

**Holocaust and Post-Holocaust Literature and Film**  
**ENGL 3328/CRN 25795**  
**M/W 10.30-11.50am**  
**Hudspeth Hall 300**

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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 predominantly European, North American, and Israeli authors and filmmakers who engage with the Holocaust and its aftermath in their work. They either write from their first-hand experience as survivors, as "Nachgeborene" or "Spätgeborene" in search of truth and justice, or as our contemporaries who are concerned with the rise of fascist rhetoric and policies in our own historical moment. The primary texts assigned in this course were published between 1947 and 2018; the films were released between 1935 and 2023.

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 legal foundation for industrial-scale crimes against humanity in the Third Reich, examples of complicity and resistance by Jewish and non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust, and the ongoing struggle for justice and "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" or "Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung" (confronting and working through the past) and Erinnerungskulturen (cultures of memory) in Austria, a unified Germany (and between 1949 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 and the rise of neo-fascism.

In this course we will also address the diversity of Holocaust victims, including non-Jewish members of the LGBTQIA+ community, Roma and Sinti, Afro-Germans, the disabled, neurodivergent, and those suffering from hereditary diseases, political dissenters, and conscientious objectors; we will highlight the many inspiring acts 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, Germany, Israel, and the United States; finally, we will look at the way contemporary writers and filmmakers treat 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, satirical, or even humorous, representations (i.e. *Inglorious Basterds*).

We will ask difficult 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 roles 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? Can literature and films 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. I foster curiosity and encourage an open and informed discussion, but I will not tolerate hate speech of any kind.

**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. For some texts I have a few extra copies available if you wish to borrow them from me in case you are facing financial hardship.

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 or secondary texts, such as 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 of 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*

*Adam Resurrected*

*Django*

*Never Look Away*

*A Hidden Life*

*Lore*

*Jojo Rabbit or Inglorious Bastards*

*Zone of Interest* (I hope this film will screen in a local theatre, in which case we will attend as a class)

\*\*\*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. Students are expected to do all the required readings before the class in which they are due and bring the discussed text and paper copies 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.

#### 1. 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.

**Responses:** Every Wednesday afternoon I will post a question on the texts or films 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 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 thoughts on these texts are. Like the questions, your responses 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, so you actively engage with each unit. You can earn up to 100 points for each successful and complete response.

**Questions:** Your questions on the texts or films assigned for Monday need to be posted on BB **by noon on Sunday**, to give your peers enough time to read and think about your question before articulating a response. 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.

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 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.

**Note:** You may of course always submit your questions and responses early if you want or need to keep your weekends work-free. Responses and questions must not be submitted retroactively and are always due before we discuss the assigned section on which you articulate your question.

**Attendance:**

I am aware that students (or your instructor) may fall ill, may have to take care of sick family members, or have obligations outside of school during the semester. Every student may **miss three classes** without giving me an explanation and without suffering any repercussions (i.e. I do not need to know why you were not able to come to class – you are all adults and I trust you make smart decisions). Be sure to 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 three 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 3 classes, make sure to set up an appointment with me as soon as possible, so we can find a workable solution.

**2. 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 a midterm and a 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 from the previous unit. Each quiz can give you up to 60 points. You cannot make up a missed quiz, but I will offer opportunities for extra credit.

**3. 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*. 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 third week of classes**; note that this assignment requires you to view a film in addition to the ones we discuss in class; you must not review a film that is already on the syllabus. 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 Friday of the last week in which we discuss the primary text to which you connect your film. 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 your ideas!

**4. Project proposal and annotated bibliography**

**10%**

Your submission consists of two parts, to be submitted as one document:

first, a project proposal, consisting of 2-3 paragraphs and a creative title, 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 an innovative, different and/or dissenting view; second, 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 3 weeks before the deadline.

By 6pm on **Wednesday, 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 Tuesday, April 30**. I also ask you to bring 2-3 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.

## 5. Research Paper

30%

Your final project in this class is a research paper on one (or possibly more) of the primary texts and films assigned in this class in which you articulate an original argument that engages current theories and debates of literary and cinematographic representations of 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. The body of your paper needs to be double-spaced throughout and use Times New Roman font size 12, and feature 2000-2500 words, excluding the works cited list that forms the last page of your document. More details will be posted on BB about 3 weeks before the deadline. The firm deadline, as a word.docx attachment on BB, is **6pm on Wednesday, 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

Quizzes: 300 points

Film review: 400 points

Project Proposal and Annotated Bib: 200 points

Research paper: 600 points

Total: 2000 points

A= 1800-2000 (90-100%)

B= 1600-1799 (80-89.9%)

C= 1400-1599 (70-79.9%)

D = 1200-1399 (60-69.9%)

F = 0-1199 (0-59.9%)

### Accommodations policy:

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. 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. Students who become pregnant may also request reasonable accommodations, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and University policy. Accommodations that constitute undue hardship are not reasonable. To make a request, please register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS).

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, pregnancy, etc. Please see me 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.

### Title IX:

Please note that accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and University policy I am obligated to report any instance of sexual harassment or abuse to the university's title IX office. If you experience or witness such an event and choose to confide in me I am by law not allowed to keep the information confidential.

### **Scholastic Integrity and Plagiarism:**

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOOP). It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

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. 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/>.

