

## European Studies/History 527 The Holocaust in Feature Films

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### Required Readings:

**(BA)** Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present*

**(BE)** Bergen, *War and Genocide*

**(MI)**, Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory*

**(TO)** Toplin, *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood*

L=Long Movie, Plan to Stay Later.

Date	Movie/Topic	Reading
<b>Unit 1: Hitler , Germany, and the "Final Solution"</b>		(See <a href="http://www.IMDb.com">www.IMDb.com</a> for reviews of each movie)
January 18	Introduction to Course	BA, 1-19
January 25	Max	BA, 239-243 BE, 1-51
February 1	The Great Dictator	TO, 1-57
February 8	Jew Boy Levi	BA, 103-120 BE, 53-100
February 15	The Wannsee Conference	BE, 131-157, TO, 58-89
Feb. 22	The Empty Mirror	BA, 65-74, TO: 90-138
<b>Unit 2: Jewish and Gentile Responses to the Holocaust</b>	<b>First Paper Due March 1</b>	
March 1	(L) Diary of Anne Frank	BA, 23-40 MI, 3-84
March 8	(L) The Pianist	BA, 78-84, 243-48; BE, 101-129
March 22	Rosenstrasse	BE, 131-174
March 29	Life Is Beautiful	BA 135-164
April 5	The Grey Zone	BA, 253-258; BE, 174-219
<b>Unit 3: The Lingering Impact of the Holocaust</b>	<b>Second Paper Due April 12<sup>th</sup></b>	
April 12	(L) Judgment at Nuremberg	MI, 85-107; BE, 221-228
April 19	The Pawnbroker	MI, 107-125
April 26	Left Luggage	BA, 215-225
May 3	The Nasty Girl	BA, 225-230.
May 10	Homicide	MI, 159-186
May 17 4:00 PM	<b>Final Paper Due</b>	

## I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

In European Studies and History 527, students will view a variety of feature films on the origins, implementation, and aftermath of the Holocaust. Goals of this course include:

- to acquaint students with significant American and foreign feature films dealing with Holocaust themes;
- to introduce students to issues of cinematic representation of the Holocaust and the contemporary meanings and critical and public reception of such films;
- to develop students' skills in the critical analysis of visual and narrative strategies in films and the process of adapting literary and historical sources into films;
- to interpret these films as products of specific cultural contexts and reflections of different national understandings of the Holocaust;
- to apply the above skills in written assignments and class discussions.

## II. ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS AND OPTIONS

Students will need to select three of the assignments listed below. One assignment must be completed by the end of each course unit.

- A. Oral Review: Students can volunteer to present a ten minute review of the movie seen the prior week for the rest of the class. They should approach the film from the perspectives introduced in the Baron, Toplin and Mintz books and can (but also credit) reviews for each movie posted on the [www.IMDb.com](http://www.IMDb.com) website. They can opt to show film clips or PowerPoint presentation to illustrate their analysis of the film. They should also prepare a several questions about the film to facilitate the class discussion of it. Each student can do only one oral review. Students who do this option are exempted from doing a paper for the unit in which their film is screened.
- B. Papers: For each unit, students are required to write a six-page double-spaced 12 font typed paper with one-inch margins analyzing one or two films according to one of the following approaches. (Only students presenting an oral review from the unit are exempted from writing a paper during that unit.)
1. Analyze one of the films shown in class for its effectiveness in conveying a theme or representing an event or figure from the history of the Holocaust. Use the Toplin book as a guide for the criteria that a good historical film should meet.
  2. Analyze one of the films shown in class from the second or third units as an example of one of the two models of representation discussed in the Mintz book.
  3. Based on conflicting reviews and interpretations for a particular movie, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each and present own interpretation of it
  4. Compare and contrast the portrayal of the same theme in two movies from the course:

For example, compare the depictions of:

Hitler as portrayed in *Max*, *The Great Dictator* and *The Empty Mirror*

Anti-Semitism in *Jew Boy Levi* and *The Wannsee Conference*.

The experience of Jews in hiding in the *Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Pianist*

Concentration survival in *Life Is Beautiful* and *The Grey Zone*

Jewish resistance and passivity in *The Pianist* and *The Grey Zone*

Postwar responses to the Holocaust in *Judgment at Nuremberg* and *The Nasty Girl*

Concentration camp survivors in *The Pawnbroker* and *Left Luggage*

Gentile responses to the Holocaust in *The Pianist* and *Rosenstrasse*

Holocaust in postwar German and Jewish identity in *The Nasty Girl* and *Homicide*

5. Compare and contrast the treatment of the same theme in class movie and similar movie not shown in the course. (see Baron, 279-289 for other films to watch).

Suggested Comparisons:

*The Great Dictator* and *The Producers*

*The Empty Mirror* and *Downfall*

*Jew Boy Levi* and *Swing Kids*

*Conspiracy* and *The Wannsee Conference*

*The Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Attic* or *Anne Frank: The Whole Story*

*Schindler's List* and *The Pianist*

*Life Is Beautiful* and *Jacob the Liar*

*Rosenstrasse* and *Aimee and Jaguar*

*The Grey Zone* and *Triumph of the Spirit* or *Escape from Sobibor*

*Judgment at Nuremberg* and *Nuremberg*

*The Pawnbroker* and *Sophie's Choice*

*The Nasty Girl* and *The Odessa File*

*Left Luggage* and *Shine* or *The Substance of Fire*

*Homicide* and *The Believer*

6. Explain and interpret the changes a director makes in adapting a literary or historical source into a film.

Sources:

*The Empty Mirror* compared to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*

*Jew Boy Levi* compared to Thomas Strittmaier's play with the same title

*The Wannsee Conference* the minutes from the Wannsee Conference

*The Diary of Anne Frank* to *The Diary of Anne Frank: Definitive Edition*

*The Pianist* to Wladislaw Szpilman's memoir of the same title.

*Rosenstrasse* to Nathan Stolz's *Resistance of the Heart*

*The Grey Zone* to Milos Nyslizi's *Doctor in Auschwitz*

*Judgment at Nuremberg* to historical accounts of the Nuremberg Trials of Judges.

*The Pawnbroker* to Lewis Wallant's novel of the same title

*The Nasty Girl* to Anna Rosmus' *Against the Stream*

*Left Luggage* to Carl Friedrich's novel *The Shovel and the Loom*

7. Explain and interpret the differences and similarities between how one of the feature films depicts its subject compared to a documentary on the same topic.

*The Empty Mirror to The Twisted Cross or Hitler: A Career*  
*The Wannsee Conference to The Specialist*  
*The Diary of Anne Frank to Anne Frank Remembered*  
*Aimee and Jaguar to Love Story: Berlin 1942*  
*The Grey Zone to The Last Days*  
*Judgment at Nuremberg to A Memory of Justice*  
*Left Luggage to Breaking the Silence*

8. Study the critical and popular reception to one of the films by looking up reviews of the movies, identifying the most common reasons for criticism or praise of the film, and interpreting the similarities or differences in these responses.

### Graduate Students:

If you are a graduate student, your last paper will be a 12 page double-spaced 12 font paper with one-inch margins evaluating the validity of the theoretical or interpretive approach presented in one of the books listed under the Selected Bibliography in Baron, 269-277 as applied to one or two of the movies in the course.

- C. Academic Honesty: Footnote your sources, indicate direct quotes, and avoid close paraphrasing your sources. Plagiarism will result in failure of the course.
- D. Late Papers: On the first and second papers, .33 will be deducted from your grade if handed in the same week. If handed at the next class, a full grade will be deducted. The last paper will lose .33 if one day late, .66 for two days late, and failed after then.

### III. ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION

We will pass an attendance sheet at the beginning of each class. We expect you to see these films in class. You can miss two classes without any consequences. Every missed class after that will result in a .33 reduction of your final grade (i.e. B to B-).

### IV. ASSESSMENT/GRADES

#### Undergraduate Students:

The review or paper for the first unit counts 20% of the final grade.

Each review or paper for the remaining units counts 30% of the final grade.

Participation in discussions or postings on Blackboard Forums=20% of the final grade.

#### Graduate Students:

Your first and second papers each count 20% of the final grade.

The last paper counts 40% of the final grade. Discussion or Blackboard=20%

Participation in discussions or postings on Blackboard Forums=20% of final grade.