

COMPARATIVE MODERN SOCIETIES: THE HOLOCAUST AND THE THIRD REICH
OR, THE SOCIOLOGY AND THE HOLOCAUST
V93.0133-001, Fall 2005
Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30-10:45 AM, Waverly 668

Instructors:

Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur

Mikaila.Arthur@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11-12:30 or by appointment

Office Location: 269 Mercer Street, 4th Floor, Room 436

Monika Krause

Monika.Krause@nyu.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Office Location: 269 Mercer Street, 8th Floor, Room 814

Website: <http://homepages.nyu.edu/~mma235/sochol> (contains a link to the course Blackboard site)

Course Description:

The Holocaust was an extreme and a unique event in human history. But it was hardly a “historical accident”. Over a period of more than a decade, Jews, homosexuals, Roma, political adversaries, and mentally and physically disabled people were systematically marginalized and later murdered. This immense act of destruction required the co-ordination of millions of peoples’ actions. How could this happen in the twentieth century, at the height of modern western civilization, in a country respected for its achievements in the arts, in literature and in philosophy?

This question remains challenging to us today. Have we fully understood what made this event possible? What are the implications of the fact that this happened for our assumptions about modern society? How can we as citizens learn lessons from the Holocaust and how do we include them in our everyday practice? The course asks systematically over the course of a semester: how could this happen and what can we learn about modern social life—including contemporary U.S. society—by looking at evidence about the Holocaust?

What are the aims of this course?

This course gives you an opportunity to think about key issues in contemporary social life through a systematic engagement with modernity’s most extreme event. You will learn—among other things—about the specific role of racism, the state, bureaucratic organizations, and capitalism in modern life.

This course should equip you to better:

- employ key concepts of the sociological tradition in analyzing modern social life;
- assess explanations of the Holocaust;
- think critically about the assumptions we make about social life around us. Can they account of the fact that the Holocaust could and did happen or do they need to be rethought in the light of this event?; and
- reflect on the ethical and political implications of being a citizen after the Holocaust—within the university and outside.

Course Requirements:

In order to do well in this course, you must regularly attend class and come prepared by having done the required course readings. Regular participation in class is required for passing this class. What counts is not that you are always right but that you engage with the materials and other students’ thoughts with serious intellectual effort and with respect for each other’s feelings, backgrounds, opinions, and ideas. Discussion questions to help you prepare for class can be found in Blackboard. If you have significant difficulty speaking

in class, meet with the instructors early in the semester to discuss alternate plans for the participation component of the course, including office hours, attendance, and contributions to the course Blackboard forum.

We accept two absences (excused or unexcused). If you miss more than two classes or come unprepared you will lose points towards your final grade. If you have a chronic illness or disability that may interfere with your attendance, please come see us with proper documentation and we will discuss a plan to ensure your success in the class. In addition, religious observances do not count towards the two absence limit.

Normal expectations for a college course are that you should do about two hours of work outside class for every one hour in class. That means that since you are spending about two and one-half hours per week in the classroom, you should expect to be spending at least five hours a week on the reading and writing assignments for this class.

The required class materials include two books and a reading packet:

The photocopied reading packet is available at New University Copy, 11 Waverly Place, or in the sociology department lounge.

The books are available at Shakespeare and Company Booksellers, 716 Broadway, or on reserve at Bobst.

The books are:

Todorov, Tzvetan. 1997. *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps*. Owl Books. List Price: \$15

Wiesel, Elie. 1982. *Night*. Bantam Books. List Price: \$6. (Other editions are acceptable, though have different page numbers)

Assignments and Grading:

Class Participation: 5%

Midterm Exam (take-home): 15%

Final Exam (in class during the regularly scheduled exam period, open-book): 30%

Five Essays, as noted in the class schedule, assignments to be distributed: 50% (10% each)

Class Schedule:

All readings are due on the class date under which they are listed. Articles available in the reading packet are noted with (RP)

Wednesday, September 7 Introduction to the Course

Monday, September 12 The Holocaust and Modernity

Adorno, *Never Again! The Holocaust's Challenge for Educators*, "Education After Auschwitz" (11-20) (RP)

Weissmark, *Justice Matters*, "Introduction" (3-22) (RP)

Wednesday, September 14 Why Germany?

Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, "Introduction" (3-27) and "Explaining the Perpetrators' Actions" (375-416) (RP)

Elias, *The Germans*, "Introduction" (1-20) (RP)

Monday, September 19 Why Not?

Browning, *Ordinary Men*, "Ordinary Men" and "Afterword" (159-224) (RP)

Wednesday, September 21 Modernity: The Classical Tradition in Sociology

Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (409-426) (RP)

Weber, "Bureaucracy" (196-244 in Gerth and Mills) (RP)

- Monday, September 26** Modernity and Racism
 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, “Abstract Labor” (123-185) (RP)
 Gilroy, *Against Race*, “Modernity and Infra-Humanity” (54-96) (RP)
 *Why Germany/Why Not? Essay Due
- Wednesday, September 28** Racism, Part II
 Gilman, “Are Jews White?” from *Theories of Race and Racism* (229-237) (RP)
 Postone, “Anti-Semitism and National Socialism,” *New German Critique* 1: 97-115 (focus on 104-115) (RP)
- Monday, October 3** The State: Bureaucracy
 Browning, “The German Bureaucracy and the Holocaust” from *Genocide* (145-149) (RP)
 Baumann, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, “The Scandal of Ambivalence” (18-54) (RP)
- Wednesday, October 5** Rosh Hashanah
 No Class
- Monday, October 10** Columbus Day
 No Class
- Wednesday, October 12** The State: Bureaucracy II, and International Aspects
 Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, “Background” (3-19) and “The War Refugee Board” (209-310) (RP)
 *Modernity, Bureaucracy, and Racism Essay Due
- Monday, October 17** International Aspects of the Holocaust
 Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, “Conclusion” and “Afterword” (311-354) (RP)
 Black, *IBM and the Holocaust*, “A Nazi Medal for Watson” (105-136) (RP)
- Wednesday, October 19** Viewing the Holocaust
 Film TBA
- Monday, October 24** The Camp and State-Citizenship
 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, “The Perplexities of the Rights of Man” (290-302) (RP)
 *Take-Home Midterm Due
- Wednesday, October 26** The Camp and State-Citizenship II
 Raulff, “Interview with Giorgio Agamben,” *German Law Journal* 5:5.
 Krause, “Statelessness Today” (to be distributed via Blackboard)
- Monday, October 31** The Logic of Profit
 Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: I.G. Farben in the Nazi Era*, “Commerce and Complicity” (325-376) (RP)
 Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews*, “Aryanizations” (94-134) (RP)
 Marx, “Wage Labor and Capital” from *The Marx-Engels Reader* (203-217)
- Wednesday, November 2** The Logic of Profit II
 Black, *IBM and the Holocaust*, “The Spoils of Genocide II” (398-426) (RP)
 Pross, *Paying for the Past: The Struggle Over Reparations for Surviving Victims*, “Taking Stock” (165-183) (RP)

Monday, November 7 Profit and Technology

Black, *IBM and the Holocaust*, “The Dehomag Revolt” (218-268) and “France and Holland” (292-332) (RP)
Aly and Roth, *The Nazi Census: Identification and Control in the Third Reich*, “Introduction” (1-8), “Statistics on Jews” (56-93) and “The Value of a Human Being” (94-98) (RP)

*Comparisons Essay Due

Wednesday, November 9 Science, Medicine, and Technology

Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, “The Destruction of ‘Lives Not Worth Living’”(177-222) (RP)
Benedict, “Caring While Killing: Nursing in the Euthanasia Centers” from *Women & Expression* (95-111) (RP)

Monday, November 14 Science, Medicine, and Technology II

Mitschenlich, *Doctors of Infamy* “The Euthanasia Program” (90-145); “Seven Were Hanged” (146-148) and “The Meaning of Guilt” (149-166) (RP)

Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews*, “Medical Experiments” (936-947) (RP)

Wednesday, November 16 Obedience Within Organizations

Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, “The Accused,” (21-35), “An Expert on the Jewish Question” (36-55), “Duties of a Law-Abiding Citizen” (135-150), and “Judgment, Appeal, and Execution” (234-252) (RP)

Milgram, “Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority” (57-76) (RP)

Monday, November 21 Obedience and Morality

Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*, “Neither Monsters Nor Beasts,” (121-196)

*Science and Technology Essay Due

Wednesday, November 23 Moral Life in Extreme Conditions

Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*, “Prologue” and “Neither Heroes Nor Saints” (3-120)

Monday, November 28 Moral Life and Resistance

Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*, “Facing Evil” and “Epilogue” (197-296)

