

**HONORS 290--01: PHILOSOPHY AND THE HOLOCAUST [full title:
"MORAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES CONCERNING THE
HOLOCAUST"]**

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Office hours:

Tuesday 12:30-1:30

Thursday 9:50-10:50

or by arrangement/appointment
(other times available)

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BOOKS TO BUY (ALL IN PAPERBACK):

REQUIRED:

- 1) Ronnie Landau, The Nazi Holocaust (Ivan R. Dee, 1994)
- 2) David H. Jones, Moral Responsibility in the Holocaust: A Study in the Ethics of Character (Rowman and Littlefield, 1999)
- 3) Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz (Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, 1996)

[These books are also on reserve at Healey Library.]

[OTHER READINGS are on the Course Website: BlumPhilosophy.com {see below}, and usually on Electronic Reserves {"ERes"} at Healey Library {the course password is "genocide"}]

Course Goals:

1. To gain a minimal, basic understanding of the historical events leading up to and including the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews of Europe (generally known as "The Holocaust.")
2. To think analytically and critically about the moral responsibility of various parties to the Holocaust – such as German police officers, ordinary German citizens, bystanders in occupied countries, religious institutions (including the Pope at the time, Pius XII)
3. To think deeply about other moral, philosophical, and religious aspects of the Holocaust – human nature; the nature of conscience; historical forces and human choice; the relation of Christianity, and religion in general, to the significance of the Holocaust; and the nature of good and evil.
4. To confront and think analytically about the moral and personal challenges of understanding a moral horror such as the Holocaust.
5. To learn skills and sensitivities of discussing emotionally charged material in a classroom setting.

**COMPUTERS, SMART PHONES, CELL PHONES, AND SIMILAR DEVICES MUST BE
TURNED OFF IN THIS CLASS, TO HELP KEEP YOUR ATTENTION FOCUSED
ONLY ON THE CLASS. IF THIS POLICY PRESENTS A HARDSHIP OR
PROBLEM FOR YOU, PLEASE SPEAK WITH ME ABOUT IT.**

Required course work:

1. time line of antisemitism & Jewish history, Nazi regime, and Holocaust: 15%
2. essay on moral responsibility for killing during the Holocaust (the Browning/Goldhagen controversy): 20%
3. Primo Levi assignment: 20%
4. Religious responses to the Holocaust: 20%
5. Vetlesen/Baumann/Holocaust overview paper: 20% [due during finals week]

[YOU ARE REQUIRED TO DO ONLY TWO OF ASSIGNMENTS 3, 4 AND 5. IF YOU CHOOSE TO DO ALL 3, I WILL DROP YOUR LOWEST GRADE OF THE THREE AND COUNT THE OTHER TWO.]

6. Final in-class exam: 15%

Class participation and attendance: 10% [Attendance: After 2 absences, your attendance grade will be reduced by .5 for every class missed, unless you have a valid excuse for which you can produce appropriate and convincing documentation. But fewer than 2 absences will still enhance your overall attendance grade.]

[ALL PAPERS EXCEPT #5 MAY BE REWRITTEN]

YOU MUST EARN AT LEAST A "B" IN THIS CLASS TO GET HONORS CREDIT FOR IT

COURSE WEBSITE: "BlumPhilosophy.com" (type in address line of your browser), or www.faculty.umb.edu/lawrence_blum. Click on "Philosophy and the Holocaust," on the left side of the home page, for course materials – assignments, handouts, syllabus, etc. All of the readings not in the required books are available on this website under the class for which they are due ("class 3," "class 8," etc.). Handouts, assignments, and course announcements will be posted on the site. Please check the website when you miss class.

Disability: If you have a disability and feel you will need accommodations in order to complete course requirements, please contact the Ross Center for Disability Services, Campus Center Upper Level, room 211 (617.287.7430).

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:

A university such as the University of Massachusetts can function properly only if its members conduct their academic life in an entirely honest manner, with complete integrity. The university spells out in detail what kinds of conduct violate this requirement of academic integrity (under the "Code of Student Conduct") in the catalog, in the student handbook, and on the university website. Violations of this policy are subject to a range of punishments, from a failing grade on the assignment in which plagiarism or other dishonesty has taken place, to expulsion from the university. The penalties, and the procedures to be taken by the instructor, the student, and the university, in a case of suspected plagiarism or other dishonesty, are spelled out in the documents just mentioned. [The instructor's rules for appropriate citation of sources will be provided with the first essay assignment.] I see academic honesty as a matter both of individual and institutional morality.

