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

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Excellent participation</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>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.</td>
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B Very good participation
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.

C Regular participation
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.

F Insufficient participation
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.

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;
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:

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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| Week 1 | Introduction | • I.B. Singer’s “The Lecture”(8 pages)  
Reading I.B. Singer’s “The Lecture”(8 pages) together  
Questions for discussion: remembering vs. forgetting, the significance of everyday objects, a sense of belonging |
| | Discussing history | • Introduction from The Holocaust (7 pages)  
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  
Excerpts from Yehuda Bauer: The History of the Holocaust (4 pages) |
| Week 2 | The importance of language and models of representation | • Bernard Malamud. “The German Refugee” (11 pages)  
Student Presentation 1: Oscar’s problem with both the English and the German language  
Discussion: language as part of one’s identity, turning away from the mothertongue as personal crisis  
Summary and discussion of the chapter assigned, differences between the exceptionalist and the constructivist view, shifts of focus between fact and fiction  
Alan Mintz: “Two Models in the Study of Holocaust Representation” (25 pages) |
| Week 3 | Giving account of the depth of trauma: experiences in Auschwitz | • excerpts from Elie Wiesel: Night (30 pages)  
Student Presentation 2.: Comments on the title “Night”  
Student Presentation 3. Relationships between fathers and sons  
Discussion: a young boy’s account, questions of emotion, faith and identity  
Student Presentation 4.: Comments on the sentence: “Hier ist kein warum” – absurdity as reality  
Student Presentation 5. : Attempts at remaining “human” in inhuman circumstances, e.g. the importance of washing oneself  
Discussion: a young scientist’s account, seeing oneself both from the inside and outside  
excerpts from Primo Levi: Survival in Auschwitz (30 pages) |
| Week 4 | Differences in genre: borderlines between journal, memoir and fiction  
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 | ● Dora Sorell “Journal” (20 pages)  
● David Frankel: “This is All I Remember” (30 pages) |
| --- | --- |
|  | Student Presentation 7.: A complicated mother-daughter relationship  
Discussion: a literature professor’s memoir: a voice resisting all stereotypical responses | ● excerpts from Ruth Klüger: Still Alive (30 pages) |
| Week 5 | Poetry “after Auschwitz”  
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 | ● 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) |
|  | 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. | ● Shoshana Felman: “Education and Crisis. VI.: Poetry and Testimony: Paul Celan, or the Accidenting of Esthetics” (15 pages) |
| Week 6 | The Woman’s Voice and the Question of Gender  
Introducing Austrian Nobel Prize winning author  
Discussing questions of fact and fiction, the genre of drama  
Student Presentation 11: The Woman Perpetrator | ● Elfriede Jelinek: Rechnitz: The Exterminating Angel (192 pages) |
|  | Student presentation 12: The significance of items of clothing  
Discussion of the post traumatic possibilities of readjustment to society  
Take-home midterm papers due | ● Cynthia Ozick: The Shawl, Rosa (69 pages) |
| Week 7 | “After” and “Before” the Holocaust: Generational Contrasts  
Student Presentation 13: Positivism in philosophy  
Discussion of the problems of the second generation, the children of survivors | ● Rebecca Goldstein: “The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish: A Story” (8 pages) |
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<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Exceptional Narrative Voice</th>
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<td>Introduction of Hungarian Nobel Prize winning author</td>
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<td>Student presentation 15: The significance of the word “naturally”</td>
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<td>Contrasts with Elie Wiesel: the narrator’s lack of emotional involvement</td>
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<td>Aharon Appelfeld: Badenheim, 1939 (148 pages)</td>
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<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Student presentation 16: The shocking statement about the happiness of concentration camps</th>
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<td>Discussion: surprise as a basic element of the experience</td>
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<td>Imre Kertész: Fateless I. (100 pages)</td>
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<th>Week 9</th>
<th>How to See the “Others”: Questions of Assimilation</th>
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<td>Student presentation 17: Humor and horror</td>
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<td>Discussion: how joking and humor can accompany the fear</td>
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<td>Nathan Englander: “The Tumblers” (20 pages)</td>
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<th>Student presentation 18: The significance of colors</th>
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<td>Student presentation 19: Signs of war in a peaceful environment</td>
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<td>Discussion: questions of (the lack of) empathy, “we” vs. “them”</td>
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<td>Philip Roth: “Eli the Fanatic” (14 pages)</td>
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<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Problems of Xenophobia</th>
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<td>Student presentation 19: The significance of prejudice</td>
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<td>Student presentation 20: The recurring image of the peacock</td>
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<td>Discussion: The American South as a background, community vs. individual achievements, types of discrimination</td>
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<td>Flannery O’Connor: “The Displaced Person” (25 pages)</td>
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|        | Conclusion, Preparation for the final exam |
|        | Discussion of reading journals |

|        | FINAL EXAM |

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**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.
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REQUIRED READINGS:

- 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

RECOMMENDED READINGS: