



FACULTY OF ARTS
CHARLES UNIVERSITY
IN PRAGUE



PRAGUE JEWISH STUDIES

HOLOCAUST ON FILM 2012

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Prerequisites: Enthusiasm and eagerness to watch, listen, think, speak and learn

Course Description & Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

This course will expose students to diverse cinematic depictions of the Holocaust - both documentary and narrative fiction - and to subjects, ongoing debates and controversies faced by filmmakers, film critics, filmgoers, historians and philosophers. We will focus on how the film medium deals with a wide variety of issues pertaining both to the historical event itself and to problems of contemporary concern, as well as deal with the evolution of current interpretations and representations. The class will explore the ways cinema documents and imagines the Holocaust, reconstructs or constructs history and memory and shapes our views on and knowledge of the Holocaust.

Students will be asked to grapple with a range of complex and challenging questions, among others: Should we consider the Holocaust to be beyond representation? Or what are the limits, if any? What are the ethics of cinematic representation? What is a responsible and irresponsible approach to historical fiction and where lies the distinction if there is one? What is and is not remembered, how is it remembered, how are these remembrances recollected or reenacted and what are the consequences of particular ways of representing and interpreting the Holocaust? Can films persuasively communicate the experience of the Holocaust, approximate what really happened and how it was experienced? In what way have films impacted public awareness of the Holocaust and influenced or created the public's opinions? How has the production and reception of films about the Holocaust changed over time and in different places? What are the political, social, psychological, religious and theological reactions to the Holocaust as echoed in films? Can we derive aesthetic pleasure from depictions of atrocities? What are the aesthetic considerations and cultural implications of the transition of the most extreme and extraordinary historical experience into art? Is there such a



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thing as fantasies of witnessing the Holocaust, identification? How is the gender discourse reflected and expressed?

Individual sessions will be divided between screenings (either of entire films or extracts) and lecture/discussion. While each session will have a main theme, they will not be separated strictly. Rather, the discussed topics and concepts will be “layered” and continuously developed while students will be asked to build on areas already covered in class, employing knowledge, comprehension and critical analysis skills acquired throughout the course. Greater emphasis will be put on studying Czech and European films but one session will also be devoted to the American cinematic responses to the Holocaust.

Part of the course includes a one-day excursion to Terezín.

Located near Prague, the garrison town of Terezín (Theresienstadt) was turned into a “model ghetto” by Nazis to which Jews from Bohemia and Moravia and later also from Germany, Austria, Holland, Denmark and Slovakia were deported. With “self-government” and cultural life, Terezín was abused by Nazi propaganda to present to the world a “Jewish settlement” and to conceal the true fate of the Jews. The fortress city in fact functioned primarily as a transit camp and a point of embarkation to extermination centers in German occupied Baltic States, Belarus and Poland. Of the approximately 140,000 Jews transferred to Theresienstadt, about 33,000 died there and 90,000 were sent further east, sending an absolute majority of them to their deaths.

Since a number of films screened in the class depict or refer to Terezín, a tour of the town will confront the physical reality of the former ghetto and concentration camp with the cinematic interpretations of its history.

Q&A session with a director of one of the screened films

The course will most probably feature a Q&A meeting with the director of one of the films viewed and discussed in class (depending on the availability of the artists, it will likely be one of the following: Jan Hřebejk, Jan Němec, Václav Marhoul, Matěj Mináč).

Required Readings

A course reader will be distributed to students at the beginning of the course.

Recommended Readings

The course reader is based on excerpts from a number of the following books. Students are welcome and encouraged to read beyond the brief required selections in the reader.

Arendt Hannah, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil*, New York: Viking Press, 1994.

Bauer Yehuda, *A History of the Holocaust*, New York: Franklin Watts, 2002.

Bartov Omer, *The "Jew" in Cinema: From the Golem to Don't Touch My Holocaust*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.



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Bordwell David, Thompson Kristin, *Film Art: An Introduction*, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002.

Borowski Tadeusz, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

Browning Christopher R.: *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Finkelstein Norman G., *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, London: Verso, 2000.

Glazar Richard, *Trap with a Green Fence: Survival in Treblinka*, Northwestern University Press, 1995.

Goldhagen Daniel J., *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York: Vintage Books, 1997.

Gross Jan T.: *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community of Jedwabne, Poland*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Hirsch Joshua, *Afterimage, Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.

Insdorf Annette, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust*, New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1983.

Krall Hanna, *The Subtenant; To Outwit God*, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992.

Lang Berel: *Holocaust Representation: Art Within the Limits of History and Ethics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Liehm Antonín, *Closely Watched Films: The Czechoslovak Experience*, White Plains, New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1977.

