

History 326: History at the Movies

The Holocaust in Cinema

Winter 2010
Classroom: Tory 1-129
Tuesday, Thursday 9:30-10:50
office hours: W 11:30-12:30, Th 13:00-14:00

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Course Goals

We are going to try to do a number of things at once. One is to explore how film presents history. Another is to explore the history of the destruction of the European Jews during World War II and some of the historical discourse surrounding it. And another is to learn to write (or produce) film reviews/analyses. We will do these things with films, texts, and lectures. The first month will establish the basics, as we watch a socially important TV miniseries that attempts to cover all of the Holocaust, and at the same time read one of the classics of the literature on the Holocaust. Then we explore a number of different themes, including bureaucracy, survival and the lack of it in the countryside, communist interpretation, atrocities against non-Jews, communist and Nazi crimes, and Polish debates. Our films are primarily American, but there are also some foreign films: Czech, German, Israeli, Polish, and Soviet. For lack of time, certain obvious film choices are missing, like *Schindler's List* and *Shoah*. Great music by Quincy Jones graces our last screen offering. Texts come from autobiography, eyewitness accounts, film studies, history, interviews, journalism, methodology, and sociology. The lectures are intended to be interactive, i.e., I am hoping for hands raised to intervene, make new points, raise questions, etc.

Schedule of Classes and Readings

5, 7 January

Introduction

Rosenstone, Robert. *History on Film/Film on History*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2006. Excerpts on Methodology.

12, 14 January

Holocaust, dir. Marvin J. Chomsky (1978) Episode 1

Novick, Peter. *The Holocaust in American Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999. Excerpts.

19, 20 January

Holocaust Episode 2

Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Chapters I-VI.

26, 28 January

Holocaust Episode 3

Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Chapters VII-XII.

2, 4 February

Holocaust Episode 4

Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Chapters XIII-XV and Epilogue.

9 February

Midterm Exam

11 February

The Specialist: Portrait of a Modern Criminal, dir. Eyal Sivan (1999)

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000. Excerpts.

23, 25 February

Diamonds in the Night, dir. Jan Němec (1968); *Birthplace*, dir. Paweł Łoziński (1992)

Biber, Jacob. *Survivors: A Personal Story of the Holocaust*. Studies in Judaica and the Holocaust, 2. San Bernardino: R. Reginald, The Borgo Press, 1989. Excerpts.

Friedman, Henry. *I'm no Hero: Journeys of a Holocaust Survivor*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1999. Excerpts.

2, 4 March

Last Stage, dir. Wanda Jakubowska (1949)

Interview with Wanda Jakubowska.

Rosdolsky, Roman. "A Memoir of Auschwitz and Birkenau." *Monthly Review* 39, no. 8 (January 1988): 33-38.

9, 11 March

Come and See, dir. Elem Klimov (1985)

Snyder, Timothy. "Holocaust: The Ignored Reality." *New York Review of Books*, 16 July 2009.

Rudling, Per A. "The Khatyn' Massacre: A Historical Controversy Revisited." Unpublished manuscript, 2009.

16, 18 March

Katyn, dir. Andrzej Wajda (2007)

Dean, Carolyn J. "Recent French Discourses on Stalinism, Nazism, and 'Exorbitant' Jewish Memory." *History and Memory* 18, no. 1 (2006): 43-85.

23, 25 March

The Pianist, dir. Roman Polanski (2002)

Michlic, Joanna. "Coming to Terms with the 'Dark Past': The Polish Debate about the Jedwabne Massacre." *Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism*, no. 21. The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism. 2002.

30 March, 1 April

The Counterfeiters, dir. Stefan Ruzowitzky (2007)

Burger, Adolf. *The Devil's Workshop: A Memoir of the Nazi Counterfeiting Operation*. London: Frontline Books, 2009. Excerpts.

