

English 649.001: Literature of the Holocaust
Professor Anita Norich

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e-mail: norich@umich.edu

OFFICE HOURS: Wed., 1:30 – 3:00
& by appointment

3014 Tisch Hall; 764-6341

I am always eager to talk with you individually about your papers or course work. If my office hours are inconvenient, just let me know and we'll set up another time.

Although it has been taken largely out of context, T.W. Adorno's famous dictum - "to write poetry after Auschwitz is a barbaric act" – has set the terms of various debates about the literary responses to the Holocaust. More recently, it has been supplanted by other, productive debates about the overlapping, sometimes conflictual, concerns of memory and history. Holocaust literature has been at the center of questions about the limits of representation and the representation of pain, trauma, and survival. What are the connections between imaginative literature and history? How do we understand the documentary and testimonial impulse in much of Holocaust literature? How does this literature shape a contemporary sense of exile, diaspora, or home? How do these texts challenge our notions of national and linguistic borders?

We will read poetry and fiction originally written in English, German, Yiddish, Hebrew, French, Polish, and Italian (all in English translation; there are no language requirements for this course). Films, critical, theoretical, and historical texts inform each of our discussions.

In addition, of course, to lively participation in class discussions and a seminar paper (see due dates below), I will ask each of you to write a brief (1 page) response to each week's readings or, if you prefer, two or three questions the assigned readings raise for you. **These are to be distributed to the class on e-mail each week no later than noon on Tuesday.**

The following books are on order at Shaman Drum. (Some of them are already out of print, but are still available through Amazon.) Other materials are available through Course Tools.

Tadeusz Borowski, THIS WAY FOR THE GAS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN
Saul Friedlander, REFLECTIONS OF NAZISM: AN ESSAY ON KITSCH & DEATH
David Grossman, SEE, UNDER LOVE
Primo Levi, IF NOT NOW, WHEN?
Cynthia Ozick, THE SHAWL
George Steiner, PORTAGE TO SAN CRISTOBEL OF A.H.
Andre Schwarz-Bart, THE LAST OF THE JUST
Binyamin Wilkomirski, FRAGMENTS
Elie Wiesel, NIGHT

January 11	Introduction: naming, history, reader response
January 18	<p>Celan, "Todesfuge"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Felstiner, "Translating Paul Celan's 'Todesfuge'" in Saul Friedlander, PROBING THE LIMITS OF REPRESENTATION, pp.240-258. [The poem is at the end of this essay.] • Adorno, "Commitment" • Susan Gubar, POETRY AFTER AUSCHWITZ, pp. 1-64
January 25	<p>Wiesel, NIGHT (1960)</p> <p>We will view "Night and Fog"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steiner, LANGUAGE AND SILENCE, pp. 3-11, 95-109, 140-168.
February 1	<p>Schwarz-Bart, THE LAST OF THE JUST (1959)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominick LaCapra, "Representing the Holocaust," PROBING THE LIMITS OF REPRESENTATION, pp. 108- 127. <p>SUBMIT 1-2 PAGE PROPOSAL FOR FINAL PAPER TOPIC</p>
February 8	<p>Borowski, THIS WAY FOR THE GAS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN (1967)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sidra Ezrahi, BY WORDS ALONE, pp. 1-23; 49-66; 217-219.
February 15	<p>George Steiner, PORTAGE TO SAN CRISTOBEL OF A.H. (1979)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAUL FRIEDLANDER, REFLECTIONS OF NAZISM: AN ESSAY ON KITSCH & DEATH • Alvin Rosenfeld, IMAGINING HITLER, pp. xiii-xx; 79-112
February 22	<p>YIDDISH POEMS: to be distributed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Roskies, AGAINST THE APOCALYPSE, pp.1-14; 225-257 [ON-LINE THROUGH MIRLYN].
March 1	WINTER BREAK
March 8	<p>David Grossman, SEE, UNDER LOVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," in YALE JOURNAL OF CRITICISM, 14, no. 1 (spring 2001): 5-38 [ON-LINE THROUGH MIRLYN]

March 15	<p>Primo Levi, IF NOT NOW, WHEN? (1985)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alter, Robert. "Deformations of the Holocaust." COMMENTARY, February 1981, pp. 43-54 [ON-LINE THROUGH MIRLYN] • Alvarez, A. "The Literature of the Holocaust." COMMENTARY, November 1964, pp. 65-69 [ON-LINE THROUGH MIRLYN] <p>SUBMIT ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR FINAL ESSAY</p>
March 22	<p>Cynthia Ozick, THE SHAWL (1989)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Novick, THE HOLOCAUST IN AMERICAN LIFE, pp.1-15; 207-263.
March 29	<p>Wilkomirski, FRAGMENTS (1995)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From THE WILKOMIRSKI AFFAIR , pp.
April 5	<p>We'll decide on a text together. Some suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JAMES YOUNG, THE TEXTURE OF MEMORY, pp. 1-15, 27-48; 119-154
April 12	<p>FINAL PAPERS DUE! Presentations of papers: Everyone will have 10 minutes in which to summarize their final essays; questions and suggestions will follow.</p>