

Memory, Trauma, and the Holocaust
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and
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(Head, USF Libraries Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center)

SPC 6934, Summer 2011

Room: CIS 3057

Time and Dates: May 9-13, and June 19, 2011; 10-5 each day

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Course Description:

This class focuses on the Holocaust, an extraordinary, senseless, tragic, and large-scale experience of suffering that is outside the bounds of “normal,” one that is in so many ways “unspeakable,” and even “unthinkable.” “Memory, Trauma, and the Holocaust” will explore the Holocaust through history, oral history and personal testimony. We will concentrate on the personal testimony of survivors: ways it can be gathered, its role in understanding and coping with traumatic experiences, its relationship to memory and evidence, and how the passage of time and life experiences affect storytelling and how storytelling affects life experiences. We will try to address the “so what” question of “why gather testimonies at all.” Students will engage relevant scholarship on memory, trauma, and narrative; view Holocaust documentaries; examine recorded survivor testimonies; and interact with local survivors.

We now live in the last era in which we can interact with first-hand witnesses of the Holocaust and document their lives and memories. Now in their seventies, eighties, and nineties, these survivors have lived with memories of trauma for more than six decades. Experientially, they can be thought of as experts on long-term coping with trauma. We have a unique opportunity to work with the USF Libraries Holocaust and Genocide Center to listen to recently recorded testimonies of survivors in the Tampa Bay area, view testimonies given by many of the same survivors in the 1990s in the USC Shoah Visual History Archive interviews, and interact with some of the local survivors who will tell their stories in our class. We also will take a tour of the Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg, guided by Carolyn Bass, an expert docent and director of the Museum.

Prior courses in the Holocaust are not required, though students will be expected to complete Doris Bergen’s *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* before the class begins.

The major course assignment will consist of analyzing two recorded interviews of a single survivor over a fifteen to twenty year period, comparing those testimonies to an interview conducted in 1946, and writing a paper from the testimonies and other scholarly sources on memory, narrative, and trauma in historical context.

We predict this will be an incredible and, for many of you, life changing experience. We promise to guide you the best we can through all aspects of the class. This material is emotionally difficult. You will see images and hear stories you didn't think possible and that you will never forget. You need to be willing to handle this kind of experience. We feel there is much to be gained from grappling with the messy realities of the dark side of the human condition, but you must decide if you feel the same way. We also feel it is our responsibility as a civilized culture to preserve testimonies of these atrocious events and how people have coped and lived. We also feel it is necessary to try to understand in the best ways we can what happened in the Holocaust so that we can do our part to prevent this kind of tragedy from happening again, and so we can, in our daily lives, stand up against what we believe to be morally wrong. We are honored to be a part of this process. The requirements—indeed just being in class—will be time consuming and energy draining. We may shed tears in this class. How could we not? But we also expect that we will build a compassionate community that is sensitive to each other's feelings, needs, loss experiences, life trials, and pain experienced in response to the suffering of others, and that the class will provide collective intellectual discussions and emotional support.

Even with this content, this class will not be all gloom and doom. We expect one of the outcomes to be that we become more aware of the importance of living as well and fully as possible in our day-to-day lives, which can be enhanced by reflecting on the past and future, viewing and analyzing our lives in relation to the lives of others and in the context of the larger world in which we live. To live fully requires us to acknowledge, yet not be overwhelmed by, the presence of death, loss, and disruption. To live fully requires hope, commitment, and engagement. Additionally, we think this kind of investigation can make us better human beings, able to empathize with others' suffering and perhaps better understand our own. We also hope that you will leave this class with a sense of history, oral history, personal narrative, testimony, and all the issues (ethical and methodological) in working with survivors to tell their stories.

Required Reading:

Doris Bergen (2009). *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*. Rowman & Littlefield. (Hard copy is called *The Holocaust: A Concise History*.) Whichever you buy, make sure it is the 2009 edition in hardback or paperback. Available at the USF Bookstore or online at Amazon.com.

All other required readings will be on Blackboard in the “Content Collection” tab for the course.