6 April, 8 April

The Pawnbroker, dir. Sidney Lumet (1964)

Leff, Leonard J. "Hollywood and the Holocaust: Remembering *The Pawnbroker*." *American Jewish History* 84, no. 4 (1996): 353-76.

Discussion of the final.

Readings

All readings are on the History and Classics Moodle except Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. I have ordered it for the bookstore and also placed two copies on reserve at the Humanities and Social Science Library. It costs \$12.78 from Amazon.ca. It's a controversial classic and well worth owning. The enrollment key for our course on the Moodle is Cinema. The URL for the Moodle is:

<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/historyandclassics/moodle/>

Film Screenings

Films will be screened on Saturdays at 11:00 in Business 3-9, and again on Mondays at 3:00 in Business 2-9; these are on the Saturdays and Mondays before the class begins discussing the film that is screened. Most screenings will last about two hours. The longest screening will be for *The Pianist* (150 minutes). Because the University will be closed for Good Friday and Easter Monday, we will show *The Pianist* at 3:00 on Thursday 1 April in a place to be announced instead of on Monday; the Saturday screening will take place as normal on 3 April.

Grading

Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	35%
Film Review/Analysis	35%

I will be grading different components in percentages. Here is how the percentages convert to letter grades:
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A+	96	B+	84	C+	72	D+	60	F	less than 56
A	92	B	80	C	68	D	56		
A-	88	B-	76	C-	64				

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will consist of an essay chosen from two questions. The questions will concern the miniseries *Holocaust* and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. You will have to know both fairly well.

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of two essays chosen from three questions. They will concern the films and readings from 11 February on. I will discuss the final exam at the last class meeting on 8 April, so please attend it. If you know you have to miss that class, then please make arrangements with another student to find out what I said.

Film Review/Analysis

For this course we will write a film review or analysis. This is probably a more useful genre than the traditional academic paper.

Here are the rules:

1. The film or films under review *must* relate to the Holocaust. If you are uncertain whether a certain film qualifies or not, ask me.
2. Your review absolutely must make reference to other films we showed in our course, to assigned readings, and to the lectures. I have made this rule for two reasons: 1) I want to see integration of knowledge, and 2) I don't want to evaluate a paper bought on line.
3. Papers must be original compositions: plagiarism will not be tolerated. On plagiarism, please consult the Code of Student Behavior published in the *Calendar* and on the university website. Here is the most important passage: "No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study."
4. Aim for 2000-2500 words, but length is flexible. Add illustrations.

I am putting up some sources on the Moodle that will help you. There is a short piece called "Writing the Film Review" that outlines some basics and makes some useful suggestions. Then I am putting up three examples of historical film reviews: Timothy Snyder's review of *Defiance* (Snyder Caught between Hitler and Stalin), Robert Rosenstone's review of *Glory* (Rosenstone on Glory), and my own review of *Victim Cinema* (Himka Victim Cinema). For academic style (footnotes, etc.) follow my article or use the Chicago Manual of Style online. Get to the latter through our library online

access if you want full access to the site. This is the best style guide for academic historians.

Please feel free at all times to come to my office hours or make an appointment to discuss your paper. Better we talk about it than for you to grope in the dark.

Papers will be graded with the following criteria in mind:

- quality of style
- organization
- presentation
- research
- depth of analysis
- effective integration of other course materials

On style and the writing process in general, the following book is said to be very helpful: Thomas Kane and Karen Ogden, *The Canadian Oxford Guide to Writing* (Oxford University Press).

Papers must have footnotes or endnotes: I need to know where you're getting your information from. It is not enough just to provide notes for quotations. Even internet sources need to be quoted (see Chicago Manual of Style online to learn how).

Instead of writing a paper, you may present your analysis as a film about 10-20 minutes long. The same criteria are applicable, *mutatis mutandis*.

The papers (or DVDs) are due by 8 April. Late submissions will be liable to penalties of 4 percentage points for each working day late. I can be flexible if you need an extension, but you have to let me know in advance.