SYLLABUS

Sept 3 (class 1): Introduction

---EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM: THE BACKGROUND TO MODERN ANTISEMITISM---

5 (class 2): Gavin Langmuir, "From Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism," from History, Religion, and Antisemitism (1990): 275-287 [bottom of page], 301[top of page]-305 [ERes]

Background reading: (a) Landau, Chapter 2 "Survey of Jewish History", 25-47;

(b) Landau, Chapter 3 ("The European Jew and the Modern World"), 48-63

[Note that by October 1st you must look at some of the on-line Holocaust resources (in particular, testimonies), on the handout of that name. See Oct 1 assignment.]

---THE RISE OF NAZISM AND DEVELOPMENT OF ANTI-JEWISH POLICIES IN GERMANY---

10 (class 3): (a) Landau, Chapter 4 ("Nazism and Modern Germany"): 75-92, 94-96, 104-106, 110-112

(b) Chapter 5 ("Nazi Germany, 1933-38: Anti-Jewish Policy and Legislation") 115-133

(c) Chapter 6 ("Nazi Europe, 1938-41: Kristallnacht to Ghettoization in the East") 134-160
(in class: segments of "Triumph of the Will")

----DID THE GERMAN PEOPLE SUPPORT HITLER'S ANTI-JEWISH POLICIES? WAS THERE A NAZI CONSCIENCE?---

12 (class 4): Claudia Koonz, "Racial War at Home," from The Nazi Conscience (2003): 253-275 [ERes]

Background reading : (a) Landau, Chapter 9 ("The Jewish Question: Public Opinion in Nazi Germany"), 222-242

(b) Jones, Chapter 4 ("Self-Deception"): 79-84 [NOTE: *not whole chapter*]

17: (class 5) (a) Jonathan Bennett, "The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn" 123-134
[available only on the course website]

(b) A. Campbell Garnett, "Conscience and Conscientiousness," from J. Feinberg (ed.), Moral Concepts, 80-83 [available only on the course website]

---first part of Time Line of anti-Semitism & Jewish history, Nazi regime, and Holocaust due---

-----THE BROWNING/GOLDHAGEN DEBATE ABOUT THE MOTIVES OF POLICE BATTALION KILLERS-----

19: (class 6) (a) Christopher Browning, "Ordinary Men," (from Donald Niewyk [ed.], The Holocaust, 3rd edition): 76-90

(b) Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, "Hitler's Willing Executioners," (from Donald Niewyk [ed.], The Holocaust, 3rd edition): 91-103

[(a) and (b) are listed on the site as "Browning and Goldhagen"]

(c) "Pushed to their psychological limit" (Members of the Einsatzgruppen on the stresses and strains of killing), from "The Good Old Days
The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders" (1988): 60-71
[ERes]

24: (class 7) Jones, chapter 7 ("Perpetrators: Men in Police Battalions"): 145-167

26: (class 8) Nick Zangwill, "Perpetrator Motivation: Some Reflections on the Browning/Goldhagen Debate," in E. Garrard and G. Scarre (eds.), Moral Philosophy and the Holocaust (2003): 89-102 [ERes]

++++Moral responsibility and the Browning/Goldhagen controversy assignment handed out++++

-----THE SYSTEM OF EXTERMINATION: AUSCHWITZ AND ITS VICTIMS-----

Oct 1: (class 9) (a) Franciszek Piper, "Auschwitz Concentration Camp: How it was used in the Nazi system of terror and genocide and in the economy of the Third Reich," in M. Berenbaum and A. Peck (eds.), The Holocaust and History (1998): 371-386 [ERes]

(b) Konnilyn Feig, "Non-Jewish Victims in the Concentration Camps," from M. Berenbaum (ed.), A Mosaic of Victims (1990), 161-178 [ERes]

(c) By today, look at some personal testimonies at one of the on-line sites. [See handout: "On-Line Holocaust Resources." One of these, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, is on the website]

Background reading: Landau, chapter 7 ("The Holocaust, 1941-45: From Dehumanization to Annihilation"): 161-180

----"THE FINAL SOLUTION TO THE JEWISH QUESTION": THE WORLD OF AUSCHWITZ---- [IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENT FOR THE (NEXT) 3 CLASSES ON LEVI'S SURVIVAL IN AUSCHWITZ:]

For *each* of the 3 days, mark out one incident or passage that strikes you as particularly significant, and be prepared to say in class why you think it important. I will call on students at random to introduce and discuss your chosen passage.]

