growth--toward sound character, courageous moral decision making, and a passion to serve suffering people--through encounter with the horrifying reality of the Holocaust and consideration of how you might have behaved in that era.

III. TEXTBOOKS AND ASSIGNED READING

A. There are five required textbooks for the course. They will be available in the bookstore.

Christopher Browning. *Ordinary Men*. HarperCollins, 1992.

David P. Gushee. *Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust*. 2nd ed. Paragon House, 2003.

Richard Rubenstein/John Roth, *Approaches to Auschwitz*, rev. ed. John Knox, 2003.

Corrie ten Boom. *The Hiding Place*. Bantam, 1971.

Elie Wiesel. *Night*. Revised edition, Hill and Wang, 2006.

B. Key Holocaust websites worth exploring this term include:

USHMM < <http://www.ushmm.org/>>; <<http://wlc.ushmm.org>>

Yad Vashem < <http://www.yadvashem.org.il> >

Holocaust Cybrary < <http://www.remember.org/>>

Holocaust Links < <http://www.remember.org/cylinks.html>>

The Nizkor Project <<http://www.nizkor.org/>>

C. Suggestions for further reading, as well as other handouts, will be given throughout the semester.

IV. METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

A. Class time will be spent primarily in focused conversation concerning the reading for the day. Some lectures will be offered, as well as films and other media of instruction.

B. If details can be worked out, we will take a trip in late April to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC; this will be one of our major means of instruction this term.

C. All assignments are also intended to be means of instruction rather than merely methods of evaluation.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND METHODS OF EVALUATION

A. Course Requirements/Grade Determination

Grades will be determined on the basis of the following criteria. Full descriptions follow.

1. Exams.....200 points
2. Reading/Reflection Journals.....100 points
3. Memoir Paper.....100 points
4. Final Paper.....200 points
5. Attendance/Participation.....see policy statement below

The official Mercer University grading scale will be used in the course:

Grading Scale.

90-100%	A	540
87-89%	B+	522
80-86%	B	480
77-79%	C+	462
70-76%	C	420
60-69%	D	360
<60%	F	

What Letter Grades Mean. The following standards define letter grades in this class:

A indicates *outstanding* performance in *all* phases of the assignment/course.

B indicates *high* achievement in *most* phases of the assignment/course.

C indicates *adequate* achievement in *many* phases of the assignment/course.

B. Description of Assignments

1. Exams (2/23, 4/6)--These two objective/essay exams, worth 100 points each, will cover readings and classroom experiences and test reading/retention of key terms, dates, events, etc.

2. Reading/Reflection Journals (due each Monday at start of class)--It is critical to read, think, feel, and pray deeply about a subject as complex, challenging, and horrifying as the Holocaust. For this reason I am assigning you the task of keeping a running journal of your reading, thinking, feeling, questioning, and praying related to this course. I expect to see at least two entries per week, preferably several more. **The journal must include reflections on the reading assigned for the week, indicating book and page numbers considered.** But it should also include thoughts, concerns, laments, prayers, questions, and whatever else might indicate your spiritual, emotional, and intellectual engagement with the material. This journal should be kept in the form of computer entries printed out. I will evaluate these journals based on the seriousness and depth of your engagement with the material and experiences in the course.

EACH JOURNAL ENTRY SHOULD INCLUDE AT LEAST TWO THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS. All entries will, of course, be completely confidential, and will be returned to you the next week.

3. Memoir Paper (due 2/23). We are reading two Holocaust memoirs this term, by Wiesel and ten Boom. Your assignment is to do a 7-8 page composite book review on both of these books.

This is intended to be a dialogue paper between the books. Try to cover the following categories in your paper:

- a. Narrative--summarize the basic experience of the Holocaust as each author describes it. Cover pre-war, wartime, and immediate post-war experiences.
- b. Analysis--discuss what each author has to say about Jewish-Christian/gentile relations, morality, God, and other significant topics in the books.
- c. Reflection--react to the books, reflect on their meaning, ponder their most memorable images and scenes, perhaps create a dialogue between their authors. Consider the implications of what you have read.

4. Final Paper (due 5/4, by email)--This is a senior-level 20-page research/reflection paper which requires your very best work. Your task is to pick one of the many issues raised by the Holocaust and explore it in considerable depth in this thorough and well-written paper. The issue you select should be something we discuss during the course. If you wish to tackle a different issue, please contact me early with your idea. The possibilities are endless. It will be important to narrow your topic to a manageable size.