Suggested Readings (for a later time):

- Appleman-Jurman, Alicia (1989). *Alicia: My Story*. Bantam.
- Frankl, Viktor. (1959). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Levi, Primo (2008). *Survival in Auschwitz*, Classic House Books or Touchstone Reprint edition (September 1, 1995), (Also printed as *If This Is a Man*.)

- Levi, Primo (1989). *The Drowned and the Saved*. Vintage.
- Wiesel, Elie. (1982). *Night*. Bantam.

Course Opportunities:

A. Presentation and Participation: This course depends on active participation in class discussions, presentations, and activities. Therefore, you must be able to attend all classes (unless other arrangements are made and approved in advance), keep up with the readings, and come to class prepared to discuss what you have read, heard, and viewed. Please bring the readings to class each day. We will ask each of you to take the lead with us on two readings during the week. That means reading the selection thoroughly and coming to class prepared to take a leadership role in the class discussion of that reading that day. We will, of course, assume that everyone in class has read and thought about the assignments. This will be an intense week. We will be in class add day and you will have (limited) reading assignments each night. Please arrange your personal schedules accordingly.

You will present your final papers to the class on June 19th. Please limit your presentation to 20-25 minutes with an additional 10-15 minutes for discussion. It is your responsibility to time yourself accordingly. If you speak for the full 35 minutes, then you will not have time for critical commentary and discussion.

B. Class Project: Your class project is due **July 1st**. Your final papers should be 20-25 typed pages (12 font, 1” margins), fully referenced in a consistent style. For this project, you will select a local survivor whose interviews appear in both the Shoah Visual History Archive and the USF Libraries Oral History Program digital collections. We will give you a list of possible interviewees. You will watch both interviews carefully. Then you will do the following:

1. Write a brief summary of the main events in this survivor’s story.
2. Discuss briefly the emotionality and storytelling/narrative approach of the survivor.
3. Analyze how the content of the story changes and stays the same between the two interviews. Does the survivor emphasize the same events? Different ones? Do the same things that seemed important in the Shoah interview continue to be important in the more recent interview? Do the same stories make the survivor emotional? Does the emotionality and narrative style stay the same or change over the two testimonies? In what ways?
4. Discuss and compare the approach of the interviewers. Describe the context and style. What kinds of questions are asked, why, and to what effect? Does she or he guide the interviewee, ask many questions, follow up, and so on? What impact do you think the interviewer’s demeanor and approach have on the content of the interview? On the emotionality of the interviewee? On the narrative style and story that gets told? Give examples. What might you say about the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee? To what degree is the interviewer seeking factual detail, narrative coherence, and/or remembrance of feeling?
5. Choose a theme that stands out for you in one or both interviews or a theme in which you are interested. This might be religious beliefs before, during, and after the

- Holocaust; childrearing beliefs and practices; the importance of ethnicity; modes of survival; coping with hunger; attitudes toward perpetrators; forgiveness, blame, and revenge; resistance activities; education; or most any topic you would want to pursue. Discuss how this theme plays out in the two interviews you are watching.
6. Finally, select an interview from Voices of the Holocaust (<http://voices.iit.edu/>), a series of testimonies recorded by David Boder in 1946. As above, summarize the story, narrative style, and emotionality. Compare this interview with the Shoah VHA and USF Libraries interviews, using the relevant questions from above that deal with content, emotionality, demeanor of the interviewee, approach of the interviewer, the relationship that develops between interviewer and interviewee, and the theme chosen.
 7. In your conclusion, discuss what you have learned about memory, trauma, and narrative in Holocaust survivor testimonies. For example, how might particular historical moments in time and/or academic disciplines influence the interviewers' approach, goals/motivation, and intent and the survivors' narrative, beliefs, perceptions, and emotionality? How might the age of the interviewee and the time that had elapsed since the Holocaust have influenced the story told, the questions asked, and the way the story was heard? To speak to part seven, you will need to seek out relevant published sources that address these issues (including course readings). We leave it to you to come up with other relevant issues.

