

506: 299: 02: History Workshop  
The Holocaust: History, Memory, and Historical Practice  
T/TH 1.10-2.30, Campbell Hall A2

Prof. Paul Hanebrink  
101A Van Dyck Hall  
[hanebrin@history.rutgers.edu](mailto:hanebrin@history.rutgers.edu)  
Office Hours: TTH 4:00-5:00pm

### **Course Description**

The History Workshop is designed to teach the basic methods of historical practice. How do historians define research problems and questions? What are primary sources? How do historians find them, interpret them, and use them to write histories? What are secondary sources? How do historians find them and use them to help write histories? What is the difference between writing history and simply remembering the past?

In this class, we will learn and apply these skills in the context of studying aspects of the Holocaust. The Holocaust has been the subject of an unprecedented amount of scholarship in the last several decades. Countless books have been written about many different topics. Numerous sources have been translated from their original languages into English, making it possible for many more historians (including us!) to think and write about the Holocaust. At the same time, there has been an explosion of testimony given by survivor witnesses, who feel compelled to tell their story to others so that memory of what happened to them will be transmitted to future generations. What is the relationship between history and memory? What kinds of questions can and do historians ask about the Holocaust? What influence does the widespread emphasis in our culture on remembering the Holocaust have on historians? What role should it play in the work of historians?

### **Learning Goals**

1. Explore how historical knowledge is produced.
2. Introduce students to the problems and practices involved in historical research, including assessing the strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of sources.
3. Introduce students to the problems and practices in historical interpretation, including evaluating conflicting historical interpretations; exploring how the ways in which historians frame their questions influences their interpretations.
4. Introduce students to the problems and practices involved in historical writing and narration.

### **Readings**

There are two required books.

1. Yitzhak Arad et al, eds. *Documents on the Holocaust. Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999 – ISBN: 978-0803259379)

2. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York: Touchstone, 1996 – ISBN 978-0684826806)

All other course readings are available on Sakai, under “Resources.” These are marked on the syllabus.

### **Written Assignments and Evaluation**

All writing should be in 12 point font, doubled spaced. Portfolio assignments should be uploaded to the course dropbox and turned in in class.

- Portfolio Assignments: 6 short written assignments that respond to specific given questions. (1-2 pages each) (5% each, 30% total)
- Final Project: A document “anthology” (40%)
  - Draft Introduction due 12/6: 5%
  - Workshop Presentation on 12/6-13: 10%
  - Final Draft due 12/16: 25%
- Active Participation in class discussions and in office hours (30%)

### **Final Class Project**

I will give you more information about the final project once we have begun the class. For now, here is a brief description:

You will put together an anthology of historical documents that could be used to answer a historical question. You will write an introduction to this anthology as well as brief “editorial” introductions to each document, and provide a conclusion about the questions that these documents pose and the answers that they offer. You must locate at least 6 primary documents (two of which must be video testimonies from the VHA) and 4 relevant secondary sources.

### **Schedule of Classes**

You must complete each reading for the day of class. You will need to bring a copy of these readings with you to class.

#### Week 1

September 6 Why is this class about the Holocaust?

September 8 Why did *Kristallnacht* happen?

All of today’s readings are in the Arad Document Collection:

- Extracts from *Mein Kampf* by Hitler
- Riots of *Kristallnacht* – Heydrich’s Instructions
- Discussions by the Authorities Following *Kristallnacht*
- Regulation for the Elimination of the Jews from the Economic Life of Germany
- SS Views on the Solution of the Jewish Question

## Week 2

September 13 How was *Kristallnacht* experienced by its intended targets?

All of today's readings are in the Arad Document Collection:

- Description of the Riot at Dinslaken
- Letter Describing the Deportation to Zbaszyn
- Emmanuel Ringelblum's Notes on the Refugees in Zbaszyn
- Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness. A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1933-1941*, excerpts.

Portfolio Assignment #1 due: Compare one source from Sept. 8 with one from Sept. 13. In what specific ways are they different? Select a citation from each source to support your answer.

September 15 When historical actors don't do what you expect, or why did German Jews stay in Germany so long?

All of today's readings are in the Arad Document Collection:

- "Wear It with Pride, The Yellow Badge," Article by Robert Welsch
- Proclamation by the Central Committee of German Jews for Relief and Reconstruction
- The Position of the German Jews, As Seen By Alfred Wiener, of the Leadership of the *Centralverein*
- Instruction for Jewish Public Elementary Schools, January 1934
- Report on the Activities of the *Hilfsverein* in the Year 1933

## Week 3

September 20 What were the responses to *Kristallnacht* in the United States and Great Britain?