This is intended as a research *and* reflection paper. In terms of research, I expect that you will use course lectures, assigned readings, and at least 15 other books or serious articles one can find in the library or on the web.

A proposal is due on March 23. That proposal should name the topic and include at least 6 bibliographical entries. If I think you need to change the direction of your paper, I'll let you know then.

5. Attendance/Participation-- The success of a discussion class of this type depends on the active presence and participation of all students. You are encouraged to ask questions, to make constructive comments, to provoke thoughtfully, to stake out unpopular positions if you can defend them. Please respect the opinions of your fellow students and speak one at a time when you have been recognized. As seniors, you should be able to express yourselves on the issues we will discuss. In order to receive a good participation grade, you *must* speak up in class. The discussion questions you submit for each class are important, but they are no substitute for your actually speaking out. Mere volume of words is not enough. You must make contributions that move the discussion forward based on a close reading of the texts

Since there is only one class meeting per week, you may not miss more than one class for whatever reason. Exceptions may be made for University business, such as debate team, sports, Mercer Ambassadors, etc., but you still must clear these absences with me ahead of time.

ACADEMIC POLICY STATEMENTS

On Papers and Their Presentation: I prefer to receive papers in **12-point Times New Roman** font, printed on a well-functioning printer, stapled in the upper left-hand corner, no plastic covers needed. Term papers should be double-spaced, follow the Chicago Manual of Style (Turabian) or MLA style, with a title page and full bibliography including all works cited. While small variations in referencing style are common, be consistent with whatever form you employ throughout the paper. If using Turabian, either endnotes or footnotes are acceptable. Paper grades include consideration of both literary/presentation quality and substantive content. Use inclusive language with reference to human beings (“humans,” “men and women,” “humanity”).

On Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft in which a writer passes off someone else’s words as his or her own, either intentionally or unintentionally (through inadequate quotation use and footnoting). While intention is sometimes hard to judge, intentional plagiarism is expressly forbidden and will result in automatic failure. All other forms of cheating are, of course, forbidden as well. Be very careful about downloading material from the internet and using it in your term paper. Proper citation and quotation is required here as with all other bibliographic resources.

On Late Work: All papers and assignments are due at the start of class on the date assigned. Papers lose 5 points credit for every day that they are late, excluding Sundays. Papers turned in after the start of class are treated as if turned in the next day. If you turn in a late paper, be sure to note on the paper the date and time it was turned in. The *only* exceptions to this policy include family emergencies and bereavement. Absence from class due to official college functions does not constitute grounds for a no-penalty extension on a paper, nor do computer problems, relationship hassles, or other common stresses of university life. Remember that insight papers cannot be turned in after the start of class on the days they are due. **NO PAPERS OF ANY TYPE WILL BE RECEIVED AFTER MIDNIGHT ON THE DAY OF THE FINAL EXAM.** Your term paper is due that day and simply cannot be late.

On Lost Papers: Students are wise to keep both a hard copy and a computer version of every paper they write. If a paper turns up missing in this class, you are responsible for turning in a replacement version as soon as we discover the paper is missing.

On Cell phones: Cell phones are a great convenience but can be a source of major irritation in public events, such as church, movie theatres, and classrooms. I ask you to silence all beeping and ringing devices in class, unless there is an emergency facing you that you can tell me about.

On Accommodation for Disabilities: Students with a documented disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. If you are not registered with Disability Services, the instructor will refer you to the office of Student Support Services

(SSS) for consultation regarding documentation of your disability and eligibility for accommodations under the ADA/504. In order to receive accommodations, eligible students must provide each instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form from Disability Services. Students should return the completed and signed form to the Disability Services Office on the 3rd floor of the Connell Student Center. Students with a documented disability who do not wish to use accommodations are strongly encouraged to register with Disability Services and complete a Faculty Accommodation Form each semester. For further information, please contact Disability Services at 301-2778 or visit the website at www.mercer.edu/stu_support/swd.htm.

On Attendance and Participation:

- A. Consistent class attendance is required for the successful completion of this course, just as consistent work attendance is required for a successful professional life. The student is expected to attend classes every day in accordance with Mercer's attendance policies. See catalog for official policy statement.
- B. Class absences will be considered in two categories: excused and unexcused.
- C. Excused absences include the following: illness, emergencies, bereavement, or official college functions. The professor reserves the right to determine the validity of all absences.
- D. Request for an absence to be excused must be made in advance of the absence or at the next class attended after the absence. Remember that even if an absence is excused due to illness, a pattern of absences will certainly be problematic for success in this class, or any class—or life—and may reflect underlying lifestyle issues.
- E. If an exam is missed because of an excused absence, it may be made up. If the absence is unexcused, the student receives a 0 on that exam. Whenever a student has advance knowledge that an exam must be missed due to an excused absence, the professor should be informed so that arrangements can be made.
- F. Each unexcused absence beyond the first one will reduce your final grade by one full letter grade.
- G. Two tardies will count as an absence.
- H. Participation quality can be considered at the professor's discretion to swing close grades either up or down.

