



## Representing the Holocaust

Fall 2019 | GERM2203 FILM2253

Instructor Dr. Nick Block  
Time M W F 10-11 pm  
Room Devlin Hall 112

### Contact Information

E-Mail [blockni@bc.edu](mailto:blockni@bc.edu)  
Office Lyons Hall 201A  
Office Hours: M 3-4, F 11-12 by appt thru  
[nickblock.com/officehours/](http://nickblock.com/officehours/)  
Instructor's Website: [nickblock.com](http://nickblock.com)

### Course description

This course examines representations of the Holocaust from different national contexts around the world. Ghetto diaries, first-hand testimony, and second-generation efforts to piece together the trauma of the past shape the research complex

known as Holocaust studies. Students will engage with a wide range of representational forms, centering on cinema, literature, and memorials. Films include the French *Shoah*, the American *Schindler's List*, the East German *The Murderers are Among Us*. Literature includes the American comic *Maus*, the Italian *Survival in Auschwitz*, and the Yiddish *Night*. Class time will also introduce historical debates around the Holocaust, including discussions of intentionalism vs. functionalism, women as perpetrators and victims, and genocidal comparisons. There will be a field excursion to Boston's local Holocaust monument.

### Required Materials

- Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*. Touchstone, 1996. **ISBN 9780684826806**
- Elie Wiesel, *Night*. Hill and Wang, 2006. **ISBN 9780374500016**
- Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale, My Father Bleeds History*, Vol. I. (you might consider buying the combined vols. I & II. But we will only discuss the first in class.) **ISBN 9780394747231**
- Aharon Appelfeld, *Badenheim 1939*. David R Godine, 1980. **ISBN 9781567923919**
- BUY A STAPLER (to turn in papers)
- **All other readings will be made available at Canvas to print out and bring to class.**

## Links

Canvas for readings, PowerPoints, grading rubrics:  
Instructor's Website for assignment calendar:

<https://bc.edu/lms>  
<https://nickblock.com/>

## Grade

Participation	10%
In-Class Comprehension Quizzes	10%
Midterm	15%
4 critical response papers (1-2 pages)	20%
3 Essays (3-4 pages)	45%

## ✓ Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for this course are goals for humanities courses more broadly speaking. Students will:

1. Gain an historical frame of reference for events during World War II as it pertains to the Holocaust genocide.
2. Read complex texts actively: recognize key passages; raise questions; appreciate complexity and ambiguity; comprehend the literal and figurative uses of language.
3. Appreciate form: recognize how literary and film form and structure shape meaning; appreciate how genre generates expectations and shapes meanings.
4. Enjoy the experience of reading challenging literature: appreciate literature's ability to elicit feeling, cultivate the imagination, and call us to account as humans.
5. Critically interpret a range of cinematic visual styles, narrative conventions, and generic trends and clearly express those interpretations orally and in writing.
6. Practice writing as a process of motivated inquiry, engaging other writers' ideas through the use of quotations, paraphrase, allusions and summary. Use sources well and cite them correctly.

Using the Carnegie national standardization guidelines for homework vs. credit hours (see <http://www.bc.edu/offices/avp/Credit-HourCompliance.html>), homework for this 3-credit class = avg. 6 hours a week. Students can expect to read 75-100 pages per week: 25-35 pages between classes.

Be aware that neo-fascists and Holocaust deniers are very present online. When you browse for terms related to Nazism and the Holocaust via search engines, check the information carefully and critically. Dubious websites are often disguised as respectable academic ones (e.g., David Irving's website [www.ihr.org/](http://www.ihr.org/); notorious also is "the world's largest website of historical revisionism" [www.vho.org/](http://www.vho.org/)). Make sure to verify a site before using it for your work.

## Participation

Readings brought to class: **4 Points will be deducted** from the participation grade for each time a student does not bring the reading to class printed on paper. An electronic version of the reading is not a substitute for the book.

### **Field Excursion – New England Holocaust Memorial**

Students will participate in an individual field excursion to the New England Holocaust Memorial, located in downtown Boston at 98 Union St, Boston, MA 02129. The train on the green line is an hour-long ride. As the assignment states, you must take a picture of the memorial, which you will add to your 2-page response. Likely, you will choose to do a reading of the image you took to best explain the affective work of the memorial.

### **Electronic Policy**

The preferred way to address me in an e-mail is "Dear Prof. Block,". I will try to answer all e-mails within 24 hours of receipt during the workweek (Monday 9am – Friday 5pm). Students may utilize laptops, tablets, smartphones in class during discussion, in the hope that students are using such a device to inquire about pertinent information regarding an author or film, for example. Obviously, checking e-mail or social media will negatively affect your participation grade.

### **Attendance**

You are allowed a maximum of 3 absences during the semester without penalty. Beginning **with the fourth absence, a penalty of -1% will be levied on the final semester grade** for each class missed. **Being late to class three times counts as one absence.** Keep your instructor informed if you miss any classes or assignments. Extended illnesses and family emergencies will be treated as exceptions and handled on a case-by-case basis.