Grading:

If you do all the work and do it well, attend and participate regularly in class, you should reasonably expect a good grade. (We will be using pluses and minuses.) The final project will count approximately 60% of your grade. The rest of your grade will come from participation, which includes attendance, participation in class, thoughtful responses to readings, giving a presentation, and leading discussion of readings as assigned. Late project papers will receive lowered grades. It will be difficult to get an "A" if your assignments are late, you take an incomplete, miss an entire class (except under excused, extenuating circumstances), or do not attend the Holocaust Museum tour. We consider incompletes appropriate only for documented medical emergencies or other serious situations, such as death of a loved one.

Class Policies:

- A. Attendance:** Students are expected to be present for every class, unless you have a compelling reason to be absent. The tour of the Holocaust Museum is also considered a "class." We do not, however, expect you to attend if you are ill or have a family emergency, though we do expect that you will let us know in advance about your absence and make up the work missed.
- B. Cell Phones and Computers in Class:** All cell phones must be turned off when you enter class and throughout the class. (And yes, we'll all forget occasionally, and that is fine, as long as it doesn't become a habit!) If you bring laptops or iPads to class, please use them only for taking notes (and don't hide your faces behind them).
- C. Religious Holidays:** If you have a conflict with a scheduled class due to a religious

holiday, you must inform us in writing during the first week of class so that we can make alternative arrangements for work you will miss.

D. Disability: Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability may consult with the office of Services for Students with Disabilities to arrange appropriate accommodations. Students are required to give reasonable notice (typically 5 working days) prior to requesting an accommodation.

E. Academic Integrity: For university guidelines, see www.ugs.usf.edu/catalogs/0405/adadap.thm.

F. Selling Class Notes: Students are not permitted to sell notes or tapes of class.

G. E-mail: Please make sure you receive e-mail on the account listed in blackboard. You will be responsible for accessing course materials placed on Blackboard and for any information we send to the class via e-mail on blackboard.

Tentative Schedule:

1. **Monday, May 9th** (10-1) Issues in Holocaust history: a brief introduction

a. **Morning:** Introduction to the syllabus and class (Carolyn);
History (Mark)

READING:

- Bergen: *The Holocaust: A Brief History*, entire book

Lunch: 1-2:30 (including time to read article for the afternoon)

b. **Afternoon:** (2:30-5) Instruction on online and print reference resources on the Holocaust, USF Libraries digital collections system (CORAL), and USC Shoah Visual History Archive (Mark); (Remember you have to be on campus or connected to the USF network to access the Shoah site.)

In Class Film: Excerpts from *Shoah*, by Claude Lanzmann (Carolyn)

READING:

- Felman, S. (1994). "Film as witness: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*" in Hartman, G. (ed.) *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (pp. 90-103). New York: Blackwell.

2. **Tuesday, May 10th**: 10:00-12:30 (including reading time, 10:00-11:00)

a. **Morning:** Oral History and Holocaust testimonies, general issues (Mark)

READING:

- Shoah Visual History Archives Interviewer and Videographer Guidelines
- Kushner (2006) “Holocaust Testimony, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation,” *Poetics Today*, 27, pp. 275-295;
- Wieviorka, Annette. “The Witness in History.” *Poetics Today*. Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer 2006), 385-397.
- Hartman, Geoffrey H. “Learning from Survivors: The Yale Testimony Project.” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. Vol. 9, No. 2 (1995), 192-207.

Lunch: 1:30-2:30

- b. **Afternoon:** (2:30-5) Personal Testimony: Collaborative Witnessing and Intimate Interviewing (Carolyn)

In Class Film: Henry Greenspan: Sharing Authority in Interpreting Survivor Testimony <http://citizenshift.org/henry-greenspan-sharing-authority-interpreting-survivor-testimony-worthy-and-realistic-goal> (4:50)

In Class Cases: Excerpts from:

1. Shoah: Alisha (Mark)
2. Jerry Rawicki transcript (videotaped for library) (Carolyn)
3. Jerry Rawicki transcript (collaborative interview) (Carolyn)

In Class Film: “Children from the Abyss” (60 minutes), or “I Remember” (60 minutes), from *Broken Silence* by Spielberg and Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.

