NEJS 132b

Against the Apocalypse:
Jewish Responses to the Holocaust

Professor: Dr. Laura Jockusch  
Semester: Fall 2017  
Class Meetings: M, W, Th 11-11:50am  
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Course Description

For decades, historians and the wider public ignored the vibrant activity of Jewish individuals and organizations during and immediately after World War II to confront, comprehend, and publicize the Nazi crimes, later known as the Holocaust. However, considering the Jewish perspectives on the Holocaust changes the chronology of Holocaust awareness in the postwar era and leads to a re-evaluation of the first two decades after the war. In contrast to its alleged hermetic silence and paralysis, we find a host of crucial and distinctive activities that the Jewish world initiated immediately after 1945 to publicize the unprecedented dimensions of Nazi crimes. Jews in Europe, Palestine/Israel, and the Americas were by no means silent after the war, but tried on different levels to come to terms with the European Jewish cataclysm. On the part of the Jews, there was neither lack of knowledge and understanding nor was there unwillingness to confront the traumatic events in discourse, writing, and commemoration; rather, they encountered an all-encompassing refusal on the part of the non-Jewish world to listen to and act on what Jews had to tell.

This course provides an overview on the breadth of Jewish activities in the Diaspora and Israel to understand and commemorate the destruction of European Jews in the 1940s and 1950s and to create Holocaust consciousness. After surveying the history of the Holocaust and discussing the possibilities and constraints of Jewish responses to Nazi persecution and mass murder while the events were unfolding, the course’s main emphasis is on the years 1945-1961. Exploring the hardship of liberation and rebuilding and the promise and potential of the postwar moment, it highlights five realms of responses: history writing and documentation; the search for justice and the shaping of legal frameworks after genocide; cultural, political and religious responses to the Holocaust; and modes of commemoration. The concluding part of the course seeks to reevaluate the myth of a postwar Jewish silence.

Learning Goals

- Identify the major events, persons, problems, concepts and ideas in the history of Jewish responses to Nazi persecution and mass murder
- Read historical texts and primary sources critically and contextualize their significance to relevant problems
- Write short interpretive essays that speak critically about events and ideas.
Recommended Books


Learning Goals

- Identify the major events, persons, problems, concepts and ideas in the history Jewish responses to the Holocaust
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Course Requirements

1. Serious and consistent class participation (this means attendance is essential because your participation is part of your grade)
2. Regular introductions of the homework readings
3. Two written assignments of 4-5 pages
4. A midterm exam
5. A final exam

Grading

Class participation 10 percent
Essays 30 percent
Midterm 30 percent
Final exam 30 percent

Late work policy

Unless there are legitimate reasons (e.g., serious illness or personal circumstances), work will not be accepted more than one week past the due date. Work turned in late will be docked 5 percent per day.

Preparation Time

Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Academic Honesty

You must complete all assignments alone. In your writing, you must follow rules of attribution, meaning that you must cite all sources consulted in preparing your papers. As stated in the Student Handbook, “Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. A student shall not receive credit for work that is not the product of the student’s own effort.” Examples of penalties for a student found responsible for an infringement of academic honesty are no credit for the work in question, failure in the course, and the traditional range of conduct sanctions from disciplinary warning through permanent dismissal from the University.
Students with Documented Disabilities

Students with disabilities certified by the Coordinator of Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs and First Year Services will be given reasonable accommodations to complete required assignments. Disabilities that are not documented and approved by the Office of Academic Affairs will not be given accommodations.

Weekly Topics and Reading Assignments

1. INTRODUCTION

August 30, 2017  Introduction: Why study Jewish Responses to the Holocaust?

2. UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORICAL EVENT: THE THIRD REICH'S DESTRUCTION OF EUROPEAN JEWS

August 31, 2017


September 4, 2017  Labor Day -- No Class

3. SCOPE AND LIMITS OF WARTIME JEWISH RESPONSES TO NAZI PERSECUTION

September 6, 2017  Perceiving the Threat: Between Information and Knowledge


September 7, 2017  Jewish Responses inside the Nazi Orbit: Cooperation and Collaboration

September 11, 2017  Jewish Responses inside the Nazi Orbit: Coping and Compliance
Evgeny Finkel  *Ordinary Jews*, 98-125.

September 13, 2017  Jewish Responses inside the Nazi Orbit: Evasion and Resistance
Evgeny Finkel  *Ordinary Jews*, 126-158, 159-190.

September 14, 2017  Guest lecture by Dr. Miriam Offer

“Jewish responses to the Holocaust: The Response Patterns of Physicians and Medical Staff during and after the Holocaust”

September 18, 2017  Patterns of Jewish Responses in the Free World

4.  ON THE THRESHOLD TO THE POSTWAR ERA

September 20, 2017  The Ambiguities of Liberation

September 21, 2017  Rosh Hashanah – No Class

September 25, 2017  The Ambiguities of Liberation (Historical Sources)

September 27, 2017  Liberated but Not Free / Rehabilitation
September 28, 2017  The Jewish Displaced Persons


October 2, 2017  Rebuilding the Postwar Jewish World

David Weinberg  “Between America and Israel: the quest for a distinct European Jewish identity in the post-war era,” Jewish Culture and History 5,1 (2002) 91-120.

October 3, 2017  Review for Mid-Term Exam

October 4, 2017  Mid-Term Exam

October 5, 2017  Sukkot – No Class

5. DOCUMENTING NAZI CRIMES: JEWISH HISTORICAL RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST

October 9, 2017  Historical Commissions and Documentation Centers


October 11, 2017  Historical Models for Documenting Catastrophe


October 12, 2017  Shmini Atzeret -- No class
October 16, 2017  
**Survivor Testimony**

Rachel Deblinger  

Alan Rosen  
“‘We Know very little in America’ David Boder and Un-Belated Testimony,” in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, 102-114.

Boaz Cohen  

6.  
**SEEKING JUSTICE: JEWISH LEGAL RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST**

October 18, 2017  
**Revenge or Retribution?**

Mark Roseman  

October 19, 2017  
**Courtroom Justice**

Laura Jockusch  

October 23, 2017  
**Jewish Honor Courts**

October 25, 2017  Jewish Collaborator Trials in Israeli Courts


October 26, 2017  Criminalizing and Outlawing Genocide


October 30, 2017  Restitution


November 1, 2017  Reparation and Compensation


7. CONTINUING THE GOLDEN CHAIN: JEWISH CULTURAL RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST

November 2, 2017  Holocaust Literature


November 6, 2017  Folklore and Music


November 8, 2017  Theatre


**November 9, 2017  Film**

View Sections from *Undzere Kinder* (Poland, 1948)


**November 13, 2017  Early Memoirs**


**8.  CREATING SPACES OF MEMORY: JEWISH COMMEMORATIVE RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST**

**November 15, 2017  Memorials**

Margarete Myers Feinstein  *Holocaust Survivors*, 64-107.

**November 16, 2017  Yisker Books**

9. BETWEEN NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND MINORITY STATUS: JEWISH POLITICS IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST

November 20, 2017  Zionism and Statehood


November 22-23, 2017  Thanksgiving—No Class

November 27, 2017  Bundism and Human Rights


10. RECKONING WITH GOD: JEWISH RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST

November 30, 2017

Margarete Feinstein  Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 202-220.

11. REASSESSING JEWISH RESPONSES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

December 4, 2017  The 1961 Eichmann Trial and After


December 6, 2017  Construing the “Myth of Silence”


December 7, 2017  Summary and Preparation for Final Exam