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353-01 The Holocaust

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INTRODUCTION

“The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. “Holocaust" is a word of Greek origin meaning "sacrifice by fire." The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were "racially superior" and that the Jews, deemed "inferior," were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community.

During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived "racial inferiority": Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals.

In 1933, the Jewish population of Europe stood at over nine million. Most European Jews lived in countries that Nazi Germany would occupy or influence during World War II. By 1945, the Germans and their collaborators killed nearly two out of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution," the Nazi policy to murder the Jews of Europe. Although Jews, whom the Nazis deemed a priority danger to Germany, were the primary victims of Nazi racism, other victims included some 200,000 Roma (Gypsies). At least 200,000 mentally or physically disabled patients, mainly Germans, living in institutional settings, were murdered in the so-called Euthanasia Program.”

Webpage introduction, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  

The shattering of Jewish life in the 20th century was a transformational event for Judaism. It was similarly of great importance in humankind’s understanding of the failings of modernity, the nation state, and even morality. The Catholic Church and other world traditions, Europe, America and other world communities searched for lessons to be learned and directions to embrace. The Holocaust is one of humankind’s most significant historical and moral events and as a universal tragedy its consequences and impact are profound not just for Jews.
COURSE GOALS
1. To understand the Holocaust within the context of 20th century history
2. To understand the Holocaust within the history of anti-Semitism and other racisms
3. To understand the dimensions of the perpetrators, victims, collaborators, bystanders and rescuers
4. To gain an insight into the individual stories of the Holocaust and how they might impact our lives in the 21st century
5. To gain an understanding of how the Holocaust informs the contemporary Jewish experience and contemporary American experience

Humanities Elective
Study of the humanities has always been at the heart of a Jesuit education. Xavier’s Humanities elective can be fulfilled by taking a course in addition to the designated E/RS Focus course in any of the following disciplines: Classics, Modern Languages, English, History, Philosophy, or Theology. In this course you will encounter significant issues about the broad range of human experience. You will learn to recognize and evaluate various ways in which people understand and express the human experience.

In addition to satisfying the above statement, the Theology courses that count for the Humanities Elective will engage the humanities
1) in some interdisciplinary nature and/or
2) with a community-engaged learning component and/or
3) with an interfaith focus.

Jewish Studies Minor
This course satisfies the requirements for a Jewish Studies Minor.

Peace and Justice Studies Minor
This course satisfies the requirements for a Peace and Justice Studies Minor.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Klein, Gerda Weissman. *All But My Life*
Wiesel, Elie. *Night.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. Attendance and Participation: 30%
2. Six reflections (1-2 pages each): 30%
3. Mid-term paper (5-7 pages): 20%
4. Final take-home exam: 20%

GENERAL POLICIES
Attendance is imperative. With just thirteen classes the material covered in each class session, and the discussions which take place are critical for the learning objectives to be realized. One absence will be allowed, but please do everything you can to read the assignments before each class, and to be present and participating in each session.
Each student has a total of five grace days for assignments. No more can be asked for so use them wisely. A grace day is a day that Xavier is in session – it does not therefore include holidays or weekends. For instance if a reflection is due on a Friday and you just have nothing of quality to hand in – take the weekend to write a quality reflection and hand it in on Monday. You will have used up one (1) grace day. Grace days can be used without justifications needed (doctor’s notes, tweets from parents, dog teeth marks, etc.), just inform the class assistant that you are using one or more of your grace days.

All assignments are to be submitted via Canvas (Turn-it-in) by midnight of the due date.

GRADING
The grading scale will be: A = 100-94%; A- = 93-92%; B+ = 91-90%; B = 89-87%; B- = 86-84%; C+ = 83-82%; C = 81-79%; C- = 78-76%; D+ = 75-74%; D = 73-71%; D- 70-68%; F = 67-0% (See Xavier catalog, 43). Plagiarism of any kind or from any sources will result in dismissal from the class. For policy on departmental grading see http://www.xavier.edu/theology/grading_policy.cfm

OFFICE HOURS
Though the instructor is on campus (Gallagher 340) the best and most respectful conversations will take place if appointments are arranged electronically or by stopping in the office.

