

**Holocaust and Post-Holocaust Literature and Film**  
**ENGL 3328/CRN 27277**  
**M/W 9- 10.20am**  
**Hudspeth Hall 100**

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Office: Hudspeth Hall 321  
Office Hours: M/W 1.30-3pm (in my office) and by appointment (preferably on zoom)  
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**Course description:**

In this course we will read from a wide range of genres - memoirs, novels, short stories, poems, and plays - and watch feature films and documentaries created by a diverse set of European, North American, and Israeli authors and filmmakers who engage with the Holocaust in their work. They either write from first-hand experience as survivors, as "Nachgeborene" or "Spätgeborene" in search of truth and justice, or as our contemporaries are concerned with the rise of fascist rhetoric and policies in our own historical moment. The assigned primary texts were published between 1947 and 2018; the films were released between 1935 and 2022.

We will study these literary and visual texts within their specific historical contexts (setting and publication/release); for example, we will discuss the social, economic, psychological, scientific, and political developments that led to the rise of fascism in Europe and beyond in the 1920 and 1930s, the long reach of historical antisemitism in Europe and the Americas, the systematic dismantling of democratic institutions in Austria and Germany in the 1930s, the popularity of scientific racism and eugenics in Europe and the Americas, the legalization of industrial-scale crimes against humanity in the Third Reich, examples of complicity and resistance, and the ongoing struggle for justice and "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (or "Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung") and Erinnerungskulturen in Austria, a unified Germany (and between 1947 and 1990, the FRG and GDR), Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Italy, and France, and the role of the arts in representing and commemorating the Holocaust and in fighting Holocaust denial.

In this course we will also focus on the diversity of Holocaust victims, including non-Jewish members of the LGBTQIA+ community, Roma and Sinti, the disabled, terminally ill, and neurodivergent, political dissenters, Afro-Germans, and conscientious objectors; we will highlight the many inspiring acts and narratives of resistance by Jewish and non-Jewish victims of persecution; we will study the way the Sho'ah is memorialized in museums, memorials, public art, and commemorative holidays in Austria and Germany; finally, we will look at the way contemporary writers and filmmakers confront the Holocaust via the writing of alternative histories (i.e. *The Plot Against America* and *The Man in the High Castle*) or in highly controversial, because wildly ahistorical or even satirical or humorous, representations (i.e. *Inglorious Basterds*, *Jojo Rabbit*, *The Hunters*).

We will ask difficult and important questions such as: How was it possible for an industrial-size genocide to take place in the middle of Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Is the Holocaust unique among other genocides? Who enabled, facilitated, and exculpated the Holocaust? Who was complicit and why? How are nationalism and antisemitism intertwined? Which role do personal responsibility and civil disobedience play in resistance movements? Which moral dilemmas does personal conviction pose for those who also need to ensure the survival of their loved ones? Whose histories are remembered and whose are forgotten, and why? How do processes of memorialization and amnesia function in the construction of national identities after the Sho'ah? How is memory, collective and individual, represented in the "archive and the repertoire"? How is the Holocaust remembered (and taught) in the public sphere? How vulnerable are democratic institutions to fascist takeover? Do we ever learn from history or are we destined to repeat our mistakes from the past? To what extent can literature and film help us access forgotten or marginalized histories of the Holocaust, especially if public education is failing students, while conspiracy theories and Holocaust deniers thrive? Are literature and films about the Holocaust able to combat the rise of fascist, alt-right, and (neo)Nazi movements in Europe, the United States, and beyond?

We will contextualize our conversations in class within relevant historical debates, practice the art of close reading of literary texts and films, engage relevant critical theories, and apply them to our readings and discussions. I consider you fellow literary, film, and cultural scholars on a shared journey of intellectual inquiry, and expect everyone to come to class prepared, curious, and full of questions.

**Required primary texts (all titles available at the UTEP bookstore):**

Please note that I **require you to use paper copies** of all assigned novels. Ebooks usually do not have page numbers and therefore make focused in-class discussion and documentation of your close readings difficult if not impossible. You do not have to purchase your books at the UTEP bookstore if you can find more affordable copies online or in local bookstores, but please make sure to purchase the assigned edition, so we are literally “on the same page” when we read and discuss the novels in class.

