**PSCI 5900**

**Special Problems: The Holocaust and Film**

Spring 2024

Instructor: Dr. Cindy Renker

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Office Hours: MWF 2 pm and T by appointment

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**Course Description and Objectives**

This course will examine how the Holocaust has been portrayed in feature films and documentaries in different countries. Our guiding questions will include: Do cinematic attempts to capture the horror of the Holocaust faithfully convey its scope, or do they end up trivializing it? How do documentary and narrative filmmakers attach words and especially images to the Holocaust and its aftermath? How do differences in genre, style, subject matter, and issues of authorial intent affect—or not affect—the “meaning” of Holocaust film? Through watching of various cinematic texts, we will discuss these and other questions about the problem and limits of language, the role of trauma, authenticity, memory and post-memory, genocide, storytelling and history, and representation and adaptation of the Holocaust in film in Hollywood, Europe (France, Italy, Hungary, and Germany) and in Israel. We will explore problems of representing historical tragedy and catastrophe via a medium of popular culture, and we will try to decide what should count as "success" or "failure" in such representations.

*This course fulfills the CLASS requirement for Communication and Digital Skills. At the end of this course, students should be able to demonstrate effective communication using a digital technological platform and do at least two of the following:*

*1. Demonstrate the ability to communicate a central idea effectively using appropriate organization/structure.*

*2. Demonstrate the ability to develop content at an advanced level using a combination of effective supporting materials.*

*3. Demonstrate the ability to engage in verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors that are appropriate for the audience and adhere to the conventions of the medium selected (written, oral, or visual).*

**Texts**

Required Reading (handouts)

Secondary readings (excerpts) from:

*Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* by Annette Insdorf

*Afterimage: Film, Trauma and the Holocaust* by Joshua Hirsch

Recommended Reading

*Hitler and the Holocaust* by Robert S. Wistrich

**Films**

USA: Hollywood and the Holocaust

*Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust* (2004)

*Schindler’s List* (1993)

*Life is Beautiful* (1997)

France: Documentaries

*Night and Fog* (1955)

*The Trial of Adolf Eichmann* (2011)

Germany: Coming to terms with the past

*Comedian Harmonists* (1997)

*Naked Among Wolves* (2015)

Hungary: Fictionalizing the Holocaust

*Son of Saul* (2015)

Israel and the Holocaust

*TBD*

*The Little Dictator* (2015)

**Evaluation and Assignments**

Attendance/Class Participation (20%)

Response Journal (15%)

Response Papers (30%)

Media Folder (15%)

Final Paper (20%)

**Course Policies**

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory not optional. If a student is late or leaves class early, s/he will not receive attendance credit for that day. Missing more than three class meetings will negatively impact your attendance/participation grade. Missing five classes will drop the final grade by one letter grade, 10 by two letter grades. If a student misses more than 10 classes, s/he will receive an ‘F’ for the course.

Participation: This is a discussion-based class, so one cannot hope to do well without consistently displaying active engagement with the films and secondary readings. It is a foundational requirement of the course to participate in class discussions. You do not have to speak constantly, but you do have to speak consistently, and you have to make it clear, moreover, that you have not only read the material assigned, but also that you have thought about it carefully and come to class prepared for a meaningful discussion. Your response papers (discussed below) will be a helpful tool.

Assigned Readings: Students will be assigned secondary readings that prepare them and provide the contexts for the films watched in class. The readings will help students engage in meaningful class and group discussions and focus their viewing experience. Students are expected to complete all their reading assignments announced at the end of class and come prepared to share their insights and questions the following class.

Response Journal: Students will keep a response journal in which they will be able to reflect on the films watched in class in German. The material viewed will be graphic and emotionally taxing at times. The journal will help students express and work through their reactions to the watched material. Journal entries should not summarize the film or film segments or record unsubstantiated, vague impressions but, rather, include thoughtful and critical responses (both personal and intellectual) that reflect your questions, critiques, emotions, and analyses, and that occasionally will serve as a point of entry for class discussions. Students will sometimes write in their journal in class but mostly at home. I will announce when a journal entry is due. Each entry should be a minimum of 2 paragraphs (typed or legible handwriting). Make sure to date and title (of film and segment of film) each entry. Please use a one-page filler paper for each entry that should be kept and organized in a folder with fasteners (brads). No binders, please! You will hand in your response journal as indicated on the schedule.