CLASS SESSIONS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

ALL READING ASSIGNMENTS ARE TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE DATE OF THE CLASS

January 11  
Introduction – Why study the Holocaust, resources, class outline, personal stories
FILM – A BLESSING TO ONE ANOTHER (0-16:50); THE MAN WHO CRIED (0-13:00)

January 25  
Anti-Semitism – Historical perspectives, Jewish life in Eastern Europe between the Wars; Blood libel accusation
FILM – CONSTANTINE’S SWORD (10:46-21:45); AS IF IT WERE YESTERDAY (0-12:43); FATE DID NOT LET ME GO (26 minutes)
READ – Bauer, Chapters 1, 2

February 1  
Rise of Nazism – What made Hitler who he was; Organization of the SS, Gestapo, Nazi machine
FILM – AUSCHWITZ (0-10:41)
SPECIAL GUEST – STEVEN F. CASSIDY
READ – Bauer, Chapters 3, 4
REFLECTION #1 DUE: Anti-Semitism

February 8  
Anti-Semitism: The War against the Jews – legislation, isolation, Kristallnacht
FILM – AUSCHWITZ (10:42-32:00)
SPECIAL GUEST - STEVEN F. CASSIDY
READ – Bauer, Chapters 5, 6

February 15  
Survivor Memories
FILM – ONE SURVIVOR REMEMBERS (50 minutes); NO ONE WANTED US: THE VOYAGE OF THE ST. LOUIS (10 minutes)
READ – Bauer, Chapter 7
BEGIN TO READ – One survivor’s or one rescuer’s testimony (DUE 4/11)

February 22  The Rwandan Genocide – A Survivor’s Story: Immaculee Ilibagiza
Lecture begins at 7PM at the CINTAS Center
(This public lecture is in lieu of our traditional class)
READ – Bauer, Chapter 8
REFLECTION #2 DUE: Gerda Klein

February 29  The Perpetrators, The Victims, The Survivors
SPECIAL GUEST – WERNER COPPEL
(91 years old on 2/22)
READ – Bauer, Chapter 9; Wiesel, Entire book
REFLECTION #3 DUE: Immaculee Ilibagiza

March 14  Concentration Camps, Death Camps, The Killing Machine
FILM – AUSCHWITZ (32:00-56:00)
SPECIAL GUEST – STEVEN F. CASSIDY
READ – Bauer, Chapter 11
REFLECTION #4 DUE: Werner Coppel

March 21  Bystanders – The world stood silent, Pius XII
FILM – AMEN (130 minutes)
MIDTERM PAPER DUE

April 4  Rescuers and Resistance
FILM – NICKY’S FAMILY (70 minutes)
READ – Bauer, Chapters 12

April 11  The End of WWII - Liberators, Nuremberg, Holocaust Deniers; What did the world learn?
FILM – SISTER ROSE’S PASSION (39 minutes); Ambassador John Dolibois
READ – Wiesenthal, Book One; Bauer, Chapter 13
REFLECTION #5 DUE: Survivors in their own words (Book review)

April 18  Lessons for Today – For us, for the United States, for humankind
FILM – BLUE CARD (9 minutes); UNCOMMON VISION: The Life and Times of John Howard Griffin (60 minutes)
READ – Wiesenthal, Book Two
EXTRA CREDIT OPTION REFLECTION DUE (See below)

April 25  Closing Thoughts
FILM – Tibor Rubin, Medal of Honor (13 minutes); NICKY’S FAMILY (Final 20 minutes)

REFLECTION #6 DUE: Wiesenthal (Sunflower)

May 2  FINAL EXAM SUBMITTED

EXTRA CREDIT OPTION: WATCH THE FILM SCHINDLER’S LIST or THE PIANIST AND WRITE A TWO PAGE REFLECTION. Two points credit.