Primo Levi. *Survival in Auschwitz* (Simon & Schuster, 1996). ISBN 9780684826806  
Ruth Klüger. *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (CUNY, 2003). ISBN 1558612718  
Jurek Becker. *Jacob the Liar* (Arcade Press, 2013). ISBN 1611457866  
Martin Sherman. *Bent* (Applause, 2000). ISBN 978-1557833365  
Bernhard Schlink. *The Reader* (Vintage, 1997). ISBN 9780375707971  
Nora Krug. *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*. (Scribner 2019). ISBN 978-1476796635  
Philip Roth. *The Plot Against America*. (Vintage, 2005). ISBN 978-1400079490

NOTE: Texts marked with an asterisk (\*) in the syllabus are additional primary texts such as poems, plays, or short stories, or scholarly articles, available on JSTOR or MLA Ebsco on the UTEP Library website (<https://www-jstor-org.utep.idm.oclc.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>). It is paramount that we, as members of the College of Liberal Arts, frequently use the databases that contain these scholarly articles; if we do not access them, the university will cancel these (expensive) subscriptions, which will make future scholarly research very challenging. I will therefore only post book chapters or other sources not readily available on these databases and will ask you to access the assigned scholarly articles yourselves. This will ensure that we will both keep our subscriptions and that you will hone your research skills.

**Required films** (to be watched in full at home; we will analyze selected clips in class\*\*\*)

*Triumph of the Will*  
*The Pianist*  
*The Counterfeiters*  
*Sophie Scholl - The Final Days*  
*Transit*  
*Django*  
*Never Look Away*  
*A Hidden Life*  
*Lore*  
*Jojo Rabbit*

\*\*\*Note: These assigned films must not be used for the film review assignment.

### **Course Requirements:**

Full disclosure: This is a reading, writing, viewing, and thinking intensive course; it also contains emotionally difficult material that may trigger students who have experienced trauma. Our class is a safe space in which everyone is encouraged to freely express their informed opinion and ask questions in a respectful and sensitive manner; I will not tolerate hate speech of any kind.

Students are expected to do all the required readings before the class in which they are due and bring the discussed text and hardcopies or electronic versions of any assigned secondary sources (articles, reviews, etc.) to class. A fair warning: Be prepared to read between 200-250 pages a week **or** watch up to 2 films per week. If you cannot make a significant time commitment, this may not be the right class for you; however, I promise it will be worth your time.

### **Attendance and participation**

**25%**

Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion (f2f and online) are essential to your success in this course. By active participation I mean coming to each class on time, with your books and notes on the films you watched, as well as printouts or digital copies of additional assigned texts in hand. I expect you to ask concrete questions or offer specific comments about the assigned readings and films, volunteer questions and responses to both me and your classmates in discussion, engage in group work, and be active listeners to my mini-lectures and to your classmates' comments. You can earn up to 100 points over the course of the semester for active and meaningful participation in class discussion and group work.

As part of your participation, you are expected to **submit 2 questions and 2 responses** (to my or your peers' questions) over the course of the semester to the **discussion board** on Blackboard (BB). It is important that you **spread your questions and responses out over four units**, rather than submit all questions and all responses on the same unit. You will be assessed not only based on the quantity but the quality of your contributions to class discussion. This gives you a lot of choice and control over your interests and time management– it also helps us keep up class discussion if we should have to move online.

**Questions:** Your questions need to be posted on BB **by noon on Sunday**, to give you and your peers enough time to read the material before articulating (and potentially responding to) a question. Your questions must be formulated in a concise (**250-300 words**), but thoughtful, way and I expect you to always **incorporate at least one direct citation** from the assigned primary or secondary texts via parenthetical documentation. You can earn up to 100 points for each question.

**Responses/Reflections:** Every Wednesday evening I will post a question on the readings assigned for the following Monday on blackboard (BB). Over the course of the semester, you must respond either to 2 of my questions OR you can choose to respond to 2 of your peers' questions – or one of mine and one of your peers – this is up to you. These responses to or reflections on your peers' or my questions must be submitted online via blackboard **by 8am the following Monday**, so I have time to read your responses prior to our class to have a better understanding of what your readings of these texts are. Like the questions, your responses/reflections need to be articulated in a concise (**250-300 words**) but thoughtful way and I expect you to always incorporate at least one direct citation from the assigned primary or secondary texts via parenthetical documentation. Again, it is important that you **spread these answers out over several units**. You can earn up to 100 points for each response/reflection.

**Note:** You may of course always submit your questions and responses early if you want or need to keep your weekends work-free.

