



History of the Holocaust

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

HIST 4933 and HIST 5933 Section 201

Spring 2024

Contact Information

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In this course we will explore the roots of the Shoah in European anti-Semitism, the Holocaust itself, and the immediate repercussions of this horrific event. All of us, as students of the Shoah (the Holocaust of European Jewry), have a responsibility to come to a deeper understanding of this event in order to prevent future genocides. The irrationality of anti-Semitism will be analyzed, as will the methods by which this rhetoric was put into practice, not only by the SS, but also by the German Army, police forces, and by "ordinary men." We will also examine some of the experiences of other targeted groups.

However, we will pay particular attention to interpreting the behavior and experiences of the various perpetrators. Why did each act in the manner they did? Were bystanders, especially Germans, as guilty of the crimes against humanity as the perpetrators? Why was there not more open and aggressive resistance by the Jewish populations of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union? At the end of the course, we will examine the numerous, but ultimately too few war crimes trials, then touch on the memory and representation of the Holocaust.

This course will also challenge some of the preconceived notions about the Holocaust often presented as "truths" in public schools, popular (and flawed) books (for example, Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*), and in the media. These challenges are meant to stimulate lively and rational debate, in which students with various opinions can exchange points of view respectfully without childish shunning and cancelling or ad hominem attacks. There is NO room for personal and intellectual growth unless your opinions and values are challenged. The discussions, lectures, and readings are meant to develop critical thinking skills in relation to historical themes and particular events. A primary element of the course is the improvement of critical thinking skills, using historical themes and paradigms (examples, patterns, models, and standards) for this intellectual growth.

Textbooks

Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* (Penguin Classics, 1992), ISBN: 978-0140186246

Rita Botwinick, *A Holocaust Reader* (Pearson, 1997), ISBN: 978-0138422387
[Relevant parts are on D2L].

Doris L Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), ISBN: 978-0742557154

Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, 2nd ed. (Harper Perennial, 1998), ISBN: 9780060995065

Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* (Penguin, 2002): ISBN: 9780142002407

Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, New Edition (Indiana University Press, 1999), ISBN: 9780253213051

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I and II*, ISBN: 9780394747231 and 9780679729778

Historical Atlas of the Holocaust (McMillan Publishing, 1996), ISBN: 0028974514

Readings for the week MUST BE DONE by the beginning of the first class for that week.

Academic Integrity, Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given) is forbidden and will be dealt with in the harshest of terms possible according to MSU Texas policy. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

Notice: Understand the following – it applies to all assignments, including drafts of papers. If you, in any instance, “cut and paste” from any internet source without citing that source (plagiarism) or use unapproved internet sources, you will fail the course, including if you cheat in any way on a **draft**. Plagiarism of any kind will result in the same penalty. Ignorance of this policy and the university's policy on academic dishonesty is NOT an excuse. Be warned, this includes, but is NOT LIMITED to, use of an **AI program** for any reason; plagiarism of any form; having someone else do any of the work (research or writing), etc. Depending on the severity of the offense, the professor reserves the right to employ any or all university sanctioned disciplinary actions, of which I will pursue prosecution to its furthest extent. I will drop you from the course and report the incident to the Student Affairs and any other office as per the university's policy.

Grading

In the past, I've used a number of different assignments to evaluate student learning and retention. However, this semester I am employing assignments and evaluation as my mentors evaluated me as an undergraduate, which held me accountable for my own performance.

Undergraduates:

Mid-term exam: 30%

Final exam: 30%

Two book reviews (Browning and Gross): 20%

Participation: 20%

Graduates:

Mid-term exam: 25%

Final exam: 25%

Final paper (including a draft): 30%

Participation: 20%

Discussion will be an essential part of the classroom structure, therefore all students are expected to attend class and actively participate. Learning requires active engagement from each student and new ideas can only be exchanged if class members are present. Poor attendance will affect your grade in two ways:

- 1) If you are absent, you will not earn any points for discussion or participation on that day, and hence you will lower your discussion/participation grade.
- 2) More than three (3) unexcused absences will result in a letter grade reduction for the course. Each absence thereafter will again lower the grade of the student by one grade letter. Six unexcused absences will result in an automatic 'F' for the course. The instructor has the sole right to determine the validity of any excuse for absence. In general, only medical problems severe enough to require a doctor's care or genuine personal and family emergencies qualify as legitimate excuses. Again, I have the sole discretion on determining the validity of these excuses.

Final Grade	Percentage
A	90% plus
B	80 – 89.9%
C	70 – 79.9%
D	60 – 69.9%
F	Less than 60%

The book reviews may be a new exercise to some in the class. This is **NOT a book report**. Reviews are critiques of books in which the reviewer briefly describes the main thesis and the points the author uses to prove the argument. Once this is done, the reviewer critiques the book (is the argument believable, well researched, persuasive, well-written). Does the author fulfill his or her stated or implied purpose? Is the argument subtle or ham-fisted? I will provide a "how to" sheet with a barebones description of how to do a short academic review. I suggest

you use review essays from an academic journal (such as the *American Historical Review*) to get a feel for what they are meant to do and how they should be written. This review will give you practice doing a formal critique. We will spend class time talking about and practicing analytical writing and the book review itself.

For undergraduates, the books for reviews are *Ordinary Men* and *Neighbors* in that order. I suggest you read the books even before the dates we will discuss them to avoid the end of term flood of assignments. Early work is encouraged. The review for *Ordinary Men* will be **due**, without exception, on **March 18 no later than 4pm**. The review for *Neighbors* will be **due**, without exception, on **April 29 no later than 4pm**. No late work will be accepted. Same goes for the exams.

Active participation means not only attending the course, but contributing to discussion, asking questions, and being engaged. Just showing up IS NOT ADEQUATE. If you can't commit, there's no reason to take the course.

There will be two essay/short answer exams: a midterm and a final which will be turned in no later than **4pm on May 7**. Both will be essay exams of the take home variety. They will be distributed at least a full week **BEFORE** their due dates. You will be responsible for using at least TWO academic (not a website) resources beyond your class textbooks to answer each question and cite them correctly in your exams. Encyclopedias and similar reference books are not allowed in the exams or in final papers (for the grad students).

For graduate students: you will be required to select a topic of interest for a final paper. The final paper should be 3600-4500 words that build and support a thesis and must be supported by correctly cited, appropriate resources. You must have your topic and a tentative thesis approved by the instructor no later than **January 29 at 4pm**. You may find in your research that the original thesis is untenable or you develop a different argument, and that's okay. Be sure to talk to me about it though as soon as possible.

Student Participation

Students will be held personally responsible for their own educations. I am a harsh taskmaster and do not accept excuses that tend to be pervasive in today's society. You are adults, and with age comes responsibility for your own actions or lack thereof. Active student participation in learning (which includes careful reading of **ALL** assignments, classroom engagement, attentive note taking, and participation in discussions), the maintenance of a weekly study schedule, the completion of **ALL** assignments in a timely manner, adequate preparation for exams, and, when necessary, individual post-exam consultation with the instructor, is essential to meeting the learning outcomes of the course. However, if you turn in all assignments, pass your exams, and participate in discussions, you are not guaranteed a "good grade". A is a designation for superior work, and B for good work. If your work ethic, written work, and test taking efforts are merely satisfactory, you will EARN a C. The bare minimum earns a D.

Extra Credit

I do NOT offer extra credit. DON'T ASK.

Make Up Work/Tests

I will only allow make up work if there is a legitimate excuse for missing a scheduled exam. I have the sole discretion in determining whether or not an absence is excused. University functions approved by the administration counts. Other reasons must be documented in some acceptable form or fashion (proof) must be presented.

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

I use MSU's D2L program to post documents or give assignments. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication between student and professor. In the first week, I will post the syllabus and the terms for the course. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor. I will put a few required readings on D2L (see schedule below) during the semester.

Online Computer Requirements

It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings. Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!

Institutional and COVID Policies

In general, the class policies concerning COVID are those implemented by MSU Texas and are subject to change as university policy changes. Please check university policies throughout the semester. Below are listed some of the things you should be aware of.