### **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

The use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as [ChatGPT](#) or [DALL-E](#), is **not allowed** for assignments in this class. Each student is expected to use critical and creative thinking skills to complete tasks and not rely on computer-generated ideas. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

### **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) is good professional practice and will be part of your participation grade. When sending 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!

### **Extra Credit:**

Students may submit up to three extra credit assignments on BB. Each assignment can earn a maximum of 20 points and needs to be submitted on BB up to a week after the relevant event (i.e. lecture, film screening, gallery opening, etc.) took place. I will offer a plethora of opportunities for extra credit over the course of the semester, both on and off campus.

## Syllabus<sup>1</sup>

Monday, January 22	Introduction to the course Course expectations, learning goals, assignments, syllabus, etc. *Paul Celan. "Todesfuge" (Death Fugue, 1948) *Cynthia Ozick. "The Shawl" (1980)
Wednesday, January 24	Foundational historical context, fascist terms, and symbols The Weimar Republic and the Rise of the Third Reich Memorials and Memorialization *Clint Smith. "Monuments to the Unthinkable." <i>The Atlantic</i> (Dec 2022)
Monday, January 29	How to Read a Film: Basic terms and concepts for analyzing film <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>
<b>UNIT ONE:</b>	<b>Survivors' memoirs and films based on autobiographies</b>
Wednesday, January 31	<i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> (9-86)
Monday, February 5	<i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> (87-173)
Wednesday, February 7	<i>Still Alive</i> (Part I)
Monday, February 12	<i>Still Alive</i> (Part II)
Wednesday, February 14	<i>Still Alive</i> (Parts III and IV) *Birgit Maier-Katkin. "Ruth Klüger: Reflections on Auschwitz"
Monday, February 19	<i>The Pianist</i> (Dir. Roman Polanski, 2002; free on youtube) Note: you always need to watch the entire film <b>before</b> the class we discuss it
<b>UNIT TWO:</b>	<b>Fictionalizing survival: Autobiographically inspired novels and films</b>
Wednesday, February 21	<i>The Counterfeiters</i> (Dir. Stefan Ruzowitzky; 2019 Amazon Prime or youtube)
Monday, February 26	Visit by Dr. Sandy Deutsch, Professor Emerita of History at UTEP Quiz #1
Wednesday, February 28	<i>Jacob the Liar</i> (1-135)
Monday, March 4	<i>Jacob the Liar</i> (136-244) *Ilona Klein. "'Life Is Beautiful, Or Is It?' Asked Jakob the Liar"
Wednesday, March 6	<i>Adam Resurrected</i> (Dir. Paul Schrader, 2008)
<b>March 11-17</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
<b>UNIT THREE:</b>	<b>The Diversity of Holocaust victims</b>
Monday, March 18	<i>Bent</i> *from <i>The Men With the Pink Triangle</i> *from <i>The Historical Uncanny: Disability, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Holocaust Memory</i> Quiz #2
Wednesday, March 20	<i>Django</i> (Dir. Étienne Comar, 2018; Amazon) *from Ceija Stojka. <i>Sogar der Tod hat Angst vor Auschwitz</i>

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<sup>1</sup> The Syllabus is subject to change, depending on shifting circumstances.

Monday, March 25	Eugenics, Euthanasia, and Sterilization: The T4 Program <i>Never Look Away</i> (Dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2018; Amazon) *Margaret Talbot. "Behind a Locked Door." <i>The New Yorker</i>
Wednesday, March 27	<i>A Hidden Life</i> (Dir. Terrence Malick, 2019; Amazon) *from <i>A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis</i>
<b>UNIT FOUR:</b>	<b>Die Nachgeborenen and Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung</b>
Monday, April 1	<i>The Reader</i> (Part I: 1-83) *Bill Niven. "Bernhard Schlink's <i>Der Vorleser</i> and the Problem of Shame" Quiz #3
Wednesday, April 3	<i>The Reader</i> (Part II: 87-163) *from <i>Hitler's Furies</i>
Monday, April 8	<i>The Reader</i> (Part III: 164-) *Cynthia Ozick. "The Rights of the Imagination and the Rights of History" *Jeffrey Roth. "Reading and Mis-Reading <i>The Reader</i> "
Wednesday, April 10	<i>Lore</i> (Dir. Cate Shortland, 2012; Amazon)
Monday, April 15	<i>Belonging</i> *"Prologue" and "On the Use and Abuse of Historical Comparison" from <i>Learning from the Germans</i>
<b>UNIT FIVE:</b>	<b>"Alternative Histories"</b>
Wednesday, April 17	<i>The Plot Against America</i> (1-121)
Monday, April 22	<i>The Plot Against America</i> (122-236) Quiz #4
Wednesday, April 24	<i>The Plot Against America</i> (237-362) *Dan Shiffman. "The Plot Against America and History Post-9/11" Zoom: Guest lecture by Dr. Ezra Cappell (College of Charleston) Email final project: primary text and tentative thesis
Monday, April 29	<i>Jojo Rabbit</i> *Elie Wiesel. "Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory" Quiz #5
Tuesday, April 30	Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography are due by 6pm.
Wednesday, May 1	Review Workshopping Project Proposals and Annotated Bibliography
Friday, May 3	Dead Day
Wednesday, May 8	Final Papers are due as word.docx on BB by 6pm
Wednesday, May 15	Grades are due