Please do not submit these assignments as an attachment but copy and paste your work in the provided space on BB. The quality and number of these questions and responses/reflections factor into your participation grade, prepare you for class discussion, and encourage a conversation between you and your peers beyond the classroom (which may become even more important if we should have to go online at any given moment in the semester). No late submissions will be accepted - the idea is that you engage with the assigned materials **before** we meet in class.

**Attendance:**

Because we are still in a pandemic, I am aware that students (or your instructor) may fall ill or may have to take care of sick family members during the semester. Every student may **miss four classes** without giving me an explanation and without suffering any repercussions (i.e. I do not need always to know why you were not able to come to class – you are all adults and I trust you make smart decisions). Choose your freebies wisely and plan ahead for your semester; it might be a good idea not to use up all freebies in the first two weeks, since emergencies with health, family, or cars may happen later in the semester. It is your responsibility to catch up on missed work and turn in assignments, such as questions and responses, on time, even and especially after you missed a class. If you fall ill, or if you anticipate any emergencies during any point of the semester that will force you to miss more than 4 classes, make sure to set up an appointment with me as soon as possible, so we can find a workable solution.

**Quizzes:**

**15%**

Because I believe in continuous rather than singular assessment, I will administer 5 short quizzes over the course of the semester instead of one final exam at the end of the semester. Each quiz will ask questions to ensure you have read or viewed and understood the assigned materials for that day. Each quiz can give you up to 60 points. You cannot make up a missed quiz, but I will offer plenty of opportunities for extra credit.

**Film review:**

**20%**

Based on the list of feature films, documentaries, or TV series available on BB, you are asked to write a professional journalistic film review, modeled in style, tone, and length after an existing publication that focuses on cultural production, such as *The Atlantic*, *The Nation*, *The National Review*, or *The New Yorker* – OR write a more academic film review for a journal such as *Cinéaste* (see sample review of *The Pianist*). Do not model your work after a daily newspaper such as *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*, because they tend to be too short (your review needs to have 1000 words or more). **I will provide a list of suggestions and samples in the second week of classes**; note that this assignment requires you to view a film in addition to the ones we discuss in class. In your review you are also asked to connect your film to one of the primary texts on our syllabus in a meaningful way (in 1-2 paragraphs) in terms of theme or aesthetics/form.

The deadline for your review will be the Monday after the last week in which we discuss the primary text to which you connect your film, i.e. if you choose to write a review of the 1975 East German adaptation of *Jacob the Liar*, it would make sense to link the review to Becker's novel, hence your review will be due on Monday, February 27. Or, if for example you choose to review the documentary *Waldheim's Waltz*, or the feature film *Murer*, you could very productively connect them to *The Reader*, hence your due date for the review would be Monday, April 10 (see syllabus). Regardless which option you choose, it is a good idea to use your review as a starting point for your final project to streamline the research process. Feel free to contact me early with ideas!

**Project proposal and annotated bibliography**

**10%**

Your submission consists of one document, made up of two parts: one, a proposal, consisting of 2-3 paragraphs, in which you offer an original tentative thesis on one or more of the assigned texts, and clearly showcase how your essay will contribute to existing scholarly conversations about the text of your choice and literary or cinematic representations of the Holocaust. Ideally, focus on one of the key terms and/or key debates and offer a different and/or dissenting view; and two, an annotated bibliography featuring at least 4 scholarly articles taken from JSTOR and/or MLA/EBSCO only. Only one of these 4 articles may be taken from the syllabus. I will post a sample project proposal and annotated bibliography on BB 2 weeks before the deadline.

Dr. Marion Christina Rohrleitner

Spring 2023

By **Monday, April 24**, I ask you to send me a short, informal email letting me know your primary text(s) and your research question. Your project proposal and annotated bibliography are due as one word.docx attachment on **BB by 6pm on Monday, May 1**. I also ask you to bring 3 hardcopies of your proposal to our last class on Wednesday, May 3, so we can workshop your work with your peers in an effective manner. The purpose of this exercise is to increase accountability and responsibility for your scholarly work and to share your work with and receive feedback from a larger and well-informed public of peers. I strongly encourage you to come by for office hours to discuss your ideas and sources with me prior to submitting your proposal to maximize effectiveness. I will provide constructive feedback by Monday, May 3 to everyone.

