

October 20, 2021

SYLLABUS FOR: The Holocaust in Cinema: A Thematic Approach

Thursday Afternoons

Zoom Videoconference Class

COORDINATORS: Ezra L. Stieglitz and Sam Shamoon

1:00-3:00 PM, 8 weeks

Sep 23-Nov 11

Fee: \$25

CLASS SIZE LIMIT: 25

There have been many excellent films produced about the Holocaust. The main purpose of this class is to view and analyze a collection of provocative films related to specific Holocaust themes. The themes being considered for this class are the rescuers, Nazi confiscation of Jewish assets, the aftermath of the Holocaust, justice and reckoning, and Holocaust denial. Films being considered for this class are *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *Conspiracy*, *Woman in Gold*, *1945*, and *Denial*. This class is especially meaningful today with the dramatic rise in anti-Semitic incidents.

FORMAT: Each class is based on viewing one film based on a specific Holocaust theme. The time for each class will be divided as follows. The first part of class will be based on providing historical information on the theme of the week. This information will make the discussion of the film more meaningful. The second part of class will be based on an in-depth discussion of the elements/contents of the film. In addition, interesting material about the making of the film such as reasons why it was produced, the actors, and the location of the filming will be presented.

Below is an example of how a specific class is organized.

THEME: The Aftermath of the Holocaust

FILM OF THE WEEK: *1945*

PART 1: Historical information about what happened to Holocaust survivors who returned to their countries and towns of origin soon after the end of WWII.

PART 2: The film *1945* (2017) is a Hungarian movie co-written and directed by Ferenc Török. It takes place in a remote rural village in Hungary, a few months after the German surrender (12 August 1945, 11 AM). Two mysterious strangers dressed in black appear at the railway station of a Hungarian village. Within a few hours, everything changes. Information about this film such as the director, actors, and awards received would be presented. Time could also be devoted to a discussion of how this film was received in Hungary.

Participants will be responsible to view all films on their own. Each class is divided into two parts. First, one class member will provide historical information on the theme of the week. The second part of class will be devoted to a discussion of the film of the week. Class members will be asked to discuss their answers to questions distributed in advance of the class. The leader of this discussion will be determined later.

RESOURCES/EXPENSES: Films to be viewed are available through a variety of sources such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube, etc. as well as local libraries! There will be minimal expenses based on the film being watched and some will be at no cost through the local library or on YouTube.

COORDINATORS: Ezra Stieglitz, Ph.D., is a retired Rhode Island College Professor Emeritus where he taught a course on “Holocaust and Genocide.” He has also served as an educator on the March of the Living Program where high school students visited Holocaust sites in Poland. Ezra Stieglitz is a long-time board member of the Sandra Bornstein Holocaust Education Center. Sam Shamoon has coordinated many popular courses for LLC. In addition, he has given lectures on the history of Mizrahi Jewry and is an active Board member of the Friends of Touro Synagogue Foundation, which is dedicated to preserving the synagogue and its legacy of religious freedom.

Ezra Stieglitz

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Sam Shamoon

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Role of Participants

The class is based on films related to Holocaust themes. During the first part of each class, members will be responsible for making a 35-40 minute presentation on a topic related to that theme. This presentation will provide the segue needed to better understand the content of the film discussed in the second part of class. Potential topics for these presentations are listed in the “Class Schedule” of the syllabus below. For example, for the theme “Justice and Reckoning,” the following presentation topics are listed for your choosing:

The difference between perpetrators and collaborators --
What punishments are justifiable? Explain why.

The Nuremberg Trial of the major war criminals, held from November 20, 1945, to October 1, 1946, e.g, Hermann Goering, Hans Frank

The Trial of Adolph Eichmann


The trials of “lesser officials” from 1960 to the present, e.g., John Demjanjuk

Base your presentation on one of these topics. Of course, you may choose another topic related to the theme that is not included on the list. Feel free to check with the coordinators on the appropriateness of this selection. Time will be allotted for questions and answers at the end of your presentation.

