

Historiography of the Holocaust: An Introduction

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Rationale:

The aim of this concentrated course is to introduce the field of Holocaust history through a variety of angles: (a) its course of development over the decades as a result of a variety of factors - political interests and pressures, judicial and restitution procedures, archival accessibility, scholarly methodologies, media representations, coping strategies of survivors and defense strategies of perpetrators, and more; (b) major controversies that dominate(d) the field; (c) coping with the challenge of conceptualization; (d) the Holocaust historian's workshop: from raw documents to the shaping of historical interpretation: analyzing a selection of key historical documents and their interpretations by scholars.

The course is divided into three parts (one meeting per semester), each part consisting of 3 sessions.

Lecture Plan

Meeting 1: Holocaust Research: History, Other Methodologies, Memory and Public Discourse

1. A General Introduction: The Historian's Craft, Social Scientific Methodologies, and Memory Shaping Processes
2. Shoah, Holocaust and More: The Emergence and Distribution of Terms Designating the Holocaust
3. Twelve Years of the Nazi regime, Nine Decades of Research: The History of Holocaust Research from a Bird's-Eye View, 1933-2025

Required readings for meeting nr. 1:

1. Dan Michman, Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective. Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches and Fundamental Issue (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), pp. 335-356
2. Dan Michman, "Characteristics of Holocaust Historiography since 1990 and Their

Contexts: Emphases, Perceptions, Developments, Debates", The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Holocaust Studies, Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl, eds. (Wiley Blackwell, 2020), pp. 211-232

Suggested reading: Dan Michman, Holocaust Historiography between 1990 to 2021 in Context(s): New Insights, Perceptions, Understandings and Avenues – An Overview and Analysis, Search and Research Series 34 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2022).

Meeting 2: Holocaust Historiography: Polemics and Conceptualizations

Part 1: Major Debates in Perpetrator History: Perspectives and Methodologies (2 hours)

- a. Intentionalism/Functionalism/Hilberg's 4-steps model/"Working Towards the Führer"; Center/Periphery
- b. German History: A German Sonderweg? Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans? And: Were women involved?
- c. European History: Germans or/and "Neighbors"? A European Project?
- d. Global Context: Unique and/or Universal? Holocaust/Genocide
- e. How to reconstruct: documents or testimonies? Are only perpetrator materials relevant?

Required readings:

1. Raul Hilberg, Sources of Holocaust Research. An Analysis (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), pp. 13-49
2. Dan Michman, Review of Tom Lawson, Debates on the Holocaust
3. Dan Michman, Getting it Right, Getting it Wrong: Recent Holocaust Scholarship in Light of the Work of Raul Hilberg, The 2017 Annual Raul Hilberg Memorial Lecture, University of Vermont (Vermont: Carolyn & Leonrad Miller Center for Holocaust Studies, 2017)

Recommended reading:

1. Ian Kershaw, The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015 [Revelations edition])
2. Wendy Lower, Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013)

Part 2: Major Debates in Jewish History: Scholarly Analyses vs. Learning Lessons and Working Through the Collective Trauma (2 hours)

- a. The Jewish Councils – Jewish collaboration?
- b. What is "Resistance"?

- c. Jewish Solidarity – did it exist in the Holocaust period? Jews under the Nazi regime (and its Allies) and in the Free World
- d. Was the Holocaust a unique event or part of a pattern of Jewish history?
- e. Where to locate the Holocaust - apart from or integrated into modern Jewish history?

Required readings:

1. Richard I. Cohen, "Arendt Controversy", in: Israel Gutman (Ed.-in-chief), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 80-81
2. Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat. The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 570-575
3. Roger S. Gottlieb, "The Concept of Resistance. Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust," *Social Theory and Practice* 9:1 (Spring 1983), pp. 31-49
4. Dan Michman, "Particularist and Universalist Interpretations of the Holocaust: A Complex Relationship", *Beyond Ordinary Men*, Thomas Pegelow-Kaplan and Jürgen Matthäus, eds. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2019), pp. 269-286
5. Jan Láníček, Dan Michman, and Laurien Vastenhout, "Introduction," in Laurien Vastenhout and Jan Láníček (eds.), *Jewish Councils« in Nazi Europe, 1938-1945: A Pan European Perspective* (Göttingen: Wallstein, forthcoming: 2024)

Part 3: Analyzing case studies of conceptualization (One-and-a-half hour)

- a. Key Ingredients: Core, Periodization, Extent
- b. Key tools: Title and Sub-title, Table of Contents, Index, Introduction and Conclusion
- c. Analyzing Some Comprehensive Histories (Poliakov, Hilberg, Davidowicz, Yahil, Longerich, Friedlander, Snyder 2x; Cesarani, Gerlach, Hayes)

Required readings: [Scans of relevant pages from the comprehensive histories mentioned in par. c will be available before the meeting via Moodle]

Suggested readings for meeting nr. 2:

1. David Bankier and Dan Michman (eds.), *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008)
2. Nicolas Berg, *The Holocaust and the West German Historians. Historical Interpretation and Autobiographical Memory* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015)
3. David Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010)
4. Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London:

Bloomsbury Academic, 2015 [Revelations edition])

5. Tom Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010)
6. Dan Michman, *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective. Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches and Fundamental Issues* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003)
7. Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2010)

Meeting 3: Some Key Documents in the History of the Holocaust: The Original Text, the Copy, the Translation(s), the Interpretation(s), the Image – A Workshop

1. Documents and their contexts
2. Hitler's first political writing, September 16, 1919
3. *Mein Kampf*: Excerpts on the Jews, 1925
4. The Nuremberg Laws, September 15, 1935
5. The meeting in Goering's office after Kristallnacht, November 12, 1938
6. Heydrich's Schnellbrief to the commanders of the Einsatzgruppen after the invasion of Poland, September 21, 1939
7. Übelhör's order regarding a ghetto in Łódź, December 10, 1939
8. The Wannsee meeting Protocol, January 20, 1942
9. Himmler's Posen speech to senior SS commanders, October 3, 1943
10. The Vilna Ghetto Underground Manifesto, January 1, 1942
11. The Allies Declaration in the British Parliament on the Mass Murder of the Jews, December 17, 1942

Required readings: [Scans of the documents + questions regarding their contents will be disseminated before the meeting]

Suggested readings regarding the backgrounds of the documents:

1. Christopher R. Browning (with contributions by Jürgen Matthäus), *The Origins of the Final Solution* (Lincoln and Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press and Yad Vashem, 2004)
2. Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-39* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997); *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945: The Years of Extermination* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007)
3. Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler in History* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1984)

4. Ian Kershaw, Hitler. 1889-1936: Hubris (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998); Hitler. 1936-1945: Nemesis (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000)
5. Arieh J. Kochavi, Prelude to Nuremberg. Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998)
6. Dan Michman, "Why Did Heydrich Write the Schnellbrief? A Remark on the Reason and on its Significance", Yad Vashem Studies 32 (2004), pp. 433-447
7. Leon Poliakov, Harvest of Hate (New York: Holocaust Library, 1974)
8. Dina Porat, The Fall of a Sparrow. The Life and Times of Abba Kovner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009)
9. Dina Porat and Dan Michman (eds.), The End of 1942: A Turning Point in WWII and the Comprehension of the Final Solution? (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem 2017)
10. Leni Yahil, The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)

Conclusion of the Course: Summary and Discussion