

Christianity and the Holocaust

CHR 441

MWF 11-11:50, Jennings 325

3 hours credit

Dr. David P. Gushee

University Fellow & Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy

Office: Jennings 328 Tel: 901-661-5024 (o), 668-9837 (h) email: dgushee@uu.edu websites: www.davidgushee.com http://countercultureblog.com	Office Hours: MW 1-4 & by appointment
--	---

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

An intensive interdisciplinary examination of the Holocaust and its significance for Christianity. Attention is given to the Holocaust itself, its intellectual and ideological origins, the behavior of Christians during the Holocaust, and postwar theological, moral, literary, and artistic responses to the Holocaust.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

A. To develop a sound historical, theological, and moral understanding of the Holocaust, and from this understanding gain a greater ability to function as a morally responsible Christian disciple, church member, and citizen.

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 from within the framework of a genuinely Christian worldview and an informed approach to Christian ethics.

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 from this particular test of Christian integrity.

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

F. To understand some of the main directions of Jewish and Christian theological and moral response to the Holocaust and to take them into account in the continuing development of one's own theological and ethical perspective.

G. To achieve profound personal moral growth--toward sound character, courageous moral decision making, and a passion to serve and obey Jesus Christ alone as Lord--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. At certain points in the course we will be using the Bible. During those class sessions you will need to bring a modern translation of the Bible to class and do any assigned Bible reading.

B. 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.

D. One work will be found on reserve:

Martin Luther, "On the Jews and Their Lies." In *Luther's Works*, vol. 47.

E. 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/>>

F. 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. *Please note and set aside required film nights as specified below.*

B. We will take a trip in May to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC; this will be one of our major means of instruction this term. For more about this trip, see below.

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.....300 points
2. Reading/Reflection Journals.....100 points
3. Memoir Paper.....100 points
4. Film Response Papers.....100 points
5. Final Paper.....200 points
6. Extra Credit.....up to 25 points
7. Attendance/Participation.....see policy statement below

The official Union University grading scale will be used in the course. Translated into point values for this course, it runs as follows:

760-800 A 680-759 B 600-679 C 520-599 D 000-519 F

B. Description of Assignments

1. Exams (2/26, 4/13, final)--These three 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 most Fridays 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, 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, and whatever else might indicate your spiritual, emotional, and intellectual engagement with the material. This journal can be kept in the form of a handwritten bound journal (if written legibly) or through computer entries printed out--whatever works for

you. I will evaluate these journals based on the seriousness and depth of your engagement with the material and experiences in the course. All entries will, of course, be completely confidential, and will be returned to you on Monday each week.

3. Memoir Paper (due 3/2). 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 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 for your Christian life, your theology, and for the church.

4. Film Response Papers. There's some overtime in this class, and it includes four required movie nights, for "Schindler's List," "Triumph of the Will," "Sophie Scholl," and "Weapons of the Spirit." You are required to attend these movies unless absolutely unable to do so, and to write a rapid 3-4 page response usually due the same week. Each paper should include reflections on the content of the film, its impact on you spiritually, morally, emotionally, and even theologically, and how the film connects with what we have talked and read about in class. Each paper is worth 25 points.

"Overtime Films" and Paper Due Dates:

"Schindler's List"	Showing: 2/24	Due: 2/28
"Triumph of the Will"	Showing: 3/20	Due: 3/23
"Sophie Scholl"	Showing: 4/14	Due: 4/18
"Weapons of the Spirit"	Showing: 4/28	Due: 4/30

5. Final Paper (due 5/11)--This is a senior-level 20-25 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, *Holocaust Encyclopedia* entries, 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 19. 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.

6. Extra Credit---A variety of extra credit opportunities will be presented this term. I am usually open to offering credit for attendance/papers related to major guest speakers and events on campus, such as the Baptist Identity Conference or Mars Hill forums. You may do one extra credit project only, with a value of up to 25 points. **All extra credit papers must be received by our last day of class, May 11 at 5 p.m.**

7. Attendance/Participation--This is the most advanced undergraduate course that I teach. I have the highest standards for it. I expect very high levels of commitment on everyone's part. I assume that you will attend class unless illness or other emergency prevents your attendance, and that you will participate vigorously and effectively. I will feel free to call on anyone in the class at any time to ask for their interaction with course materials. See below for official statement of attendance policies.

Note on the Washington Experience: We will go as a class to Washington from May 1-6. It is understood that all who are in the class will make the trip unless a dire emergency, unbreakable previous commitment, or financial incapacity prevents them from going (we do have a small scholarship fund available for this latter situation). My estimate is that the trip will cost each student no more than \$250. I will collect a deposit of \$100 from everyone by *March 3*, with the remainder due on *April 11*. You will need to fill out all relevant permission paperwork at the appropriate time. While in Washington, we will spend one full day at the Holocaust museum, and two days doing other sightseeing. We will also plan to visit a Jewish synagogue and probably an Anglican or Catholic Church.

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, as discussed in the Union catalog. 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 Doubling Up Papers: The School of Christian Studies generally does not permit two uses of a single paper in two different classes. Please do not “double up” papers in this way. One alternative can be to write one paper of much greater depth. Do discuss this with me (and any other professor) if you are interested in doing this.

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 THE SCHEDULED START OF THE FINAL EXAM.**

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. We need to train a generation of people who learn how to silence their cell phones. I ask you to silence all beeping and ringing devices in class.

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 Union’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 approved by the Academic Affairs Office. The professor reserves the right to determine the validity of all absences.

D. Request for an absence to be excused must be made *in writing* either in advance of the absence or at the next class attended after the absence. Verbal communication of the absence or its reasons is insufficient. 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. This includes exams missed due to oversleeping. 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. Excessive absences by a student will be reported to the administration for counsel with the student.

G. Attendance and participation generally will be evaluated as follows:

0 absences—great job (+5)

1 absence— no impact

2 absences -- -10 points

4 absences -- -20 points

6 absences -- -30 points

3 absences -- -15 points

5 absences -- -25

7+ absences—automatic F

points

The professor reserves the right to adjust these attendance grades based on the quality of class participation.

H. Tardiness--arrival in class at any point after it starts--will be counted against the attendance grade.

Three tardies=one absence.

I. Participation--The criteria of quality participation include the following: obvious completion of reading prior to coming to class, intelligent, alert, and informed participation in classroom discussion and any assigned projects or tasks, evidence of note-taking and active listening, and general quality of demeanor, engagement, and enthusiasm for course activities.

CHR 441 Christianity and the Holocaust
MWF 11-11:50
Tentative Course Schedule, Spring 2007
Dr. David P. Gushee

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

- 1/31 Course Organization and Requirements
- 2/2 Christian Ethics and the Holocaust: Exploring the Terrain
Gushee, preface, ch. 1; Rubenstein/Roth, prologue
- 2/5 Messenger from the Dead: Elie Wiesel’s *Night*
Wiesel, preface-46
- 2/7 Messenger from the Dead: Elie Wiesel’s *Night*
Wiesel, 47-84
- 2/9 Messenger from the Dead: Elie Wiesel’s *Night*
Wiesel, 85-120
Journal 1 due
- 2/12 Among the Killers: *Ordinary Men*
Browning, chs. 1-6
- 2/14 Among the Killers: *Ordinary Men*
Browning, chs. 7-12
- 2/16 Among the Killers: *Ordinary Men*
Browning, chs. 13-18
Journal 2 due
- 2/19 Rescue in Haarlem: ten Boom’s *The Hiding Place*
ten Boom, chs. 1-6
- 2/21 Rescue in Haarlem: ten Boom’s *The Hiding Place*
ten Boom, chs., 7-11

- 2/23 Rescue in Haarlem: ten Boom's *The Hiding Place*
ten Boom, chs. 12-15
Journal 3 due
- 2/24 (Sat.) Movie Night #1: "Schindler's List" (7 pm-10:30 pm)
- 2/26 **Midterm Exam 1**

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*

- 2/28 Anti-Semitism/Anti-Judaism in Antiquity
Rubenstein/Roth, 25-33
Schindler Paper due
- 3/2 Examining the Jewish/Christian Schism
Rubenstein/Roth, 33-47
Memoir paper due
- 3/5 The Question of Anti-Judaism/Anti-Semitism in the New Testament
Luke 22-24; John 8; Romans 9-11
Washington Deposit 1 due
- 3/7 Christian Anti-Semitism through the Middle Ages
Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 2
- 3/9 Luther's Fateful Polemic Against the Jews
Luther, "On the Jews and Their Lies" (263-306, skim rest)
Journal 4 due
- 3/12 The Modern Secularization of anti-Judaism
Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 3
- 3/14 Examining Christian "anti-Judaism"
 In-class film: "Shadow on the Cross"
- 3/16 Christian Theological Options vis-à-vis anti-Judaism
Reading: handout; Journal 5 due

PART THREE: THE NAZI RISE 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*

3/19 The Rise of Nazism
Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 4; appendix, 453-456 (chronology)
Final Project proposal due

3/20 (Tue.) *Movie Night 2: "Triumph of the Will" (7 pm-10 pm)*

3/21 Nazi anti-Jewish Measures, 1933-1939
Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 5

3/23 The War Against the Jews, 1939-1945
Gushee, ch. 2; Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 6
Journal 6 due; "Triumph" paper due

3/26-28 White Collar Murderers
In-class film: "Adolf Eichmann: The Specialist"
Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 7-8

3/30 Jewish Experiences Under Persecution
Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 9
Journal 7 due

4/2-9 *Spring Break*

4/11 Other Victims: The Gypsy "Porraimos"
Reading: handout
Washington Trip Balance Due

4/13 **Midterm Exam 2**

PART FOUR: MORAL CHOICES IN NAZI EUROPE

4/14 (Sat.) *Movie Night 3: "Sophie Scholl" (7 pm-10 pm)*

"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*

- 4/16 Choices in Christian Europe: Perpetrators and Bystanders
Gushee, ch. 3
- 4/18 Business, Medicine, Mass Murder, and the Holocaust
Rubenstein/Roth, 355-368; "Sophie Scholl" paper due
- 4/20 The Church Struggle in Germany
Rubenstein/Roth, 249-265
Journal 8 due
- 4/23 The Catholic Church and the Holocaust
Rubenstein/Roth, 265-282
- 4/25 Resistance: The Case of the Jehovah's Witnesses
In-class film: "Stand Firm"
- 4/27 Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust
Gushee, ch. 4; Rubenstein/Roth, 282-290
Journal 9 due
- 4/28 (Sat.) *Movie Night 4: "Weapons of the Spirit" (7 pm-10 pm)*
- 4/30 Paths to Righteousness: Motives and Characteristics of Rescuers
Gushee, ch. 5-6; "Weapons" paper due
- 5/1-5/6 *Washington Trip*
- 5/7 Artistic and Literary Responses to the Holocaust
Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 11
- 5/9 Theological Responses to the Holocaust
Rubenstein/Roth, ch. 12; Handout: Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire"
Journal 10 due (theme: Washington trip)
- 5/11 Would I Be Righteous? Moral Responses to the Holocaust
Gushee, ch. 7, epilogue; Rubenstein/Roth, 368-377

Final paper due

TBA

Final Exam