### **Academic Integrity**

The pursuit of knowledge can proceed only when scholars take responsibility and receive credit for their work. Presentation of others' work as one's own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but it also undermines the educational process. Please read Boston College's policy on academic integrity, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion:

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html>

## Key to Syllabus

📖 Primary Literature (read as homework)

★ Secondary material to be covered in class (Students will be responsible for citing the material on exams. If citing in essays, students should cite more precisely with author and page number. On exams, the information should be recalled and recited, but it is not necessary to remember authors' names.)

✍️ 1-2 page critical response (write)

📄 3-4 page essay (write)

🗣️ Guest Lecturer (listen, speak)

🎬 Movie

### Week                      Assignments are due on the date to the left.

1	Aug. 26	<b>Introduction, Writing Poetry after Auschwitz</b> ★ Celan – “Death Fuge”
	Aug. 28	📖 “How to Read a Poem,” Judith Ryan, in <i>A User’s Guide to German Cultural Studies</i> , 452-455 [3 pages] ★ Martin Niemöller, “First they came” 📖 USHMM, “History of the Holocaust: An Overview” [9 pages – all readings must be printed out and brought to class] 📖 Primo Levi - <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> [187 pages]
	Aug. 30	📖 USHMM, “Chronology of the Holocaust” [15 pages] 📖 Primo Levi - <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i>
2	Sept. 2	🕒 <b>Labor Day – No Class</b> 📖 Primo Levi - <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i>
	Sept. 4	📖 Primo Levi - <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i>
	Sept. 6	📖 Primo Levi - <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i>

Instructor’s Website for assignment calendar:

<https://nickblock.com/>

- 3     Sept. 9     **Testimony as Representation**  
 📖 Giorgio Agamben – “Witness” in *Remnants of Auschwitz* [25 pages]  
 🎬 Holocaust testimony. <https://sfi.usc.edu/video-topics>  
 Watch 30 minutes of clips among Holocaust testimony.  
 ✍️ 1-2 page critical response on testimonial clips. Read how to write a reading/film response in rubric at Canvas. Think thematically rather than topically to write your response. What is striking about what they choose to talk about? What is their demeanor while talking? How do they differ from each other?
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- Sept. 11     Quiz: Chronology of the Holocaust  
 📖 “How to View a Film,” Gerd Gemünden, in *A User’s Guide to German Cultural Studies*, 458-460 [2 pages]  
 🎬 *Shoah* (France, 1985) [Excerpts: Disc 1, first 14 min., 00:42-1:30, 2:05-2:34 (end); Disc 2, 59:15-1:19, 1:42-1:53]
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- Sept. 13     📖 Berel Lang, “Holocaust Genres and the Turn to History.” *The Holocaust and the Text: Speaking the Unspeakable*. Ed. Andrew Leak and George Paizis. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000. 17-31. [14 pages]  
 ✨ “Site and Speech.” An Interview with Claude Lanzmann about Shoah (1985)  
 ✨ Bathrick, “Teaching Visual Culture and the Holocaust”
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- 4     Sept. 16     📖 Elie Wiesel – *Night* [120 pages]  
 🎬 *Theresienstadt: The Führer gives a City to the Jews* (Nazi Germany, 1944)
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- Sept. 18     📖 Elie Wiesel – *Night*  
 Sept. 20     📖 Elie Wiesel – *Night*  
 ✨ Benjamin Wilkomirski, *Fragments*;
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- 5     Sept. 23     📖 Elie Wiesel – *Night*  
 ✨ Naomi Seidman – *Faithful Renderings*
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- Sept. 25     📖 Elie Wiesel – *Night*  
 Sept. 27     **Holocaust Memorials and Museums**  
 📖 “How to View a Building,” Scott Denham & Irene Kacandes, in *A User’s Guide to German Cultural Studies*, 456-457 [2 pages]  
 📖 Giorgio Bassani – “A Plaque on Via Mazzini” [25 pages]  
 ✨ 🎬 *Peter Eisenman: Building Germany’s Holocaust Memorial* (USA, 2005) (available on Kanopy)  
 📄 Essay on literary representations of the Holocaust: Elie Wiesel’s *Night* or Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz*.
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- 6     Sept. 30     🕒 **Rosh Hashanah—no class**
- Jewish Critique of Holocaust Memorialization**  
 📖 Esther Dischereit – *Before the High Holy Days the House Was Full of Whisperings and Rustlings* [60 pages] <http://www.eichengruen-platz.de/>
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- Oct. 2     📖 Esther Dischereit – *Before the High Holy Days the House Was Full of Whisperings and Rustlings* [60 pages] <http://www.eichengruen-platz.de/>  
 ✨ Eugen Gomringer, “Silence”