### Research Paper

**30%**

Your final project in this class is a research paper on one (or possibly more) of the texts assigned in this class in which you articulate an original argument that engages current theories and debates on the Holocaust. Because this is a junior level class, there will be several students who wish to apply for graduate school in the following year; to do so, they need a writing sample – the work produced in this class can be used as the beginning of such an important document that is evidence of your ability to do independent research, engage current scholarship, and show your familiarity with scholarly writing in our academic discipline.

In your research papers, you will offer a critical intervention in existing scholarly debates on the text, using your close readings and a clearly outlined theoretical and historical framework relevant to the Holocaust. I will share ideas for research projects with you throughout the semester. If it is productive for your thesis, and of interest to you, you are encouraged to connect your essay to current events. Your paper needs to be 2000-2500 words, or 8-10 pages, long (Times New Roman font size 12, double spaced), excluding the works cited list, which forms the last page of your document. More details will be posted on BB 3 weeks before the deadline. The firm deadline for submission, as a word.docx attachment on BB, is **6pm on Monday, May 8**.

**Note:** If you organize yourself in a smart way, you won't leave the bulk of the work until the end of the semester, but consistently submit your questions and responses on BB throughout the semester, submit your film review early, and use your research for the film review for your project proposal to streamline your research process.

### Grade breakdown

Attendance and Participation: 500 points	A= 1800-2000	90-100%
Quizzes: 300 points	B= 1600-1799	80-89.9%
Film review: 400 points	C= 1400-1599	70-79.9%
Project Proposal and Annotated Bib: 200 points	D = 1200-1399	60-69.9%
<u>Research paper: 600 points</u>	<u>F = 0-1199</u>	<u>0-59.9%</u>
Total: 2000 points		

### Students with special needs:

If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will first need to contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) in the East Union Bldg., Room 106, within the first two weeks of classes. The Center for Accommodations and Support Services can be reached in the following ways: Web: <http://www.utep.edu/cass>

E-Mail: [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu)

Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY

Fax: (915) 747-8712

I am happy to make any reasonable accommodations for students with challenges and limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please see me personally before or after class in the first two weeks, or make an appointment, to discuss any special needs you might have so that I may assist you in the best way possible. Thank you.

**Email:**

It is your responsibility to activate your UTEP webmail and blackboard accounts within the first week of classes. It is generally a good idea to check your email once a day; this is even more crucial if we should have to move our class online at any moment during the semester. If you do not have internet access at home, plan and check your blackboard when on campus. Responding to emails sent by your professor in a timely manner (usually within 24 hours during the week and within 72 hours on a weekend) is good professional practice and will be part of your participation grade. When sending me an email, remember to always put a relevant subject in the subject line, to address me in an appropriate way, and to sign your emails with your full name, so I know who you are and in which context you are writing me. This is a professional setting, and I expect everyone to act and write accordingly. Please note that **I do not read or respond to emails on the weekend**. I will also only send emails during the weekend in case of an emergency. Thank you!

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is an offense against academic honesty and any instance of plagiarism will immediately be handed over to the Dean of Students without exception, who will decide on your penalty. Be aware that I take all instances of plagiarism very seriously. Each plagiarized assignment will automatically receive 0 points. I do not accept revisions or late submissions, or assignments that do not meet the minimum length requirement of original work, therefore you will fail each plagiarized assignment. Every time you use someone else's ideas or words in your papers you must reference the source. This is true for both direct quotes and paraphrasing. The same rules that apply to print sources also apply to web-based sources. You may safely assume that if you find a source on the internet, so will I. If you have any questions or uncertainties, contact me well before your paper is due. I also strongly encourage you to consult the following useful website for further information: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/2/>.

**Syllabus\***

Wednesday, January 18	Introduction to the course Course expectations, learning goals, assignments, etc. *Paul Celan. "Todesfuge" ("Death Fugue", 1948)
Monday, January 23	*Clint Smith. "Monuments to the Unthinkable." <i>The Atlantic</i> (Dec 2022) Memorials and memorialization Foundational historical context and terms, fascist symbols and Nazi ideology
Wednesday, August 25	The Weimar Republic and the Rise of the Third Reich <i>Triumph of the Will</i> (Dir. Leni Riefenstahl, 1935) <a href="https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6uajey">https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6uajey</a> Tutorial on <i>How to Read Film</i>
<b>UNIT ONE:</b>	<b>Survival: Survivors' Memoirs and Films based on (auto)biographies</b>
Monday, January 30	<i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> (9-86)
Wednesday, February 1	<i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> (87-173)
Monday, February 6	<i>Still Alive</i> (15-131) Film review connected to <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> due by 6pm
Wednesday, February 8	<i>Still Alive</i> (135-214) *Birgit Maier-Katkin. "Ruth Klüger: Reflections on Auschwitz"