- In Class Exercise: How would we search for American or British responses to *Kristallnacht*? What can we find? We will learn about and use various search tools to answer these questions.

September 22 How do historians ask and answer questions about events?

- Alan E. Steinweis, *Kristallnacht 1938*, 56-99 (Sakai)

## Week 4

September 27 How can historians ask very different questions about the same event? Or, what was *Kristallnacht* really about?

- Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair. Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, 119-145 (Sakai)

Portfolio assignment #2 due: How are the histories of *Kristallnacht* by Steinweis and Kaplan different? Select one passage from each that exemplifies the differences, and explain why each is significant.

- September 29 How is testimony made much later similar or different to sources from the time? – A first crack at the problem
- In Class: We will watch an excerpt of an interview with a Holocaust survivor together and discuss it, in light of our discussions so far.

#### Week 5

- October 4 Asking Research Questions about the Holocaust:
- In Class: **Final Project Brainstorming Session**

- October 6 NO CLASS. Begin reading Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 1-56

#### Week 6

- October 11 Witnesses and Historians I: Do historians have any obligation to read a source in a particular way if its author intended to “bear witness?”
- Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 56-116

- October 13 Witnesses and Historians II: Do historians have any obligation to read a source in a particular way if its author intended to “bear witness?”
- Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 116-175

#### Week 7

- October 18 The Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive: What is it? How do you use it?
- Jeffrey Shandler, “Holocaust Survivors on Schindler’s List; or, Reading a Digital Archive Against the Grain” (Sakai)
  - In-Class: Familiarize ourselves with the search features of the VHA.

Portfolio Assignment #3 due: What historical question are you asking? What sources will you look for to answer it? How will you select testimonies that will help you answer this question?

- October 20 What kind of a source is witness testimony?
- Assignment: read Zoë Waxman, “Testimony and Representation” (Sakai)
  - In Class: Watch and discuss selected excerpts from testimony of TBA.

#### Week 8

- October 25 A second crack at an important issue: What are some of the differences between witness testimony and other sources, especially those produced at the historical moment in question?
- Chaim A. Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, excerpts (Sakai)
  - Compare with excerpts from testimony used on 10/20.

- October 27 How have historians used witness testimony as a historical source?
- Christopher Browning, “Survivor Testimonies From Starachowice: Writing the History of a Factory Slave Labor Camp” (Sakai)

- In-class: Discuss essay and excerpts of testimonies used by Browning.

Portfolio Assignment #4 due: Select 1 testimony that you have chosen to answer your research question? (For the final project you must have two.) What new questions has it raised? How would you search for a second testimony to help you think about these questions?

### Week 9

November 1 How to read a secondary source closely.

- John-Paul Himka, “The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53 (2-4) (2011): 209-243. (Sakai)

November 3 What is a secondary source and how do you find them?

- At home: generate a list of search terms that you might use to track down secondary sources on your topic.
- In-class: Searching for secondary sources. Using search engines such as Historical Abstracts, JSTOR, Google Scholar. Also, a word of warning about Google.

### Week 10

November 8 **Individual Meetings**

November 10 **Individual Meetings**

Portfolio Assignment #5 due: What historical question are you asking? Select two potential (non-interview) sources for your final project. What do you know about the “who, what, were, and why” of them? Write brief introductions to them.

### Week 11

November 15 How should historians treat testimony given by witnesses in a criminal trial?

- Devin O. Pendas, “Taking Evidence, February 7, 1964, to May 6, 1965” (Sakai)

November 17 NO CLASS

### Week 12

November 22 How can historians use photographs as sources?

- Carol Zemel, “Emblems of Atrocity: Holocaust Liberation Photographs” (Sakai)
- Selected Photographs (Sakai)

Portfolio Assignment #6 due: Revised topic and bibliography: what is your historical “question,” what sources will you use to answer it, and what secondary sources will you use to develop the context.

November 24 THANKSGIVING

Week 13

November 29: What does it mean to say that Auschwitz was “unrepresentable” or that it “transcended History?”

- Bernard Mark, *The Scrolls of Auschwitz*, excerpts (Sakai)
- *Sonderkommando* Photographs (Sakai)
- Photographs from the “Auschwitz Album” (Sakai)

December 1: Can film be historical? How historically accurate can or should movies be?

- In-class: We will watch excerpts from the movie, *Son of Saul*, and discuss together.

Week 14

December 6: Workshop Presentation

- **Draft of Introductions to your Final Project is due**

December 8: Workshop Presentation

Week 15

December 13: Workshop Presentation

**Your Final Project is due by 12:00 pm (noon) on Friday, December 16.**