	Oct. 4	<p>📖 "How to View a Performance," Heidi Gilpin, in <i>A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies</i>, 469-473 [3 pages]</p> <p>📺 Entweder Broder, "Happy Holocaust" (0:00 – 9:13)</p> <p>📌 Young, <i>The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning</i></p>
7	Oct. 7	<p><b>Field Excursion – New England Holocaust Memorial</b></p> <p>📌 Take a picture of the memorial and write a 2-page critical response of the affective work the memorial does, plus the picture that YOU took (not one off the Internet). [Due next class]</p>
	<del>Oct. 9</del>	🚫 Yom Kippur—no class
	Oct. 11	<p><b>Midterm</b></p> <p>📌 2-page critical response on memorial due.</p>
8	<del>Oct. 14</del>	🚫 Fall Break—no class
	Oct. 18	<p><b>Representing the Holocaust in the United States</b></p> <p>📺 <i>Schindler's List</i> (USA, 1993)</p> <p>📌 Claude Lanzmann, "Why Spielberg has Distorted the Truth" (1994)</p> <p>📌 Hansen, "<i>Schindler's List</i> Is Not <i>Shoah</i>: Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory"</p>
	Sept. 6	📖 Spiegelman – <i>Maus</i> I [159 pages]
9	<del>Oct. 21</del>	🚫 Sukkot—no class
		📖 Spiegelman – <i>Maus</i> I
	Oct. 23	<p>📖 Spiegelman – <i>Maus</i> I</p> <p>📌 1-2 page critical response</p>
	Oct. 25	<p><b>Representing the Catholic Church</b></p> <p>📺 <i>Amen</i> (USA, 2002)</p> <p>📖 Rebuttal to <i>Amen</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/history/800-000-saved-by-pius-xiis-silence.html">http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/history/800-000-saved-by-pius-xiis-silence.html</a></p> <p>👤 Prof. Michalczyk, Boston College Prof. of Art, Art History and Film</p>
10	Oct. 28	📖 Aharon Appelfeld – <i>Bertha</i> [12 pages], <i>Kitty</i> [10 pages]
	Oct. 30	<p><b>Representing the Holocaust in the Eastern Bloc</b></p> <p>📺 <i>The Murderers are Among Us</i> (German Soviet Zone, 1946)</p>
	Nov. 1	<p>📖 Hannah Arendt – <i>The Banality of Evil</i> [336 pages, excerpts]</p> <p>📌 Essay 2 on memorialization representations of the Holocaust</p>
11	Nov. 4	📺 <i>Come and See</i> (Soviet Union, 1985)
	Nov. 6	<p><b>Generational and Israeli Representation</b></p> <p>📖 Aharon Appelfeld, <i>Badenheim 1939</i> [144 pages]</p>

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- Nov. 8     📖 Aharon Appelfeld, *Badenheim 1939*
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- 12     Nov. 11     📖 Aharon Appelfeld, *Badenheim 1939*  
 Nov. 13     📖 Aharon Appelfeld, *Badenheim 1939*  
                ✍ 1-2 page critical response
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- Nov. 15     🎬 *The Great Promise* (British Palestine, 1947)
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- 13     **Nov. 18**
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- Nov. 20     📖 Yehuda Amichai – “My Father’s Deaths” [9 pages]  
                📖 Suleiman, “The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors of the Holocaust” [15 pages]
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- Nov. 22**     🎬 📖 *The Great Dictator* (USA, 1940)
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- 14     Nov. 25     🎬 *The Flat* (Israel, 2011)  
                📌 McGlothlin, “Introduction: Rupture and Repair: Marking the Legacy of the Second Generation” from *Second-Generation Holocaust Literature: Legacies of Survival and Perpetration*  
                ✍ First page of Final Essay due
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- ~~Nov. 27~~     ⚠ **Thanksgiving – No Class**
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- ~~Nov. 29~~     ⚠ **Thanksgiving – No Class**
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- 15     Dec. 2     📖 Leonard Tushnet – “The Ban” [4 pages]  
                📖 S. L. Wisenberg – “Liberator,” “My Mother’s War” [13 pages]  
                📖 Weigel, “‘Generation’ as a Symbolic Form: On the Genealogical Discourse of Memory since 1945” [11 pages]
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- Dec. 4     **Historiography: Is the Holocaust Unique?**  
                📖 “How to Read History,” Omar Bartov, in *A User’s Guide to German Cultural Studies*, 477-478  
                📖 Steven Katz, “The Uniqueness of the Holocaust: The Historical Dimension,” in *Is the Holocaust Unique?*, p. 19-38 [17 pages]  
                📖 David Stannard, “Uniqueness as Denial: The Politics of Genocide Scholarship,” in *Is the Holocaust Unique?*, p. 169-171, 186-199 [excerpt 17 pages]
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- Dec. 6     **Historiography: Women in the Holocaust**  
                📖 Lenore Weitzman “Living on the Aryan Side in Poland: Gender, Passing, and the Nature of Resistance,” in *Women in the Holocaust*, p. 187-222 [32 pages]  
                📌 Historikerinnenstreit; *Diary of Anne Frank*
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- 16     Dec. 9     📌 Last Day. Course Synthesis.
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Saturday, Dec. 14, 📌 Essay 3 on cinematic representations of the Holocaust: discuss the cinematic representations as representing a national narrative in regard to the Holocaust. Essay and makeup work due by 2:30pm.