Response Papers: You will write a total of seven short response papers in German over the course of the semester. They are due the class day after we finish the film as indicated on the tentative schedule. Each response should be between 250 and 500 words long, typed, double-spaced, a font of 12, 1” margins all around. No late papers or make-ups will be accepted! You will bring two copies (for the 5 indicated on schedule) to class with you. One copy will be turned in to me, the other will remain with you for reference and note-taking during class discussions.

You should also raise question(s) in your response papers. These should be open-ended and not single-sentence questions. Let authorial intent, in addition to your own reflections, guide you in raising critical question(s) about issues and themes. The questions of authorial intent raised in your papers will help you focus your thinking and help you participate in class discussions.

Media Folder: Each week you will select one item of news (from newspaper, magazine or the internet) from a German news source that relates to the course. Cut or print out the article, read it carefully (determining the views presented) and add it to your folder (please use a folder with fasteners, aka brads). No binders! Bring your folder to class on the days indicated on the schedule and be prepared to share your findings in class (summarizing the article briefly and its views, and describe how it relates to the course). You will be turning in your folder to me at midterm and at the end of the semester (see tentative schedule below).

Final Paper: One of your response papers will serve as the basis for your final paper, which will be an analytical essay. Toward the end of the semester, please review your papers and choose one that you will expand into a final paper. You are to analyze that film in greater depth and the issues and themes it raises by addressing the cultural, socio-historical, and/or political context. The paper needs to be in German, five to seven pages long, typed, and double-spaced. It is due the last day of class.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

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| Week | Topic |  |
| 1/15 – 1/19No CLASS 1/15! (MLK DAY) | Introduction*Imaginary Witness. Hollywood and the Holocaust* |  |
| 1/22-1/26 | *Schindler’s List* |  |
| 1/29 – 2/2 | *Schindler’s List* | Response Paper #1 |
| 2/5-2/9 | *Life is Beautiful* |  |
| 2/12-2/16 | *Life is Beautiful* | Response Paper #2 |
| 2/19-2/23 | *Night and Fog/The Trial of Adolf Eichmann* |  |
| 2/26-3/1 | *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann* |  |
| 3/4-3/8 | *Comedian Harmonists* | Media Folder |
| 3/11-3/15Spring Break! |  |  |
| 3/18-3/22 | *Comedian Harmonists* | Response JournalResponse Paper #3 |
| 3/25-3/29 | *Naked Among Wolves* |  |
| 4/1-4/5 | *Naked Among Wolves* | Response Paper #4 |
| 4/8-4/12 | *Son of Saul* |  |
| 4/15-4/19 | *Son of Saul/TBD* | Response Paper #5 |
| 4/22-4/26 | *TBD* |  |
| 4/29-5/3No Class 5/3! (Reading Day) | *The Little Dictator*Course wrap-up | Media FolderResponse Journal |
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**Student Behavior in the Classroom:**Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.  The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [www.unt.edu/csrr](http://www.unt.edu/csrr).

**Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism:** Cheating and plagiarism are serious matters. The usual penalties for these offenses include failure for the assignment, failure in the course, and a written report to the Dean of Students.

**Religious Holidays:**

In accordance with Section 51.911 of the Texas Education Code, UNT will allow a student who is absent from class for observance of a religious holy day to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time. Students are required to file a written request with each professor within the first 15 days of the semester to qualify for an excused absence. A copy of the state rules and procedures regarding holy days and the form for notification of absence from each class under this provision are available from the Registrar’s Office.

**Emergency Notification & Procedures:**

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at www.my.unt.edu. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) ensuring you in know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas, determining how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and identifying where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**American with Disabilities Act Compliance:**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

**Student Perception of Teaching:**

The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class.