- 1) This is a face-to-face course. I will NOT be livestreaming the course unless a student tests positive or must go into quarantine due to exposure by an infected individual. It is the student's responsibility to inform me, in writing (email is fine), of the situation. I will implement livestreaming within two class sessions to accommodate the sick or quarantined students.
- 2) Due to the policies on social distancing and attendance, seating charts and seat assignments will be used in this course. Each student must sit in a desk or chair with an affixed sticker allowing seating. That desk or chair cannot be moved for any reason and attendance will be taken by seating chart. Once you select a desk, you must sit in that desk and that desk alone throughout the semester.
- 3) Due to the possibility of a campus shut-down, the students are responsible for owning or having access to the necessary equipment and software to continue this course via distance learning. Below are the MINIMUM requirements as determined by the university.
- 4) If absence due to COVID infection or exposure occurs, it must be documented by the university. If you cannot make office hours, call during posted times only for immediate concerns. Otherwise, email or call to make a face-to-face or electronic meeting.
- 5) All documents relating to the course will be available on D2L. Check regularly.

HARDWARE:

PC Desktops and laptops (Use Windows' Operating System and PC Info to find your hardware information if you are unsure)

- a) Intel Core (i3, i5, i7) processors; 4th generation or newer
- b) 4 GB of RAM, 8 GB of RAM is highly recommended
- c) 256 GB SSD Storage
- d) Dual Band spectrum (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) with 802.11ac or 802.11n

Mac desktops and laptops (Use Apple's About this Mac feature to find your hardware information)

- a) Intel Core (i3, i5, i7) processors; 4th generation or newer
- b) 4 GB of RAM, 8 GB of RAM is highly recommended
- c) 256 GB SSD Storage
- d) Dual Band spectrum (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) with 802.11ac or 802.11n

PLEASE NOTE!!!: **Chromebooks are not recommended, as they will not work with D2L. You have been warned now, so do NOT expect me to make accommodations if distance learning is implemented during the semester.**

SOFTWARE:

Minimum Software requirements

Operating Systems:

- a) Windows 10 (1709)
- b) macOS 10.13 (High Sierra)

Web browsers:

- a) Internet Explorer 11 (Windows)
- b) Microsoft Edge
- c) Safari
- d) Firefox
- e) Chrome

Conferencing Software:

- a) Microsoft Teams
- b) Zoom Web Conferencing
- c) Skype for Business
- d) Web X

Other supported hardware and software options are located at <https://msutexas.edu/it/assets/files/basic-software-and-hardware-list.pdf>

Instructor Class Policies

Conduct: All students are expected to act as responsible adults. Any disruptions or distractions will be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Below you will find general guidelines covering certain actions and/or behaviors that are to be avoided. As a general rule any behavior that disrupts the administration of this class will not be tolerated. Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have the opportunity to gain from the time spent in class, students are prohibited from engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, in a request that the offending student leave the classroom. Furthermore, the professor reserves the right to deduct points from the student's semester total or remove the student from the course. **Arriving late is considered a distraction.** If arriving more than ten (10) minutes late – DO NOT enter the classroom.

Electronic Devices, Texting, and Phones: The use of tape recorders, iPods, mp3s, or any other recording device in class is **prohibited**. It is imperative that you turn off phones, all other communication devices, and electronic equipment before entering the classroom. The use of a telephone or texting device for any reason is prohibited. *On the first offense the student will be penalized 20 points on her or his participation score for the week. The second offense will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom. The professor reserves the right to expel and administratively withdraw a student from the class upon the third offense.*

Laptops, Tablets, & etc.: You must obtain permission from the professor to use laptops, tablets, and phones (or any other device capable of accessing the internet) in the classroom. Recent scholarship suggests that laptops and tablets are **major distractions** to fellow students and in general do not enhance learning and/or the classroom experience. Furthermore, there will

be no surfing, texting, emailing, etc. in the classroom, unless I specifically ask the students to do so.

E-mail: Note that e-mail correspondence is the most effective and convenient way in which to communicate with me outside the classroom. The professor/student relationship is professional by nature and, accordingly, your e-mail correspondence should be constructed professionally.

Attendance and your grade: This course is structured so that it is to the student's advantage to attend class regularly. From past experience, students who choose not to attend on a regular basis are not successful. I allow three, and only three unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will result in a penalty to your participation grade. If you have a total of nine unexcused absences, you will not be able to pass the course.

Withdrawals (Course Drop): The professor is NOT responsible for student withdrawals. The student is responsible for meeting all academic deadlines including withdrawal deadlines.

Services for Students with Disabilities: *In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Student Disability Office](#).*

Grade Appeal Process: Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#).