Loshitzky Yosefa, *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Maechler Stefan: *The Wilkomirski Affair: A Study in Biographical Truth*, New York: Schocken Books, 2001.

Mintz Alan: *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001.

Rosenstone, Robert A., *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Segev Tom, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.

Spiegelman, Art: *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1991.

Wilkomirski Binjamin, *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*, New York: Schocken Books, 1996.

Filmography

Au Revoir Les Enfants, France, 1987. Directed by Louis Malle.

Diamonds of the Night, Czechoslovakia, 1964. Directed by Jan Němec.

Distant Journey, Czechoslovakia, 1948. Directed by Alfred Radok.

Dita Saxová, Czechoslovakia, 1968. Directed by Antonín Moskalyk.



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Divided We Fall, Czech Republic, 2000. Directed by Jan Hřebejk.
Europa, Europa, Germany, 1990. Directed by Agnieszka Holland.
The Fifth Horseman is Fear, Czechoslovakia, 1965. Directed by Zdeněk Brynych.
Forgotten Transports, Czech Republic, 2009. Directed by Lukáš Příbyl. (Documentary)
The Great Dictator, U.S.A., 1940. Directed by Charles Chaplin.
Inglourious Basterds, U.S.A., 2009. Directed by Quentin Tarantino.
Lacombe, Lucien, France, 1974. Directed by Louis Malle.
Life is Beautiful, Italy, 1997. Directed by Roberto Benigni.
Night and Fog, France, 1955. Directed by Alain Resnais. (Documentary)
The Pawn Broker, U.S.A., 1965. Directed by Sydney Lumet.
The Power of Good: Nicholas Winton, Czech Republic, 2002. Directed by Matěj Mináč. (Documentary)
Prayer for Kateřina Horowitzová. Czechoslovakia, 1967. Directed by Antonín Moskalyk.
Shoah, France, 1985. Directed by Claude Lanzmann. (Documentary)
The Shop on the Main Street, Czechoslovakia, 1965. Directed by Jan Kádár and Elmar Klos.
Schindler's List, U.S.A., 1993. Directed by Steven Spielberg.
Sophie's Choice, U.S.A., 1982. Directed by Alan J. Pakula.
To Be or Not to Be, U.S.A., 1942. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch.
Tobruk, Czech Republic, 2008. Directed by Václav Marhoul.
Transport from Paradise, Czechoslovakia, 1963. Directed by Zdeněk Brynych.

Classroom Procedures

Student participation in class discussions is essential and attendance will be taken.

Class participation	60%
Film critique	15%
In-class essay	25%

Student Responsibility and Code of Conduct

Students are subject to the general standards and requirements of Charles University in regard to attendance, examinations, and conduct, as well as to the specific requirements of the program. The student is expected to assume the initiative in completing all requirements at the time specified.



Schedule

Theme 1 (Classes 1 – 5)

Memory and History - Documentary Film Representations of the Holocaust; Problems of Trauma, Testimony and Witnessing; Fact and Fiction

Shoah, France, 1985. Directed by Claude Lanzmann. (Documentary)

Forgotten Transports to Poland, Czech Republic, 2009. Directed by Lukáš Příbyl.
(Documentary)

The Power of Good: Nicholas Winton, Czech Republic, 2002. Directed by Matěj Mináč.
(Documentary)

Theme 2 (Classes 6-8)

Surviving the War, Surviving the Peace – Survivors' Reactions

The Pawn Broker, U.S.A., 1965. Directed by Sydney Lumet.

Dita Saxová, Czechoslovakia, 1968. Directed by Antonín Moskalyk.

Theme 3 (Classes 9 – 13)

Gender and the Holocaust; Holocaust Through the Eyes of Children

Prayer for Kateřina Horowitzová. Czechoslovakia, 1967. Directed by Antonín Moskalyk.

Au Revoir Les Enfants, France, 1987. Directed by Louis Malle.

Sophie's Choice, U.S.A., 1982. Directed by Alan J. Pakula.

Forgotten Transports to Estonia, Czech Republic, 2008. Directed by Lukáš Příbyl.
(documentary)

Theme 4 (Classes 14-18)

Laughter Through Tears - Humor and the Holocaust; Holocaust As Entertainment

Life is Beautiful, Italy, 1997. Directed by Roberto Benigni.

The Great Dictator, U.S.A., 1940. Directed by Charles Chaplin.

To Be or Not to Be, U.S.A., 1942. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch.

Theme 5 (Classes 19-22)

Holocaust and Hollywood - American Response to the Holocaust

Schindler's List, U.S.A., 1993. Directed by Steven Spielberg.

Inglourious Basterds, U.S.A., 2009. Directed by Quentin Tarantino.



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