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 Tentative Course Schedule, Spring 2009
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PART ONE: THE HOLOCAUST –NARRATIVE ENTRY POINTS

“It is hard for the tongue to utter such words, for the mind to comprehend their meaning, to write them down on paper. Words are beyond us now... Our hearts are empty and made of stone.”

–*Warsaw ghetto diarist Abraham Lewin*

- 1/26 Course Organization and Requirements
- The Holocaust: Exploring the Terrain
 Reading: *Gushee, preface, ch. 1; Rubenstein/Roth, prologue*
- 2/2 Messenger from the Dead: Elie Wiesel’s *Night*
 Reading: *Night*; **Journal 1 due**
- 2/9 Among the Killers: *Ordinary Men*
 Reading: *Ordinary Men*; **Journal 2 due**
- 2/16 Rescue in Haarlem: ten Boom’s *The Hiding Place*
 Reading: *The Hiding Place*; **Journal 3 due**
- 2/23 Review; **Midterm Exam 1; Memoir Paper due**

PART TWO: HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THE HOLOCAUST

"The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed had proclaimed: You have no right to live among us. The German Nazis at last decreed: You have no right to live." --*Raul Hilberg*

- 3/2 Anti-Semitism/Anti-Judaism in Antiquity
 Examining the Jewish/Christian Schism
 Christian Anti-Semitism through the Middle Ages
 Reading: *Rubenstein/Roth, chs. 1-2*
- The Question of Anti-Judaism/Anti-Semitism in the New Testament
 Reading: *Luke 22-24; John 8; Romans 9-11*
Journal 4 due
- 3/9 Spring Break

3/16 The Modern Secularization of anti-Judaism
Reading: *Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 3-4*

In-class film: "Shadow on the Cross"

Journal 5 due

PART THREE: NAZI OPPRESSION AND THE HOLOCAUST

"Antisemitism based on reason must lead to the systematic legal combating and removal of the rights of the Jew...its final aim, however, must be the uncompromising elimination of the Jews altogether." --*Adolf Hitler, 1919*

3/23 **Final Project proposal due**
Nazi anti-Jewish Measures, 1933-1939
Reading: *Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 5*

The War Against the Jews, 1939-1945
Reading: *Gushee, ch. 2; Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 6*
Journal 6 due

3/30 White Collar Murderers
Reading: *Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 7-8*
Journal 7 due; Midterm Exam 2

4/2-4/6 Trip to Washington

Jewish Experiences Under Persecution
Reading: *Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 9*

Other Victims: The Gypsy "Porraimos"
Reading: *handout*

Journal 8 due (waived for those going on trip)

PART FOUR: MORAL CHOICES IN NAZI EUROPE

"After nineteen centuries of Christianity, the extermination of six million Jews, among them one and a half million children, carried out in cold blood in the very heart of Christian Europe, encouraged by the criminal silence of virtually all Christendom...was the natural culmination of [Christianity's] moral...and...spiritual bankruptcy. This has been a moral collapse the like of which the world has never witnessed." --*Eliezer Berkovits*

4/13 Choices in Christian Europe: Perpetrators and Bystanders
Reading: *Gushee, ch. 3*
Business, Medicine, Mass Murder, and the Holocaust
Reading: *Rubenstein/Roth, epilogue*

The Church Struggle in Germany

Reading: *Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 10*

Journal 9 due

4/20

Resistance: The Case of the Jehovah's Witnesses

In-class film: "Stand Firm"

Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust

Reading: *Gushee, ch. 4*

Journal 10 due

Paths to Righteousness: Motives and Characteristics of Rescuers

Reading: *Gushee, ch. 5-6*

4/24-27

Washington Trip—Last Class

Would I Be Righteous? Moral Responses to the Holocaust

Reading: *Gushee, ch. 7, epilogue*

Artistic, Literary, Theological Responses to the Holocaust

Reading: *Rubenstein/Roth, chs. 11-12*

5/4

Final paper due—by email