- Monday, February 13 *The Pianist* (Dir. Roman Polanski, 2002; UTEP library and youtube)  
Note: you always need to watch the entire film **before** class.  
\*Leonard Quart. "Review: The Pianist"  
Film review connected to *Still Alive* due by 6pm
- Tuesday, February 14 Last chance to visit the "Let Me Be Myself – The Life Story of Anne Frank"  
exhibition at the El Paso Holocaust Museum
- Wednesday, February 15 Visit by Dr. Sandy Deutsch, Professor emerita of History at UTEP

**UNIT TWO:**

**Fictionalizing Resistance and Survival:  
Autobiographically inspired novels and films**

- Monday, February 20 *Jacob the Liar* (1-125)
- Wednesday, February 22 *Jacob the Liar* (126-244)  
\*Ilona Klein. "Life Is Beautiful, Or Is It?' Asked Jakob the Liar"
- Monday, February 27 *The Counterfeiters* (Dir. Stefan Ruzowitzky; Amazon Prime or youtube)  
Film review connected to *Jacob the Liar* due by 6pm
- Wednesday, March 1 *Sophie Scholl -- The Final Days* (Dir. Marc Rothemund, 2005, youtube)
- Monday, March 6 *Transit* (Dir. Christian Petzold, 2019; Amazon Prime)  
\*Richard Porton. "Lives in Transit: An Interview with Christian Petzold"

**UNIT THREE:**

**The Diversity of Holocaust victims: LGBTQ+, Roma and Sinti, The disabled, political dissenters and conscientious objectors**

- Wednesday, March 8 *Django* (Dir. Étienne Comar, 2018; Amazon)  
\*from Ceija Stojka. *Sogar der Tod hat Angst vor Auschwitz*
- March 13- 19 **Spring Break**
- Monday, March 20 *Bent*  
\*from *The Men With the Pink Triangle*
- Wednesday, March 22 *Action T-4* (youtube)  
*Never Look Away* (Dir. Florian Henkel von Donnersmarck, 2018; Amazon)  
\*from *The Historical Uncanny: Disability, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Holocaust Memory*
- Monday, March 27 *A Hidden Life* (Dir. Terrence Malick, 2019; Amazon)  
\*from *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*  
Film review connected to *Bent* due by 6pm

**UNIT FOUR:**

**Die Nachgeborenen und Vergangenheitsverarbeitung**

- Wednesday, March 29 *The Reader* (Part I: 1-83)  
\*Bill Niven. "Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser* and the Problem of Shame"
- Monday, April 3 *The Reader* (Part II: 87-163)  
\*from *Hitler's Furies*
- Wednesday, April 5 *The Reader* (Part III: 164-end)  
\*Jeffrey Roth. "Reading and Mis-Reading *The Reader*"  
\*Cynthia Ozick. "The Rights of the Imagination and the Rights of History"
- Monday, April 10 *Lore* (Dir. Cate Shortland, 2012; Amazon)  
Film review connected to *The Reader* due by 6pm
- Wednesday, April 12 *Belonging* (Chapters 1-6)
- Monday, April 17 *Belonging* (Chapters 7-15)  
\*from Susan Neiman *Learning from the Germans*

**UNIT FIVE:**

**"Alternative Histories"**

Wednesday, April 19

*The Plot Against America* (1-121)

Monday, April 24

*The Plot Against America* (122-236)

Film review connected to *Belonging* due by 6pm

Informal email about final project

Wednesday, April 26

*The Plot Against America* (237-362)

\*Dan Shiffman. "The Plot Against America and History Post-9/11"

Monday, May 1

*Jojo Rabbit* (Dir. Taika Waititi, 2019; Amazon)

\*Elie Wiesel. "Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory"

Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography are due by 6pm.

Film review connected to *The Plot Against America* due by 6pm

Wednesday, May 3

Workshopping Project Proposals and Annotated Bibliography  
Review

Friday, May 5

Dead Day

Monday, May 8

Final papers due as a word.docx attachment on BB by 6pm (hard deadline)

Wednesday, May 17

Grades are posted

- Fin -

**\*Syllabus is subject to change, depending on changing circumstances.**