If you want to use a visual presentation that requires screen sharing (such as *PowerPoint*), remember that sometimes frustrating and time-consuming glitches may occur when sharing it. So to ensure that things run smoothly, let's have a back-up plan: a day or two before your presentation, please send copies of your Power Point (or whatever) file to our co-coordinators, Ezra Stieglitz estieglitz@ric.edu and Sam Shamoan sam.shamoan@gmail.com. so one of us could show your visual material for you if necessary. In fact, if it would be easier for you, Ezra and Sam will run your *PowerPoint* during your presentation and change "slides" at your prompting. Whatever you feel most comfortable with. A word of advice, avoid basing most of your presentation on information found in *WIKIPEDIA*. There are many other excellent sources of information that can be found and used for your presentation.

The second half of class will be devoted to a discussion of the film of the week. In the above example, *Judgment at Nuremberg* will be discussed. Connections should be made with the background information provided in the first part of class and the theme of the film. The guiding questions distributed in advance will help you make these connections. A class member (to be chosen) will lead the discussion of the film.

Class Schedule

Date and film	Themes & Presentation Topics	Presenters/Discussion Leaders
Week I – Sept. 23	Introduction Video: "Jewish Life in Eastern Europe Before World War II"	Ezra & Sam
		Volunteers Needed 
Week II – Sept. 30 <i>Ship of Fools</i>	Theme: Nazi Germany in the 1930's Possible Presentation Topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The progression from democracy to dictatorship in the 1930's ○ The Nuremberg Laws ○ Kristallnacht: The beginning of the end 	Historical Information-Presenter: Jessica Rowe Film Discussion-Leader: Jessica Rowe
Week III – Oct. 7 <i>Voyage of the</i>	Theme: The Refugees Possible Presentation Topic:	Historical Information-Presenter:

<i>Damned</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ United States policy towards Jewish refugees during the Nazi era ○ Reasons why Jews did not leave Germany and occupied countries during the Nazi era (from 1933-1945) ○ Safe havens for Jewish refugees during the Nazi era, e.g., Shanghai 	Film Discussion-Leader:
<p>Week IV – Oct. 14</p> <p><i>Women in Gold</i></p>	<p>Theme: Nazi Confiscation of Jewish Assets</p> <p>Possible Presentation Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jewish property seizures that stripped European Jews of billions of dollars worth of cash, housing, businesses, and personal belongings. ○ The “degenerate” art exhibit in Munich (1937) ○ What happened to art collections confiscated from Jews in Germany? ○ The restitution of Holocaust-era assets: Promises and reality 	<p>Historical Information-Presenter: Anne Cohen</p> <p>Film Discussion-Leader: Diane Greenwald</p>
<p>Week V – Oct. 21</p> <p><i>In Darkness</i></p>	<p>Theme: The Rescuers (Non-Jewish)</p> <p>Possible Presentation Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What motivated non-Jews to rescue Jews? Why did they do it? ○ What is the difference between a rescuer and bystander? ○ Noteworthy non-Jewish rescuers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sugihara ○ The citizens of Le Chambon (France) ○ The Danes ○ Raoul Wallenberg ○ Nicholas Winton ○ The Righteous Among the Nations Award given by Yad Vashem 	<p>Historical Information-Presenter: Ruth Guyer</p> <p>Film Discussion-Leader: David Shamoan Screen Writer & Executive Producer for <i>In Darkness</i></p> <p>This film was nominated for an Academy Award.</p>
<p>Week VI – Oct. 28</p> <p><i>1945</i></p>	<p>Theme: The Aftermath</p> <p>Possible Presentation Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The “unwelcoming” of Jewish survivors ○ The takeover of Jewish property ○ Anti-Jewish bias in Polish towns and cities ○ Post-war pogroms 	<p>Historical Information-Presenter: Maxine Cohen</p> <p>Film Discussion-Leader:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ War reparations in Germany and other countries 	
<p>Week VII – Nov. 4</p> <p><i>Judgment at Nuremberg</i></p>	<p>Theme: The Aftermath</p> <p>Possible Presentation Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The difference between perpetrators and collaborators ○ What punishment for perpetrators and collaborators is suitable? Explain why. ○ The Nuremberg Trial of the major war criminals, held from November 20, 1945, to October 1, 1946, e.g, Hermann Goering, Hans Frank ○ The trial of Adolph Eichmann ○ The trials of "lesser officials" from 1960 to the present, e.g., John Demjanjuk 	<p>Historical Information-Presenter: Diane Greenwald</p> <p>Film Discussion-Leader: Avram Cohen</p>
<p>Week VIII – Nov. 11</p> <p><i>Denial</i></p>	<p>Theme: Holocaust Deniers</p> <p>Possible Presentation Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are arguments used by Holocaust deniers to question the occurrence of the Holocaust? ○ What can be done about Holocaust deniers? ○ Holocaust denial in the Middle East 	<p>Historical Information-Presenters: Daniel Lee</p> <p>Sandra Gandsman</p> <p>Film Discussion-Leader: Ruth Geyer</p>