READING:

- Rawicki and Ellis (2011) “Lechem Hara (Bad Bread), Lechem Tov (Good Bread): Survival and Sacrifice during the Holocaust.” *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17, 155-157.
- Greenspan and Bolkosky (2006) “When is an Interview an Interview? Notes from Listening to Holocaust Survivors,” *Poetics Today*, 27, 431-449
- Neumann, A. (1998). On Experience, Memory and Knowing: A Post-Holocaust (Auto)biography. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 425-442.

3. **Wednesday, May 11th:** (10-12:30) Holocaust testimony and history (cont.)

- a. **Morning:** Talk with Jerry Rawicki and Toni Rinde about personal testimony. Location is the **Florida Holocaust Museum** (55 Fifth Street South, St. Petersburg). It takes between 50-60 minutes to drive to the Museum from the University.

READING:

- Transcripts of Jerry Rawicki and Toni Rinde’s interviews (USF Libraries)
- Delbo, Charlotte. (1995). *Auschwitz and After* (excerpt). Yale University Press.

Lunch: 12:30-2:00

b. **Afternoon:** (2:00-4:30) **Tour of Florida Holocaust Museum**

4. **Thursday, May 12th:** (10-12:30) Memory, Trauma, and Personal Testimony

a. **Morning:** Memory and Trauma (Mark and Carolyn)

Discuss Assignments

READING:

- Laub, D. (1992) "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening." In D. Laub & S. Felman (eds.) *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (57-74). New York: Routledge.
- Assmann (2006) "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony," *Poetics Today*, 27, 261-273.

Lunch: 12:30-1:30

b. **Afternoon:** (1:30-5) Memory, Trauma, and Personal Testimony:

In Class Video: "One Survivor Remembers" (Gerda Weissmann) (39 minutes)

Speakers: Chris Patti and Sal Wainberg

READING:

- Sal Wainberg transcript (USF Libraries)
- Langer, L. (1991). *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* New Haven: Yale University Press (first two chapters), pp. 1-76.

5. **Friday, May 13th:** (10-12:30) Raising Questions: "So what?" and "Where do we go from here?"

a. **Morning:** Where do we go from here? (Carolyn)

Guests: Survivors Rosa Miller, Sylvia Richmond, and Toni Rinde

In Class Videos: "How the Light Gets In" <http://www.howthelightgetsinfilm.com> (3:58) and "One By One" video presentation, showing discussions between second-generation survivors and descendants of Nazi perpetrators, bystanders, and others.

READING: no assignment

Lunch: (12:30-2:00)

b. **Afternoon:** (2:00-5:00) Why are we interviewing survivors? Legal, psychological, education and cultural reasons (Mark)

READING:

- Wagner, Julie. “The Truth about Auschwitz: Prosecuting Auschwitz Crimes with the Help of Survivor Testimony.” *German History*. Vol. 28, No. 3 (September 2010), pp. 343-357.
- Hirsh, David. “The Trial of Andrei Sawoniuk: Holocaust Testimony under Cross-Examination.” *Social & Legal Studies*. Vol. 10, No. 4 (2001), 529-544.
- Baum, Rachel N. “‘What I Have Learned to Feel’: The Pedagogical Emotions of Holocaust Education.” *College Literature*. Vol. 23, No. 3 (October 1996), 44-57.
- Schindler, Ruben, Chya Spiegel and Esther Malachi. “Silences: Helping Elderly Holocaust Victims Deal with the Past.” *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*. Vol. 35, No. 4 (1992), 243-252.

6. **Sunday, June 19th**, (or alternate date)

a. **Morning:** Project Reports

Group Lunch

b. **Afternoon:** Reports continued, wrap up and discussion, class evaluation:

7. **July 1, Friday. Final papers due. Submit in Blackboard by midnight.**