3: (class 10) Levi, Survival in Auschwitz, 9-76

8: (class 11) Levi, 77-135

******Moral responsibility and the Browning/Goldhagen controversy assignment due******

10: (class 12) (a) Levi, 136-173

15: (class 13) Lawrence Blum, "The Poles, the Jews, and the Holocaust: reflections on an AME trip to Auschwitz," *Journal of Moral Education*, June 2004: 131-148

----MORAL CHOICE IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS----

17: (class 14) (a) Levi, "The Grey Zone," from The Drowned and the Saved, 36-69 [ERes]
(b) Lawrence Langer, "The Dilemma of Choice in the Concentration Camps"
in J. Roth and M. Berenbaum (eds.) Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications: 222-231 [ERes]

22: (class 15) Holocaust speaker: Jack Trompetter

****Levi journal due****

---THE HOLOCAUST ON FILM: SCHINDLER'S LIST, SHOAH, HOLOCAUST FOOTAGE----

24: screening of (portion of) *Shoah* [Prof. Blum is away for this class]

(Monday 28: Viewing of *Schindler's List* at Professor Blum's house, 7:00 [details later])
You must have seen the whole of *Schindler's List* by the next class, Tuesday, Oct 29!

29: (class 16) Omer Bartov, "Spielberg's Oskar: Hollywood Tries Evil," 41-60, from Y. Loshitzky (ed.), Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List [ERes].
in class: Holocaust footage

----THE MORALITY OF RESCUE----

Oct 31: (class 17) (a) "Irene Opdyke," from G. Block and M. Drucker (eds.), Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust, 192-196 [ERes]
(b) Samuel and Pearl Oliner, "The Altruistic Personality," 218-231
(c) Jones, chapter 9 ("Helpers, Rescuers, Bystanders"): 199-213 [not whole chapter]

****understanding the Holocaust: film, memoir, recollection historical description due****

----THE ROLE OF THE VATICAN IN THE HOLOCAUST ERA----

Nov 5: (class 18) (a) Michael Phayer, "The Silence of Pope Pius XII," in Donald Niewyk (ed.), The Holocaust, 4th edition: 248-260
(b) Landau, "The Catholic Church," 216-221, 236-37
(c) John Pawlikowski, "The Catholic Response to the Holocaust," in Berenbaum and Peck, The Holocaust and History (1998): 551-565 [ERes]

-----CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST-----

7: (class 19) (a) Franklin Littell, "The Meaning of the Holocaust," from The Crucifixion of the Jews (1975): 60-83 [ERes]

---final version of time line of antisemitism & Jewish history, Nazi regime, and Holocaust due---

12: (class 20) (a) "Nostra Aetate" [ERes]

(b) Richard Rubenstein and John Roth, "The Silence of God: Philosophical and Religious Reflection on the Holocaust," from Approaches to Auschwitz: The Holocaust and its Legacy (1987), 290-308 [this reading is listed on the website under "class 21"]

14: (class 21) Rubenstein and Roth, 308-321 (end of last full paragraph)

-----HANNAH ARENDT'S REFLECTIONS ON EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM---

19: (class 22) Arne Johan Vetlesen, "Hannah Arendt and the Crisis of Judgment," from Perception, Empathy, and Judgment (1994), 85-92; 108 [paragraph at bottom of page]-115 [end of section] [but try to read the whole article for this class]

******Religious responses to the Holocaust assignment handed out******

21: (class 23) Vetlesen, 115-125

-----THE HOLOCAUST AND MODERN CIVILIZATION -----

Nov 26: (class 24) Zygmunt Baumann, "Introduction: Sociology After the Holocaust," from Modernity and the Holocaust (1989), 1-30

(28): THANKSGIVING VACATION

-----THE HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE-----

Dec 3: (class 25) Raimond Gaita, "Genocide and the Holocaust," from A Common Humanity (1998): 131-156 [ERes]

******Religious Responses to the Holocaust assignment due******

++++Vetlesen/Baumann/Holocaust overview assignment handed out++++

5: (class 26) (continued: no new reading)

10: (class 27) TBD

12: (class 28) Wrap-up, studying for final exam, and an attempt at closure (no new reading)

[tentative:] Vetlesen/Bauman/Gaita/Holocaust overview assignment DUE FRIDAY, December 20 by 11:00 (electronically, or at my house in Cambridge [.2 off for each day late until Monday 23rd. Assignment not accepted after that day.]