
Literature of the Shoah

Dr. Miryam Sivan

Course Number: 702.2128.01.A

Class Time: TBA

Class Location: TBA

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Course Description:

The *Shoah* is a historical fact which continues to baffle, appall, and chide humanity. In this course, we will be reading authors whose work grapples with the multi-faceted implications of this war and its myriad experiences. Some of the authors we will be reading are people who lived through the worst of Europe, 1933-1947. Some will be by children of those who did. And some of the literature we will read has been written by Jews and non-Jews who struggle to fathom the unfathomable, and who are not only keen on 'never forgetting,' but are as frequently intent on trying to place themselves and their generation in relation to this tragedy.

Some of the 'classics' of *Shoah* literature will be on the syllabus. But lesser known works by young European, American, and Israeli authors will also appear. Most of what we read will be prose, but we will also be looking at poetry, non-fiction, and a play.

Course Requirements (Overview):

- Weekly Reading/Viewing Assignments – posted on Moodle website
- Weekly Writing Assignments on readings/viewings (Transcription Notes)
- Class Participation
- Weekly presentation of artist biographies
- Mid-Term Exam (take home essay questions: 1000 words)
- Term Paper -- BA Essay: 2500 words, no secondary sources
MA Essay: 3000 words + 2 secondary sources
BA and MA Seminar research paper: 5000 words

Final Grade:

1. Participation & Bios:	5%
2. Transcription Notes:	15%
3. Midterm Exam:	30%
4. Term Paper:	50%

Course Requirements Detailed:

*Attendance is mandatory. The University policy allows for a 20% absentee rate.

*Lateness is not acceptable and will be noted. Excessive lateness will have a negative effect on the final grade.

*Students are expected to come to class prepared. This means they must read the material, as indicated on the accompanying syllabus, and participate in class discussions.

* For each text read, students will be required to hand in **Transcription Notes**. This means you are to choose and write out in their entirety three (3) sentences or paragraphs or verses which you consider especially significant to understanding the work being discussed that week in class. After each quote, free-write about what is important and/or significant about the passage. Do these select passages act as a key to unlocking the meaning of the text? Do they cause a personal reaction, emotionally, intellectually?

These Transcription Notes will not be corrected (for grammar, spelling, etc.) nor will they be graded. But they must be handed in on the day we read the specific text and they constitute 15% of the final grade. Points will be deducted for Notes handed in late or not at all.

Please e-mail the Transcription Notes to me *in the body of the mail* – not as attachments -- before the start of every class.

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By the second to last day of class (the penultimate week of the semester) students are expected to have discussed (in person or by email) their thesis statement with me for their final paper. It is mandatory that students receive my approval before they write the full length paper.

Final paper deadlines:

BA and MA papers – 2 weeks after semester ends

BA and MA Seminar – 4 weeks after semester ends

It is highly recommended that those students who are planning to leave the country immediately after the end of classes hand in their paper on the last day of class or before they leave.

Please send me the final papers as attachments. The file name should be your name.
And please CC the International School Office as well: uhisfinalpapers@gmail.com

*My office hours TBA -- Room 236, the International School. I may also be available to meet with you others days/times. Speak to me.



Cell phones and electronic devices: Please make sure your cell phone is turned off, or silenced – no buzz -- during class and put away in your bag -- out of sight (not upside down on your desk or lap). You may use a laptop to take class notes. If I see anyone surfing the internet on any site NOT RELATED to the class discussion, your arrival that day will be counted as an absence. If the temptation is too great, then be honest with yourself, and turn off the internet option on your computer. Or bring a paper notebook to class. Take notes the old fashioned way.



Course Outline and Reading List

Introduction to Course:

Week One: Historical survey of literary works about the Shoah. Overview of themes related to the field of study: the relationship of aesthetics and ethics; ambivalence about non-survivor 'imagined' texts; Shoah hierarchy; art and trauma; literary progressions from first to second to third generation after historical epoch; where we are now.

Read and discuss poetry by Paul Celan, Dan Pagis, Nellie Sachs.

Original language: Celan – German; Pagis – Hebrew; Sachs – German.

Writers who were 'there':

Week Two: "The Hunt," Aharon Appelfeld

"The End" and "The Threshold," Ida Fink

Short stories by two European Jews (who moved to Israel after war) which deal with their characters' worlds at the edge of the cataclysm.

Original language: Appelfeld – Hebrew; Fink - Polish

Week Three: *Night*, Elie Wiesel

The novel which helped generate worldwide discussion and knowledge about the deportations and concentration camps. It basically created the genre of the Shoah memoir.

Original language: Yiddish to French

Week Four: *This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentleman*, Tadeusz Borowski

A 'political' Polish prisoner's account of the moral vertigo of the Auschwitz world.

Original language: Polish

Week Five: *None of Us Will Return*, Charlotte Delbo

A 'political' French prisoner's account of Auschwitz and the way women banded together to stem the tide of dehumanization.

Original language: French

Women, Madness, and Sexual Abuse:

Week Six: "The Woman from Hamburg," Hanna Krall

"The Shawl" and "Rosa," Cynthia Ozick

Two short stories, one by a survivor (Krall) and another by an American old enough and fortunate enough not to have been in Europe (Ozick), about women who became mothers against their will and their tragic relationships to their daughters.

Original language: Krall – Polish; Ozick -- English

Week Seven: *The Kommandant's Mistress*, Sherri Szeman

A novel which deals directly with sexual slavery in the camps.

Original language: English

Children Lost and Found:

Week Eight: *Lady of the Castle*, Leah Goldberg

"Purim Night," Edith Pearlman

A play and short story about Jewish children saved from the camps.

Original language: Goldberg – Hebrew; Pearlman – English

A Compounded Othering:

Week Nine: *Bent*, Sean Mathias (film)

A film written by Martin Sherman based on his play about the persecution of homosexuals in the Third Reich.

Original language: English

Second Generation:

Week Ten: "Cattle Car," Thane Rosenbaum

excerpts from *Nightfather*, Carl Friedman

"The Third Generation," Tova Reich

Three stories which deal with the idea of inherited trauma and responsibility.

Original language: Rosenbaum/Reich – English; Friedman -- Dutch

Theater and the Absurd:

Week Eleven: "Shoes," Etgar Keret

"Tumblers," Nathan Englander

The Nasty Girl, Michael Verhoeven (film)

Confronting and trying to make sense of the past....

Original language: Keret -- Hebrew; Englander – English; Verhoeven -- German

Thesis statements need to be approved by me.

Back to the Second Generation and the marriage of text and image:

Week Twelve: *Maus I and II*, Art Spiegelman

A graphic novel about a son's attempt to understand his life in relation to his parents' Shoah trauma.

Original language: English

Please Note:

This syllabus is subject to change depending on the length of any particular semester and other considerations of the faculty member. It is intended to give students a general idea of what texts and themes will be covered.