List and Descriptions of Films

***Ship of Fools* (1965) 2 hr. 29 min.**

An ocean liner belonging to a second-rate German company is making a twenty-six day voyage from Veracruz, Mexico to Bremerhaven, Germany in 1933. Along the way it will stop in Cuba to pick up a large group of Spanish farm laborers who are being shipped home and who will be housed like cattle in steerage

***Voyage of the Damned* (1976) 155 Minutes**

The story was inspired by true events concerning the fate of the MS St. Louis ocean liner carrying Jewish refugees from Germany to Cuba in 1939. Contents. Plot. Based on historic events, this dramatic film concerns the 1939 voyage of the MS St. Louis, which departed from Hamburg carrying 937 Jews from Germany, ostensibly bound for Havana, Cuba.

***In Darkness* (2011) 2 hr. 25 min.**

Jan 05, 2012 · IN DARKNESS tells the true story of Leopold Socha who risks his own life to save a dozen people from certain death. Initially only interested in his own good, the thief and burglar hides Jewish refugees for 14 months in the sewers of the German-occupied town of Lvov (former Poland).

***Woman in Gold* (2015) 1 hr. 49 min.**

Maria Altmann, an octogenarian Jewish refugee, takes on the Austrian government to recover artwork she believes rightfully belongs to her family.

***1945* (2017) 2 hr. 8 min.**

12 August 1945, 11 AM. Two mysterious strangers, dressed in black, Jews, appear at the railway station of a Hungarian village. In the shadow of Russian occupation, the people of the village are preparing for the wedding of the son of the town clerk. The bride's former fiance returns from captivity. Within a few hours, everything changes. Secrets, sins, reckoning, love, betrayal, confrontation.

***Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961) 2 hr. 59 min.**

It has been three years since the most important Nazi leaders had already been tried. This trial is about 4 judges who used their offices to conduct Nazi sterilization and cleansing policies. Retired American judge, Dan Haywood has a daunting task ahead of him. The Cold War is heating up and no one wants any more trials as Germany, and Allied governments,

want to forget the past. But is that the right thing to do is the question that the tribunal must decide.

DENIAL (2016) 1 hr. 49 min.

This British-American drama focuses on the amazing true story of the *Irving v Penguin Books Ltd* case. The film stars a superb Rachel Weisz playing Deborah E. Lipstadt, an American professor of Holocaust studies, who is harassed and later sued by David Irving, a scholar of Nazi Germany. Irving sues Lipstadt for libel, on the grounds that she called him a Holocaust denier. To win the case in court, the burden of proof fell on her: she had to prove her claims that Irving distorted facts to fit his view of history were indeed false and that the Holocaust was a fact, a burden of proof which took her on a journey through Shoah history.