

Art After Auschwitz: Representing the Holocaust

Dr. Rachel E. Perry
Spring Semester 2021

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Course Credits: 3 TAU Semester Credits

Course Description

More than half a century later, the Holocaust remains one of the most traumatic events of modern Western experience. Drawing from a wide variety of media and genres, from high and low culture, directed at private and public spaces of reception, we will examine some of the many drawings, paintings, multimedia installations, graphic novels, video performances, sculptural monuments and conceptual counter-monuments, photography, and architecture used to represent the Holocaust both during the event and afterwards.

The first half of the semester surveys the art created during the period of the Holocaust by individuals in exile or in hiding, in the camps and ghettos. We will explore how victims used artistic expression as both a means of documentation and as a form of “creative resistance” to communicate their protest, despair or hope. In addition to artistic responses to Fascism, we will examine Nazi aesthetics and cultural politics and their campaign against “degenerate art.” The second half of the semester will cover artistic representations “after Auschwitz.” Despite Theodor Adorno’s injunction that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,” artists have struggled over the past 70 years with the paradox of trying to represent the unrepresentable. We will analyze how artistic representations vary geographically and across generational lines, between the victims and survivors and the second and third Post-Holocaust generations for whom the Holocaust constitutes a mediated, “vicarious past.”

In addition to developing visual, analytical skills, we will encounter ethical, pedagogical, theological and philosophical dilemmas such as: What is the relationship between the historical event and representations of it, between what happened and how it is passed down to us? How has memory and awareness of the Holocaust been produced and transmitted through representational practices and cultural forms? What is—or should be—the primary role of art about the Holocaust: didactic, redemptive, cathartic? Are some media or genres more, or less, suitable to the task? What strategies have been and are being used to represent the Holocaust in the visual arts? What place does comedy or parody have? When does representation fall prey to sentimentality or melodrama, and at what costs? Can a representation of the Holocaust be beautiful, sublime or enjoyable or does aesthetic pleasure trivialize and exploit the pain of others?

Course Requirements and Expectations

In addition to frontal lectures with PowerPoint presentations, this course requires active participation. It is imperative that you come to class prepared to discuss and respond to course

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readings. It is strongly suggested that you print copies and bring these texts to class with you as we will devote a portion of each class to close textual and visual analysis.

Evaluation Criteria

- Midterm 40%
- Final Take home exam 40%
- Attendance, participation and short response papers 20%

Absence Policy

Attendance is mandatory. Missing classes will be reflected in the final grade of the course. Up to three justified and properly documented absences from classes may be accepted (for example: emergency matter or illness, both of which will require a doctor's note). Such cases of absence should be reported to the faculty immediately and again, a doctor's note is required. Students are required to arrive on time for classes.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction: