



## LT 382 RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST IN LITERATURE

IES Abroad Vienna

### DESCRIPTION:

The aim of the course is to acquaint students with literary responses to the Holocaust in the hope that the aesthetic power inherent in the texts is strong enough to enable readers to face the shocking and depressing subject matter. The works are selected from American, Austrian, Italian, Israeli, British and Hungarian literature to emphasize the international relevance of the topic and to provide a basis for finding similarities and differences. We will discuss questions of identity and cognitive dissonance, the delicate balance between remembering and forgetting, as well as problems of gender, and the differences between documentation and literary representation.

**CREDITS:** 3

**CONTACT HOURS:** 45

**LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION:** English

**PREREQUISITES:** The course does not require any previous training either in literature (literary theory), or in history, or in any of the social sciences. Some interest in the history of World War II, literature and related areas is, however, presupposed.

### METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

We will be discussing the pieces below, assigned for each meeting. The required readings will be available on Moodle. The course is intended as a real dialogue: it will, besides the traditional lecture format, heavily rely on student participation in the form of short class presentations and contributions to the discussions. Students will be required to attend a course-related trip to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial. This trip will take place on a Sunday in April (exact date to be confirmed). A private bus will take the group there. After a short historical overview provided by the staff of the Memorial Center there will be a guided tour in the (partly open-air) Museum and a debriefing session (provided by the instructor of the course). The whole trip will take up students' time roughly between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. This is additional *time* to the class times spent together but it is very helpful background to already familiar material (e.g. Wiesel's *Night*, Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*, Sorell's and Frankel's memoirs, Klüger's *Still Alive*) as well as to readings to come, (e.g. Imre Kertész's *Fateless*) It will be a unique (although unsettling) experience.

### REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class-participation – 10%
- Midterm - 30%
- Reading journal – 20%
- Presentation – 10%
- Final – 30%

### Class participation

You are expected to be fully present and to take part in the discussions.

### Grading Rubric for Student Participation

<b>A</b>	<p><b>Excellent participation</b></p> <p>The student's contributions reflect an active reading of the assigned bibliography. Skillfully synthesizes the main ideas of the readings and raises questions about the applications and implications of the material. Demonstrates, through questions and comments, that he or she has been capable of relating the main ideas in the readings to the other information discussed in the course, and with his or her own life experience. The student makes informed judgments about the readings and other ideas discussed in class, providing evidence and reasons. He/she respectfully states his/her reactions about other classmates' opinions, and is capable of contributing to the inquiry spiral with other questions. The student gets fully involved in the completion of the class activities.</p>
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<b>B</b>	<p><b>Very good participation</b> The student's contributions show that the assigned materials are usually read. Most of the time the main ideas are identified, even though sometimes it seems that applications and implications of the information read were not properly reflected upon. The student is able to construct over others' contributions, but sometimes seems to interrupt the shared construction to go over tangents. He/she is respectful of others' ideas. Regularly involved in the activities but occasionally loses concentration or energy.</p>
<b>C</b>	<p><b>Regular participation</b> The participant evidences a regular reading of the bibliography, but in a superficial way. He/she tries to construct over others' ideas, but commonly provides comments that indicate lack of preparation about the material. Frequently, contributions are shallow or unarticulated with the discussion in hand.</p>
<b>F</b>	<p><b>Insufficient participation</b> Consistently, the participant reads in a shallow way or does not read at all. Does not participate in an informed way, and shows lack of interest in constructing over others' ideas.</p>

### Midterm

Take-home assignment (with creative option): an essay of approximately 1250-200 words on a freely-chosen topic of the course (the juxtaposition of two or more pieces in all possible combinations, the description of two or more characters, some recurring metaphors in various pieces, etc.) or a creative piece of writing (poems, a short-story or a short drama).

### Reading Journal

For each class, please select a quotation that was significant for you from the assigned reading(s) and comment on it in a paragraph. These reflections are to be collected and handed in at the end of each session.

### Presentation

You will be asked to give a short presentation of approximately 10 minutes on a topic of your choice – the list of topics will be available at the first meeting of the course. The presentations will take place at the beginning of the discussion period of the classes, after the introductory remarks.

### Final

An in-class exam, consisting of 15 quiz-questions and a short essay of approximately 750 words (you may choose from seven previously offered topics).

Occasionally a "Quiz" at the beginning of the class. These quizzes serve as preparation for the final exam, they will not be graded.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Be familiar with the outlines of the history of the Holocaust, including various possible approaches to the topic
- Identify and contextualize the literary representations and their interpretations
- Interpret and critically evaluate literary texts and develop some of their own arguments about them

### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

IES Vienna requires attendance at all class sessions, including field study excursions, internship meetings, scheduled rehearsals, and all tests and exams. Attendance will be taken for every class. If a student misses more than the equivalent of a week of classes without an excuse, the final grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade (for example, A- to B+) for every additional unexcused absence.

### Excused absences are permitted only when:

- 1) a student is ill (health issues),
- 2) when class is held on a recognized religious holiday traditionally observed by the particular student, or
- 3) in the case of a grave incident affecting family members;

4) exceptions may be made for conflicting academic commitments, but only in writing and only well in advance of missed class time.

Any other absences are unexcused.

**CONTENT:**

Week	Content	Readings
<b>Week 1</b>	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>Reading I.B. Singer’s “The Lecture”(8 pages) together</p> <p>Questions for discussion: remembering vs. forgetting, the significance of everyday objects, a sense of belonging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I.B. Singer’s “The Lecture”(8 pages)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Discussing history</b></p> <p>Jewish life in Europe before WWII, differences between “Eastern” and “Western” regions, anti-Semitism in different countries, ways and degrees of discrimination in Nazi Germany</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction from <i>The Holocaust</i> (7 pages)</li> <li>• Excerpts from Yehuda Bauer: <i>The History of the Holocaust</i> (4 pages)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b>	<p><b>The importance of language and models of representation</b></p> <p>Student Presentation 1: Oscar’s problem with both the English and the German language</p> <p>Discussion: language as part of one’s identity, turning away from the mothertongue as personal crisis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bernard Malamud. “The German Refugee” (11 pages)</li> </ul>
	<p>Summary and discussion of the chapter assigned, differences between the exceptionalist and the constructivist view, shifts of focus between fact and fiction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alan Mintz: “Two Models in the Study of Holocaust Representation” (25 pages)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b>	<p><b>Giving account of the depth of trauma: experiences in Auschwitz</b></p> <p>Student Presentation 2.: Comments on the title “Night”</p> <p>Student Presentation 3. Relationships between fathers and sons</p> <p>Discussion: a young boy’s account, questions of emotion, faith and identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• excerpts from Elie Wiesel: <i>Night</i> (30 pages)</li> </ul>
	<p>Student Presentation 4.: Comments on the sentence: “Hier ist kein warum” – absurdity as reality</p> <p>Student Presentation 5. : Attempts at remaining “human” in inhuman circumstances, e.g. the importance of washing oneself</p> <p>Discussion: a young scientist’s account, seeing oneself both from the inside and outside</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• excerpts from Primo Levi: <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> (30 pages)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Week 4</b></p>	<p><b>Differences in genre: borderlines between journal, memoir and fiction</b>  Student Presentation 6.: Differences in gender-roles  Discussion: two memoirs contrasted: the significance of handwriting, reflecting on recent events vs. reflecting on past events, from a distance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dora Sorell "Journal"(20 pages)</li> <li>• David Frankel: "This is All I Remember"(30 pages)</li> </ul>
	<p>Student Presentation 7.: A complicated mother-daughter relationship  Discussion: a literature professor's memoir: a voice resisting all stereotypical responses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• excerpts from Ruth Klüger: <i>Still Alive</i> (30 pages)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 5</b></p>	<p><b>Poetry "after Auschwitz"</b>  Student Presentation 8: Musicality in Paul Celan's poem  Student Presentation 9. : Images of peace vs. images of war in Radnóti's poem  Student Presentation 10: Biblical images in Dan Pagis' "Written in Pencil"  Questions of the genre: discussing Theodore Adorno's famous statements, aesthetic beauty vs. horrifying testimony</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poems by Paul Celan ("Deathfugue"), Miklós Radnóti ("Forced March") and Dan Pagis "Written in pencil on a sealed railway car", "Instructions for crossing the border"; (3 pages)</li> </ul>
	<p>Revisiting Deathfugue in light of Shoshana Felman's interpretation, summary and discussion of the chapter assigned.   EXCURSION TO MAUTHAUSEN: Importance of historic sites – debriefing on the spot.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shoshana Felman: "Education and Crisis. VI.: Poetry and Testimony: Paul Celan, or the Accidenting of Esthetics " (15 pages)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 6</b></p>	<p><b>The Woman's Voice and the Question of Gender</b>  Introducing Austrian Nobel Prize winning author  Discussing questions of fact and fiction, the genre of drama  Student Presentation 11: The Woman Perpetrator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elfriede Jelinek: <i>Rechnitz: The Exterminating Angel</i> (192 pages)</li> </ul>
	<p>Student presentation 12: The significance of items of clothing  Discussion of the post traumatic possibilities of readjustment to society   Take-home midterm papers due</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cynthia Ozick: <i>The Shawl, Rosa</i> (69 pages)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 7</b></p>	<p><b>"After" and "Before" the Holocaust: Generational Contrasts</b>  Student Presentation 13: Positivism in philosophy  Discussion of the problems of the second generation, the children of survivors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rebecca Goldstein: "The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish: A Story" (8 pages)</li> </ul>

	<p>Student presentation 14: Signs of absurdity Discussion of expectations and disillusionment, the Austrian scene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aharon Appelfeld: <i>Badenheim, 1939</i> (148 pages)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 8</b>	<p><b>Exceptional Narrative Voice</b> Introduction of Hungarian Nobel Prize winning author Student presentation 15: The significance of the word “naturally” Contrasts with Elie Wiesel: the narrator’s lack of emotional involvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imre Kertész: <i>Fateless I.</i> (100 pages)</li> </ul>
	<p>Student presentation 16 : The shocking statement about the happiness of concentration camps Discussion : surprise as a basic element of the experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imre Kertész : <i>Fateless II.</i> (91 pages)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 9</b>	<p><b>How to See the “Others”: Questions of Assimilation</b> Student presentation 17: Humor and horror Discussion: how joking and humor can accompany the fear</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nathan Englander: “The Tumblers” (20 pages)</li> </ul>
	<p>Student presentation 18: The significance of colors Student presentation 19: Signs of war in a peaceful environment Discussion: questions of (the lack of ) empathy, “we” vs. “them”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philip Roth: “Eli the Fanatic” (14 pages)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10</b>	<p><b>Problems of Xenophobia</b> Student presentation 19: The significance of prejudice Student presentation 20: The recurring image of the peacock Discussion: The American South as a background, community vs. individual achievements, types of discrimination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flannery O’Connor: “The Displaced Person” (25 pages)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Conclusion, Preparation for the final exam</b> Discussion of reading journals</p>	
	<p><b>FINAL EXAM</b></p>	

**COURSE-RELATED TRIP:**

- Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial.** This trip will take place on a Sunday in April (exact date to be confirmed). A private bus will take the group there. After a short historical overview provided by the staff of the Memorial Center there will be a guided tour in the (partly open-air) Museum and a debriefing session (provided by the instructor of the course). The whole trip will take up students’ time roughly between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. This is additional time to the class

times spent together but it is very helpful background to already familiar material (e.g. Wiesel's *Night*, Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*, Sorell's and Frankel's memoirs, Klüger's *Still Alive*) as well as to readings to come, (e.g. Imre Kertész's *Fateless*) It will be a unique (although unsettling) experience.

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- I.B. Singer: "The Lecture", in: Joyce Carol Oates ed. *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories*, Oxford UP, 1992. p.488.
- Donald L. Niewyk, ed.: *The Holocaust*, Houghton Mifflin Co. Boston, New York, 1997. Introduction, p.1.
- Yehuda Bauer: *The History of the Holocaust*, Franklin Watts, a Division of Scholastic Inc. New York, 2001. (excerpts)
- Bernard Malamud. "The German Refugee", in: Bernard Malamud: *The Complete Stories*, Vintage, 1998. p. 357.
- Alan Mintz: "Two Models in the Study of Holocaust Representation", in: Alan Mintz: *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, University of Washington Press, 2001. p. 36.
- Elie Wiesel: *Night*, Trans. Stella Rodway, Avon Books, New York, 1969., excerpts
- Primo Levi: *Survival in Auschwitz* Transl. Stuart Woolf, a Touchstone Book, New York, 1996., excerpts
- Dora Sorell: "Journal" in manuscript, with the permission of the author
- David Frankel: "This is All I Remember", in manuscript, with the permission of the translator, Dr. Donka Farkas
- Ruth Klüger: *Still Alive. A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*. The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2003.
- Paul Celan: "Deathfugue", Transl. John Felstiner, in: *Against Forgetting*. Twentieth-century Poetry of Witness. Ed. Carolyn Forché, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1993. p. 380.
- Miklós Radnóti: "Forced March", "Razglednica IV.", in: *Against Forgetting*. Twentieth-century Poetry of Witness. Ed. Carolyn Forché, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1993. p.369.
- Dan Pagis: "written in pencil in the sealed railway car", "instructions for crossing the border", Transl. Stephen Mitchell, in: *The Selected Poetry of Dan Pagis*, University of California press, 1996.
- Shoshana Felman: "Education and Crisis. VI.:Poetry and Testimony: Paul Celan, or the Accidenting of Esthetics", in: Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub: *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. Routledge, New York and London, 1992.
- Elfriede Jelinek: *Rechnitz: The Exterminating Angel*, in: Elfriede Jelinek: *Rechnitz, and the Merchant's Contract*, Seagull Books, 2015.
- Cynthia Ozick: *The Shawl, Rosa*, Vintage Books, 1990.
- Rebecca Goldstein: "The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish: A Story" in: *The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories* Oxford University Press, 1998. p. 407.
- Aharon Appelfeld: *Badenheim, 1939* Transl. Dalya Bilu, David R. Godine Publisher, Boston, 1980.
- Imre Kertész: *Fateless* Transl. Tim Wilkinson, Vintage Books, London, 2006.
- Nathan Englander: "The Tumblers", in: Nathan Englander: *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2009.
- Philip Roth: "Eli the Fanatic" in: Philip Roth: *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories*, Vintage Books, New York, 1987.p. 247
- Flannery O'Connor: "The Displaced Person" in: Flannery O'Connor: *The Complete Stories*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1996.

#### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Peter Kenez: *The Coming of the Holocaust. From Antisemitism to Genocide*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Yehuda Bauer: *The History of the Holocaust*, Franklin Watts, a Division of Scholastic Inc. New York, 2001.
- Carolyn Forché ed.: *Against Forgetting. Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness*, W.W. Norton & Company Inc., New York, 1993.
- Emily Miller Budick: *Aharon Appelfeld's Fiction. Acknowledging the Holocaust*, Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Peter Middleton and Tim Woods: *Literatures of Memory. History, time and space in postwar writing*, Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Rebecca Goldstein: *Mazel*, Penguin Books, 1995.
- Thomas Keneally: *Schindler's List*, Scribner Paperback Fiction, New York, 2000.
- W.G. Sebald: *Austerlitz*, transl. Anthea Bell, The Modern Library, New York, 2001.
- Martin Amis: *Time's Arrow: or The Nature of the Offence*, Jonathan Cape Limited, London, 1991.