

PL456, HS461: The Holocaust: A Moral History

Prof. James Bernauer, S.J.

Purpose:

The purpose of this course is to explore the issues of good and evil and how human beings succeed or fail to meet the challenge such issues pose. The Holocaust, the tragic series of events which ruptured modern western morality, will be examined from a variety of perspectives (literary, cinematic, philosophical, theological, and political). We shall study the testimony of both its victims and its perpetrators. The special emphasis of the course will be devoted to a consideration of the intellectual and moral factors which motivated resistance or excused indifference. This consideration will be performed by a cooperative investigation into the ethical life-histories of people from this period. What part of themselves did they think of as primarily concerned with moral conduct? What form of obligation did they think of as specifically ethical? To what training did they commit themselves in order to develop as ethical beings? Why did they desire to be moral or why did they find it untroubling to be immoral/amoral? We shall conclude the course with an interpretation of the Holocaust for contemporary morality and of its theological significance for Christians and Jews.

Requirements:

The first major requirement of the course will be one's work in a cooperative imaginative analysis of the ethical-spiritual viewpoint of selected figures from among those who have been honored as "righteous of the nations." Figures will be assigned near the beginning of the semester and the materials for the investigations identified. These analyses will be submitted as a 10 page paper no later than Thursday, April 23rd. The second requirement is made up of five quizzes on the course readings (Feb. 3 and 26; March 17 and 26; April 7). Each of the quizzes on Friedlander's volumes will count for double credit. Third requirement: attendance at all classes is expected but, if an absence is necessary, Ms. Simpson should be informed before or immediately after. The student will abide by strict interpretation of academic integrity. Any questions on this should be addressed to the faculty member. The Dean has articulated a helpful overview: he "encourages students to read the section on our academic integrity policy. (See <http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/services/students> and then go to section on Academic Integrity.) Students should also be informed that suspected cases of academic integrity violations will be reported to the class dean and be investigated by the Academic Integrity Committee."

Required Texts

Friedlander, Saul. Nazi Germany and the Jews, volume 1: The Years of Persecution.

Friedlander, Saul. Nazi Germany and the Jews, volume 2: The Years of Extermination.

Mayer, Milton. They Thought They Were Free.

Browning, Christopher. Ordinary Men.

Lanzmann, Claude. Shoah.

Sereny, Gitta. Into That Darkness.

Baehr, Peter (ed) The Portable Hannah Arendt.

Course Outline

1. Jan. 15: Introduction.
2. Jan. 20: The Years of Persecution
3. Jan. 22: The Years of Persecution
4. Jan. 27: The Years of Persecution
5. Jan. 29: The Years of Persecution
6. Feb. 3: The Years of Persecution & Quiz 1
7. Feb. 5: The Years of Extermination
8. Feb. 10: The Years of Extermination
9. Feb. 12: The Years of Extermination
10. Feb. 17: The Years of Extermination
11. Feb. 19: The Years of Extermination
12. Feb. 24: The Years of Extermination
13. Feb. 26: The Years of Extermination & Quiz 2.

March 2-6: Spring Vacation

14. March 10: They Thought They Were Free (selections)
15. March 12: They Thought They Were Free (selections)
16. March 17: They Thought They Were Free (selections) & Quiz 3.
17. March 19: Ordinary Men
18. March 24: Ordinary Men
19. March 26: Ordinary Men & Quiz 4.
20. March 31: Into That Darkness
21. April 2: Into That Darkness
22. April 7: Into That Darkness & Quiz 5

April 9: No class: Passover & Holy Thursday

23. April 14: The Portable Hannah Arendt (selections)
24. April 16: The Portable Hannah Arendt (selections)
25. April 21: **Holocaust Remembrance Day** (special speaker)
26. April 23: The Portable Hannah Arendt (papers are due)
27. April 28: Final Perspectives.
28. April 30: Final Perspectives

RESERVE LIST:

- Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Poland (2 volumes)
Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Belgium
Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: France
Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Netherlands (2 volumes)
Dawidowicz, Lucy. A Holocaust Reader. (2 copies)
Oliner, Sam and Pearl, The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Germany.
Oliner, P. Saving the Forsaken: Religious Culture and the Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe.
Hamerow, T. On the Road to the Wolf's Lair: German Resistance to Hitler.
Marrus, M. Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust: Selected Articles.
Tec, Nechama. When Light Pierced the Darkness.