Wednesday, November 30 Cooperation Versus Resistance

Glass, “Two Models of Political Organization: Collaboration Versus Resistance,” *ABS* 43:2 (278-300) (RP)

Linn, *Escaping Auschwitz: A Culture of Forgetting*, “Between History and Memory,” (73-105) (RP)

Monday, December 5 Resistance and Solidarity

Tec, “Jewish Resistance in Belorussian Forests: Fighting and the Rescue of Jews by Jews” from *Resisting the Holocaust* (77-94) (RP)

Neiberger, “An Uncommon Bond of Friendship: Family and Survival in Auschwitz” from *Resisting the Holocaust* (133-150) (RP)

Wednesday, December 7 Current Challenges I

Newspaper articles to be distributed

Begin reading *Night*

Monday, December 12 Current Challenges II

Newspaper articles to be distributed

Complete reading *Night*

Wednesday, December 14 Course Review and Summary

**Night* Essay Due

Final Examination during the regularly scheduled examination slot

Academic Integrity

We expect all students to adhere to a strict standard of academic integrity. The NYU Statement of Academic Integrity is available at <http://cas.nyu.edu/object/bulletin0406.ug.aaacademicpolicies.html>. Any student who cheats or commits plagiarism will receive a grade of 0 for that assignment. Repeated offenses will result in a grade of F for the course.

Offenses include:

- ↳ Submitting work that does not use proper attribution of all sources, whether print, Internet, or simply a conversation with a classmate or friend. Proper attribution includes a correctly formatted citation and bibliographic entry every time you use an idea that did not come entirely from your own head, whether you quote directly, paraphrase, or merely draw on a text. All standard citation formats are acceptable in this course (such as MLA, Chicago, APA, etc.) though you need to be internally consistent. For those who are not familiar with a particular citation format, here are two links for the citation format used by the American Sociological Association: http://www.skidmore.edu/academics/sociology/resources/writing_citation.html and <http://www.calstatela.edu/library/bi/rsalina/asa.styleguide.html>.
- ↳ Copying work from other students or writing papers as a joint effort. This does not prohibit you from discussing assignments with your peers, but the product of your work must be your own. In addition, you may not submit papers written for other courses without our prior approval.
- ↳ Purchasing your papers from a web source, hiring someone to write your papers for you, submitting papers written by other individuals, or downloading all or part of your paper from a website. Be aware that it is easier to detect this sort of dishonesty than you might think and many NYU students have been caught.
- ↳ Hiding, destroying, or removing library materials, texts on reserve, or photocopies kept in the Sociology Department.

Support Services

NYU offers many support services for students. If you are struggling, either academically or in other areas of your life, there are resources here for you. The first resource to remember is our office hours, which we encourage you to attend. But there are many other resources available. We will be happy to discuss these resources with you privately and help refer you to the most appropriate source of assistance. Some of the most important and helpful resources NYU provides include:

- ↳ The Expository Writing Center, which can critique your writing and help you hone your writing skills. This program is not just for students with poor writing and can help any student improve. More information on the Expository Writing Center's programs and services is available at <http://www.nyu.edu/cas/expository.writing/WritingCenter.html> or you can call to schedule an appointment at (212) 998-8866.
- ↳ The Moses Center for Students with Disabilities provides resources for students with physical and learning disabilities as well as chronic illnesses. Contact them at (212) 998-4980 or visit their website at <http://www.nyu.edu/osl/csd/>. If you will need extended time on the final exam for this class, please make sure to contact us in advance about scheduling since it will only take up part of the last class.
- ↳ You can also always call the Student Resource Center Helpline, a service which can help you navigate NYU. Information is available at <http://www.nyu.edu/src/helpline/index.html> or you can call them directly at (212) 998-4411.
- ↳ The Counseling Center, which offers individual and group counseling sessions dealing with a wide range of issues, from stress to depression, from family difficulties to eating disorders. You can go for even just one appointment to help you deal with a pressing issue in your life. For more information look at <http://www.nyu.edu/counseling/> or call them at (212) 998-4780. You can also call the NYU Wellness Exchange Hotline at (212) 443-9999 or dial 9999 from any campus phone. Remember that some of the material that we discuss in this class may be upsetting. While we will always be willing to meet with you in office hours to discuss the material, there may be times when something in the reading or in class meetings may spur an intense emotional reaction. In that case, you may want to take advantage of the resources of the Counseling Center.