

Responses to the Holocaust

PHR-501 / Fall 2019

Phillips Academy



Instructor: Mr. Prescott
Location: Chapel 016
Email: kprescott@andover.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An exploration of the Holocaust through diaries, memoirs, films, works of fiction, and later nonfiction reflections on the phenomenon. Questions to be engaged will include the following: What was it like for the victims? What was it like for the perpetrators? Who were the bystanders? How could it have happened? What inspired and motivated resistance, and how were resistance efforts sustained? How have various Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, and secular thinkers responded to the challenge of this event? What have been some of its effects on our own feelings about life and human beings?

COURSE EXPECTATIONS, LEARNING GOALS, AND OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

I. Learning Philosophy - Let's say you want to learn how to shoot free throws. The first thing you are probably going to do is practice, and you decide that, initially, the best way to shoot a free throw is to chuck the ball as hard as you can at the rim. Now, if you've ever taken a free throw before, you'll know that this strategy won't be particularly effective. And so, after a few times, you decide to change it up. Maybe you try aiming for the box on the backboard. Maybe you try utilizing a softer touch. Maybe you bend your knees a little bit more. Better yet, maybe you go find someone who already knows how to shoot a free throw and ask them to watch you and offer feedback. And, because they already know what to look for, you find that you improve at a much faster rate than you would have otherwise and, before you know it, you're regularly putting the ball in the basket.

Learning in this class is really not that different. There are standards of learning that you don't yet know (in this case, understanding different aspects of the Holocaust, rather than shooting free throws), you will have regular opportunities to practice hitting those standards (reading, writing, and discussion, rather than taking foul shots), you will make mistakes, you will get feedback on those mistakes, and, ultimately, you will respond to those mistakes. At the end of the day, I'm not interested in how many practice shots you took or whether you made it on your first attempt so much as I'm interested in whether or not the shot consistently goes into the basket.

So what does all that mean for this class?

It means that your final grade in this course will reflect your **understanding** of the subject matter, not how long it took you to learn it. Okay, so what does that mean? It means that the bulk of your grade (90% of it) will be comprised of three summative assessments (one for each unit), where you will have the opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned. Now wait a second, Mr. Prescott. Those seem like pretty high stakes! Are you trying to stress us out!?

Hold on, hold on! There's an important catch here: because it takes some of us longer to develop new understandings, and because making mistakes is a **necessary** component of the learning process, **all** of

these papers can be revised as many times as you want with no penalty (see the revision policy below). Again, my goal is to help you learn!

With all that in mind, here is what you can expect of me:

- I will hold high standards. This won't be a breeze: I am going to challenge you because I believe you can meet them.
- I will be honest about where you are in relation to those standards. I'm not going to tell you that you've made a free throw if the ball isn't even hitting the rim. That helps no one!
- I will work **with** you to help you meet those standards. My job is, first and foremost, to help you learn!
- I will not penalize you for making mistakes, but will instead give you opportunities to respond to and learn from your mistakes.

Here is what I expect of you:

- I expect you to be honest about what you do (and don't yet) know.
- I expect you to work **intentionally**, which is not the same thing as working **harder**. Okay, so what does that mean? It means that repeatedly chucking the ball at the basket as hard as you can isn't going to help you learn how to shoot a free throw. Likewise, pulling an all-nighter to complete a major assignment isn't going to yield the outcome we're aiming for. Instead, I expect you to regularly **practice**, which means keeping up with the assigned work and engaging with the subject matter on a regular basis.
- I expect you to make mistakes. And, at the same time, I expect you to reflect on and respond to those mistakes.
- I expect you to read and respond to my feedback when I give it to you.

If we both uphold our end of the bargain, I have no doubt that you **will** learn in this class!

II. Grading/Evaluation - Here are the nitty-gritty details regarding your final grade in the course:

i. Essays (90%) - More specific information about the expectations for each assignment will be provided closer to their respective due dates.

- **Unit 1 Essay: The Holocaust and Racism (25%)** - Due Monday, September 23
- **Unit 2 Essay: Victims of the Holocaust (30%)** - Due Friday, October 18
- **Unit 3 Essay: Responses to the Holocaust (35%)** - Due Wednesday, November 6

ii. Class Discussion (10%) - Classroom conversations are an important component of this course. And, much like any other academic skill, some ways of conversing are productive for our learning than others. You will receive regular feedback from me on discussions, which will give you a chance to refine and hone your skills in this space (a final grade in this category will not be assigned until the end of term).

III. Revisions - As noted above, making mistakes is a **necessary** part of the learning process. With that in mind, you may revise **any** essay in the course, where the grade of the revised essay will replace the original grade on the assignment. When completing a revision, you must do the following:

- Use the “track changes” feature on Word or Google Docs and submit the revised draft **with the tracked changes visible**(this helps me see what changes you are making)
- Complete and submit responses to the revision reflection questions (posted on Canvas) with the revised draft (these ensure you are using my feedback *and* gives me insight into how you are doing so)

Revisions that do not meet the above criteria will not be accepted! Please note that assignments receiving a 3+ or lower **must** be revised.

IV. Reflective Writing – In addition to formal essays, your work in this class will include a fair amount of reflective writing both in and outside of class. This includes short writing prompts at the beginning and/or end of class, along with occasional homework assignments. In order to centralize this work, you should keep all reflection entries in a notebook, which I will occasionally collect and offer feedback on.