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction and Antisemitism (January 17)

Wednesday: Introduction and Historical Anti-Semitism

Week 2: Anti-Jewish feelings, Weimar Germany, and the Rise of Nazism (Jan. 22-24)

Monday: Bergen, vii-xi, 1-52

Wednesday: Maus I, 1-40

Week 3: Maus I, Jewish Policy, and the Question of the "Undesirables" (Jan. 29-31)

Monday: Maus I, 41-159

Botwinick, 1-23

*****For Graduate Students: Approval of research topic by 4pm*****

Wednesday: Botwinick, 45-64, 101-109
Bergen, 53-80, 125-129

Week 4: Going to War, Expansion, and Systemization (Feb. 5-7)

Monday: Bergen, 81-125
Botwinick, 110-129

Wednesday: Bergen, 131-160

Michael Zimmermann, "The National Socialist 'Solution of the Gypsy Question': Central Decisions, Local Initiatives, and Their Interrelation," *Holocaust & Genocide Studies* 15 (3) (2001), 412-427; and Henry Huttenbach, "The Romani Porajmos: The Nazi Genocide of Europe's Gypsies," *Nationalities Papers* 19 (3) (1991), 373-394. (Google Docs)

Week 5: Ghettoization (Feb. 12-14)

Monday: Botwinick, 145-161
Henry Gwiazda II, "The Nazi Racial War: The First Stage in Building the New Order in Poland," *Polish Review* 59 (1) (2014), 45-72.

Wednesday: Larissa Z. Tiedens, "Optimism and Revolt of the Oppressed: A Comparison of Two Polish Jewish Ghettos of World War II," *Political Psychology* 18 (1) (1997), 45-69. JSTOR

Week 6: The Einsatzgruppen: "Ordinary Men" (Feb. 19-21)

Monday: Botwinick, 24-44
Browning, xv-xxii, 1-37
*****MID-TERM DISTRIBUTED*****

Wednesday: Browning 38-77

Week 7: Ordinary Men: Making war on the innocents (Feb. 26-28)

Monday: Browning, 78-158

Wednesday: Browning, 159-190
*****MID-TERM DUE Friday 4PM!*****

Week 8: The Years of Peak Killing (March 4-6)

Monday: Bergen, 161-204
Botwinick, 162-170

Wednesday: Yitzhak, 1-74

Week 9: The Death Camps (March 18-20)

Monday: Yitzhak, 75-137

*****Review of Ordinary Men Due*** (undergraduates)**

Wednesday: Yitzhak, 138-178

Week 10: Death Camps II (March 25-27)

Monday: Yitzhak, 178-257

Wednesday: Yitzhak, 258-294

Week 11: Death Camps III (April 1-3)

Monday: Yitzhak, 295-364

Wednesday: Yitzhak, 365-380

Week 12: Death Throes, Killing Frenzies, and Auschwitz (April 8-10)

Monday: Borowski, 98-151

Tzipora Hager Halivni, "The Birkenau Revolt: Poles Prevent a Timely Insurrection," *Jewish Social Studies* 41 (2) (Spring 1979), 123-154
Botwinick, 175-186

*****DRAFT OF PAPER DUE*** (graduate students)**

Wednesday: Bergen, 205-220

Tim Cole, "Crematoria, Barracks, Gateway," *History & Memory* 25 (2) (Fall/Winter 2013), 102-131.

Daniel Blatman, "The Death Marches, January-May 1945: Who Was Responsible for What?" *Yad Vashem Studies* 28 (2000), 155-201.

Week 13: Collaboration (April 15-17)

Monday: Vladimir Melamed, "Organized and Unsolicited Collaboration in the Holocaust," *European Jewish Affairs* 37 (2007), 217-248.

Randolph L. Braham, "The German-Allied States and the Holocaust," *Yad Vashem Studies* 41 (2013), 129-150.

Wednesday: Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, "Anti-Jewish Policy and Organization of the Deportations in France and the Netherlands, 1940-1944: A Comparative Study," *Holocaust & Genocide Studies* 20 (2006), 437-473.

Week 14: Neighbor vs. Neighbor: Jedwabne (April 22-24)

Monday: Gross, 1-101

*****FINAL DISTRIBUTED*****

Wednesday: Gross, 102-153

Week 15: Maus II and Borowski (April 29-May 1)

Monday: Maus II, 9-74

Borowski, 11-26, 82-97

*****Review of Neighbors Due*** (undergraduates)**

Wednesday: Maus II, remainder of book

Borowski, 152-180

Final Exam and Final Paper (graduate students) Due During Exam Week