**NEJS 137a: The Destruction of European Jewry**

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Spring 2016  
Tuesdays and Fridays, 12:30 to 1:50 p.m.  
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**Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to the historical study of the Holocaust. We will examine not only the period from 1933 to 1945 but also some of the major questions, themes and debates that have occupied historians, philosophers, theologians and artists in their attempts to come to terms with the Holocaust—an event that has been compared to an earthquake that destroyed the very instruments used to measure it.

Among the questions we will pose: What were the preconditions for Hitler’s rise? In analyzing the growth of Nazi policy, how much historical importance should be assigned to the figure of Hitler himself and how much to other factors? Which aspects of Nazi anti-Semitism were a modern invention, and which were simply the most virulent variation on an ancient theme? How are we to understand not only the experiences of the victims, but also the motivations of the perpetrators and the reactions of other countries? Is the Holocaust comparable to other twentieth-century genocides? Can it be grasped with the tools of rational understanding, or does it retain a core that lies somehow beyond their reach? And what—precisely—is at stake in how we answer these questions?

In addition to standard historical accounts, we will examine a significant number of primary texts from the period and afterward, drawn from political, journalistic, literary, and cultural sources. In this way, students will experience more direct windows onto this era, at the same time as you develop your skills in working with primary source materials.

Situating our studies at a time when the living memory of these events has begun to recede, we will also briefly examine key concepts in the study of Holocaust memory and memorialization. How has a record of this past been inscribed in the broader public imagination? How should one approach the inevitable attempts -- in popular culture and in art -- to represent the unrepresentable? Or on the broadest level, what does it mean to live “after Auschwitz”?

**Course Requirements**
You will be expected to complete the readings prior to the week in which they are assigned, and to participate in class discussions. Over the course of the semester, you will also be asked to prepare one brief in-class introduction to a primary text.

Written requirements will consist of a map quiz, a 3-5 page response paper, and a final exam. In lieu of an exam, students may choose to write a final paper of 15-20 pages on a topic to be determined in consultation with me.

Grades will be determined as followed:

25% class participation (including presentation)
10% map quiz
25% midterm essay
40% final exam or final paper

Course Materials

The following books are being made available for purchase at the book store:

• **Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland** by Christopher Browning
• **Survival in Auschwitz** by Primo Levi
• **Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland** by Jan Gross
• **Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany**, by Marion Kaplan
• **Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan**
• **A History of the Holocaust** (Revised 2002 Edition) by Yehuda Bauer

The following books are among those being placed on reserve in the library:

-- **Nazi Germany and the Jews**, volumes I and II, by Saul Friedländer
-- **Hi Hitler! How the Nazi Past is Being Normalized in Contemporary Culture** by Gavriel Rosenfeld
-- **The Texture of Memory** by James Young
-- **The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945** by Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wipperman
-- **A Holocaust Reader** by Lucy S. Dawidowicz
-- **The Third Reich Sourcebook** edited by Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman
-- **Art from the Ashes** by Lawrence L. Langer
-- **Theodor Adorno: Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader.** Edited by Rolf Tiedemann
-- **Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust.** Edited by Jeffrey Shandler