

**ARTS 310: The Holocaust and the Arts**  
**Fall 2009**

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**Office Hours: M and W 1:30 – 2:30, F 9 – 10, and by appointment**

**Required Texts:**

*Auschwitz and After*, Charlotte Delbo

*Fatelessness*, Imre Kertez

*Survival in Auschwitz*, Primo Levi

*Austerlitz*, W. G. Sebald

*Maus I and II*, Art Spiegelman

**Course Introduction/Overview:**

For almost all of us, the only way we will encounter the Holocaust is second hand: through survivor testimonies, films, photos, novels, and history texts. Our initial interest when engaging this subject is probably to learn more about what happened and to seek insight into why it happened. In this class, most of us will probably learn a bit more about the Holocaust as an historical event. However, this isn't a history class. We will focus our attention more on how the Holocaust is represented and responded to in various forms of art than on the historical facts of the Holocaust. Yes, we will encounter material that is deeply disturbing, painful, even at times unbearable. And, yes, we will talk about the various aspects of the human experience as played out before, during and after the Holocaust. But as powerful as the human story is, we will keep coming back to the question of how and why one makes art out of such material. Ultimately, we will need to look at ourselves and ask ourselves why we are interested in seeking out this material in the first place and does this art, once we've encountered it, expect or even demand something of us.

**ARTS and IDEAS PROGRAMS GOALS**

Through our study of the Holocaust and the Arts, we will try to achieve the goals of the Arts and Ideas program, which are as follows:

A student who completes 3.0 credits of ILSA will be able to do the following:

Articulate the value of the arts studied and their impact on the self and others

Recognize cultural, historical, spiritual, and/or political aspects of the arts studied

Define and articulate the concepts, methods, and organizing principles of the arts studied

## **Coursework**

### ***Reading and Film Viewing***

You are expected to keep up with all assigned readings. You are expected to view the assigned films. You are expected to contribute meaningfully to our discussion of all assigned materials.

### ***Writing***

We will do at least two kinds of writing in this class, informal and formal.

First, the informal. I'd like you to keep a journal in which you respond to everything we read, view, and listen to for the class this semester. Naturally, this journal can be a place where you record and keep track of your emotional responses to what we encounter. When noting an emotional reaction to this or that, push yourself to identify the specific thing that triggered the emotion and to explore possible reasons why you responded so strongly. Beyond tracking your emotional responses, I'd like you to use the journal as a place to explore how something is made, which includes identifying choices that have gone into its being made one way or another and discussing implications of those choices. This will become easier to do as you have texts to compare to one another. Also, you can be very direct in writing about things you learn about the Holocaust or, more broadly, the human experience through whatever work is under consideration. I will often give you prompts to respond to in the journals. You are encouraged to go beyond the prompts to write additional entries on what is of greatest interest and concern to you. Please bring your journals to class. We may very well write in them in class. We may also want to refer to your entries as the basis of some in-class discussion. The journals may be handwritten or typed. Because we have the luxury of meeting in the literature department's new computer lab, we should be able to do in-class writing on computers. If your journal is a combination of handwritten and typed entries, I'll ask you to type the specific entries that I will read carefully when you turn the journals into me.

Now, the formal writing. I would like you to write one formal essay (based on research) on a topic of your choosing, so long as the topic fits within the broader context of the course, The Holocaust and the Arts. We'll work through this assignment in stages, beginning with identifying some possible directions you might head in, moving on to choosing your topic, doing some research on it, drafting a few exploratory pages as you try to refine your focus, and then writing the actual paper. The paper need not be terribly long, about ten typed pages. The paper must include documentation. I hope to create an opportunity for you to share the essence of your research with your classmates.

## ***Project***

Each of you will have the opportunity to respond to one or more of the works we study in the form of an original work of art or craft. The piece you create need not be sophisticated or reflect any expertise with the materials with which you work. In fact, if you have strength in a particular art form (or more than one), I encourage you (urge! require!) to work on something outside of your area of your expertise. We'll talk about some possibilities for these projects in class. I would like you to be thinking about your project throughout the semester. I'd also like you to document the entire process of considering, conceiving, developing, refining, and completing your project. This documentation should be done in your journal. In the journal, you should include the following:

- a) discussion of what you are planning to do for your project, why you want to do it, how you are planning to do it, and why it's significant.
- b) descriptions and reflections on each stage of the work.

The journal can also include photos (or, if it's a poem, short story, or non-fiction essay) drafts of the work as it progresses. I will be looking for growth and development of your ideas throughout the semester in response to what we are studying.

In addition to presenting to the class the finished work of craft or art, you will submit a short piece of writing that draws together, develops, and refines some of your journal entries. This paper should include specific references to texts/films/etc. we studied in class as well as to your work of art or craft.

## **Grading Weights and Scale**

### **Journal**

submission 1	=	50
submission 2	=	50
submission 3	=	100
submission 4	=	100
journal/art project paper	=	150

### **Research Project**

paper topics proposal	=	50
overview of paper plus bibliography	=	50

two pages of research	=	100
paper	=	100
research paper	=	200
art/craft project	=	50
class participation	=	100

95 and above = A  
 92 – 94.5 = A-  
 87.5 – 91.5 = B+  
 85 – 87 = B  
 82 – 84.5 = B-  
 77.5 – 81.5 = C+  
 75 – 77 = C  
 72 – 74.5 = C-  
 67.5 – 71.5 = D+  
 65 – 67 = D  
 62 – 64.5 = D-

## The Holocaust and the Arts Assignment Schedule

### Schedule

#### Week 1

Aug 18      Intro: a few poems  
                  *Max*, film screening

#### Week 2

Aug. 25      *Max*, finish film screening  
                  Modernism, German Expressionism, Degenerate Art, Nazi Art: a very  
                  brief look  
                  journal submission #1 due

#### Week 3

Sept. 1      *Fatelessness*, Imre Kertesz, pp. 3 - 134

**Week 4**

Sept. 8 *Fatelessness*, Imre Kertesz, pp. 135 - 262

*Sunshine*: a film screening (60 minutes)

journal submission #2 due

**Week 5**

Sept. 15 *Sunshine (cont.)* (120 minutes)

research paper topics due

**Week 6**

Sept. 22 *Survival in Auschwitz*, Primo Levi, Chapters 1 - 9

journal submission #3 due (identifying a thread)

**Week 7**

Sept. 29 *Survival in Auschwitz*, Primo Levi, Chapters 10 - 17

a small selection of Holocaust poems

**Week 8**

Oct. 6 *Life Is Beautiful*: film screening (116 minutes)

**Week 9**

Oct. 13 fall break

**Week 10**

Oct. 20 *Auschwitz and After*, Charlotte Delbo, intro plus pp. 1 - 171

overview of research project plus formal bibliography due

**Week 11**

Oct. 27 *Auschwitz and After*, Charlotte Delbo, pp. 172 - 354

**Week 12**

Nov. 3      *We Want the Light*: film screening (60 minutes)  
Music of Theresienstadt

journal submission #4 due

**Week 13**

Nov. 10      performance of “Elegy” by Keowee Chamber Music group  
Laurel Forum

two pages of research paper due

**Week 14**

Nov. 17      *Maus I* and *Maus II*, Art Spiegelman

**Week 15**

Nov. 24      *My Knees Were Jumping*: film screening (76 minutes)

*Austerlitz*, W. G. Sebald, pp. 3 - 117

research paper due

**Week 16**

Dec. 1      *Austerlitz*, W. G. Sebald, pp. 117 – 298

journal/art project paper due

**Week 17****Final**

Dec. 8      art/craft project presentations