



**Literature of the Shoah**

**Dr. Miryam Sivan**

**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, a play, and watching two movies.

**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: 1500 words)
- Term Paper **BA Elective:** 2000 words, no secondary sources  
**MA Regular Essay:** 2500, 2 secondary sources  
**BA and MA Seminar:** 5000-6000 words, research paper

**Final Grade:**

1. Participation & Bios:	5%
2. Transcription Notes:	15%
3. Take-home Midterm:	30%
4. Final Essay:	50%

**Course Requirements Detailed:**



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\***Attendance** is mandatory. The University policy allows for a 20% absentee rate. This breaks down to 3 classes this semester.

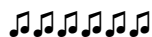
\***Lateness** is not acceptable.

\*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, and present artist bio on their assigned day.

\* Students will be required to hand in **Transcription Notes for 15 of the 20 texts we will read this semester**. 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 should 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 upload the Transcription Notes to the Assignment Folders (numbered 1-15) on Moodle.



**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, but please do not surf the internet. 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.



**Academic Honesty:** All work submitted for this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. The library homepage has a link "Citation Rules" to remind and guide you how to cite according to the MLA guidelines: <http://lib.haifa.ac.il/reference/citations/index.php/mla-heb>



## Course Outline and Reading List

### *Introduction to Course:*

**Week 1:** 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, Primo Levi.

*Original language: Celan – German; Pagis – Hebrew; Sachs – German; Levi – Italian*

### *Writers who were 'there':*

**Week 2:** "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 3:** *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 languages: Yiddish to French to English*

**Week 4:** *This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, Tadeusz Borowski

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

*Original language: Polish*



**Week 5:** *None of Us Will Return*, Charlotte Delbo

“Introduction,” *A Thousand Darknesses*, Ruth Franklin

A 'political' French prisoner's account of Auschwitz and the way women banded together to stem the tide of dehumanization and an American journalist takes on literary representation and the Shoah.

*Original language: Delbo – French; Franklin -- English*

***Women, Madness, and Sexual Abuse:***

**Week 6:** "The Woman from Hamburg," Hanna Krall

"The Shawl" (*read this story first*) 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 7:** *The Kommandant's Mistress*, Sherri Szeman

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

*Original language: English*

***A Compounded Othering:***

**Week 8:** *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*

***Children Lost and Found:***

**Week 9:** *Lady of the Castle*, Leah Goldberg

"Purim Night," Edith Pearlman

*Janek* (short film watch in class), Muriel Naim



A play, a short story, and a short film about Jewish children in hiding.

*Original language: Goldberg – Hebrew; Pearlman – English; Naim - Polish*

### **Second Generation:**

**Week 10:** "Cattle Car," Thane Rosenbaum

                    excerpts from *Nightfather*, Carl Friedman (Sherman Alexie's poem)

Narratives that deal with the idea of inherited trauma and responsibility.

*Original language: Rosenbaum– English; Friedman – Dutch; Propp – English*

**Week 11:** "How to Hide," Karen Propp

                    "Apples from Shlitzbutter's Garden," Dina Rubina

*Original language: Propp – English; Rubina - Russian*

### **German POV:**

**Week 12:** *The Nasty Girl*, Michael Verhoeven (film)

                    "Micha," chapter from *The Dark Room*, Rachel Seiffert

Second and third generation Germans confront their personal and national pasts.

*Original language: Verhoeven – German; Seiffert – English*

### **Back to the Jewish Second Generation via the marriage of text and image:**

**Week 13:** *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*