V. E-mail/Technology – Three notes on technology:

- Upon arriving to class, I ask that you drop your phone off at “**Cell Phone Daycare**”. There is good research showing that even the presence of a turned-off cell phone on a person’s desk reduces their cognitive functioning. Take some time to talk to others in the room!
- No laptops in class. While taking notes on computers can be helpful, the distractions of other programs is all too real. Let’s talk to each other face-to-face.
- Please limit e-mail use to requests for in-person meetings or to communicate emergencies. I will respond to these e-mails within 24 hours, though please note that any e-mail sent after 8:00 PM will not receive a response until the following morning. Plan ahead!

VI. Absences - There are many legitimate reasons why you may need to miss class. Andover is a busy place! I first and foremost ask that you communicate with me if you aren’t going to be present. For absences related to religious observances, please contact Ms. Ralston (gralston@andover.edu) to have the absence excused. In the event of illness, please coordinate with Skyes. For college visits, please coordinate with the Dean of Students Office.

VII. Accommodations – I am available to discuss academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Laura Warner, Director of Student Accessibility Services. Her office is located in Pearson, on the first floor. You may email her at lwarn@andover.edu for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. If you are already approved for official accommodations, please communicate with me during the first week of class, whether in person or via email.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Unit 1: Racism and the Holocaust

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6 – INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

- No assigned readings

WEEK 1 – RACIAL OTHERING IN REUNION

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 – RACIAL EXCLUSION IN NAZI GERMANY

- Read: Donald Niewyk and Francis Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 3-9.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 – REUNION

- Read: Fred Uhlman, *Reunion: A Novella* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), pp. 7-61.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 – REUNION

- Read: Fred Uhlman, *Reunion: A Novella* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), pp. 62-113

WEEK 2 – RACIAL EXCLUSION IN PRE-HOLOCAUST GERMANY

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 – DISCUSSION: REUNION AND PRE-WAR GERMANY

- Due: Reflection Paper

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 – THE NUREMBERG LAWS: CITIZENSHIP LAW

- Read: James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 29-34, 59-72.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 – THE NUREMBERG LAWS: BLOOD LAW

- Read: James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 73-80, 124-131.

Unit 2: Jewish and Non-Jewish Victims

WEEK 3 – EXPERIENCES IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 – PEER CONFERENCES

- Due: Draft of Essay #1

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25 – FILM: NIGHT AND FOG

- Due: Essay #1

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 – THE FIRST PHASE: SHOCK

- Read: Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), pp. 3-32

WEEK 4 – MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 – NO CLASS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2 – THE SECOND PHASE: APATHY

- Read: Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), pp. 32-72

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4 – RESISTANCE IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS

- Find: Bring one example of resistance in concentration camps class

WEEK 5 – NON-JEWISH VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7 – THE THIRD PHASE: LIBERATION

- Read: Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), pp. 72-93

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9 – NO CLASS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11 – NON-JEWISH VICTIMS

- Read: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Packets (Jigsaw)

WEEK 6 – RESISTANCE IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14 – WRITING WORKSHOP

- Due: Draft of Essay #2

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16 – NO CLASS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18 – INTRODUCTION TO PERPETRATORS

- Due: Essay #2

*Unit 3: Responses to the Holocaust:
Bystanders, Perpetrators, Rescuers, and Resisters*

WEEK 7 – BYSTANDERS AND PERPETRATORS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 21 – NO CLASS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23 – POLICE RESERVE BATTALION 101

- Read: Christopher R. Browning, Preface, Chs. 1, 2, and 5, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Force Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), pp. xv-xxii, 1-8, 38-48.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25 – THE JÓZEFÓW MASSACRE

- Read: Christopher R. Browning, Chs. 7 and 8 in *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Force Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), pp. 55-77

WEEK 8 – RESCUERS AND RESISTORS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28 – BYSTANDERS AND PERPETRATORS

- Read: Christopher R. Browning, Ch. 18 in *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Force Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), pp. 159-189

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30 – DEEP EVIL AND DEEP GOOD

- Read: Michael Bess, “Deep Evil and Deep Good: The Concept of Human Nature Confronts the Holocaust,” *Choices Under Fire: Moral Dimensions of World War II* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), pp. 111-135

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1 – NON-JEWISH RESCUERS

- Read: Gay Block and Malka Drucker, *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust* (New York: TV Books, 1992), selections (jigsaw).

Unit 4: The Holocaust and Forgiveness

WEEK 9 – RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4 – WRITING WORKSHOP

- Due: Essay outline

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6 – WRITING WORKSHOP

- Due: Rough Draft of Essay #3

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8 – MORAL AGENCY AND THE HOLOCAUST

- Due: Essay #3

WEEK 10 – THE SUNFLOWER

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11 – THE SUNFLOWER

- Read: Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* (New York: Schocken Books, 1997), pp. 3-55.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13 – THE SUNFLOWER

- Read: Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* (New York: Schocken Books, 1997), 55-98.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14 – THE SUNFLOWER: SYMPOSIA

- Read: Simon Wiesenthal, “The Symposium,” *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* (New York: Schocken Books, 1997); read entries by Edward Flannery, Matthew Fox, Rebecca Goldstein, Deborah Lipstadt, Dith Pran, and one additional entry of your choosing

WEEK 11 – FINALS WEEK

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18 – CONFERENCE PERIOD DAY

- Note: Mr. Prescott will be available to meet during normal class time

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20 – HOLOCAUST DENIAL

- Read: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Combating Holocaust Denial: Origins of Holocaust Denial” and “Holocaust Deniers and Public Disinformation”
- Due: All outstanding revisions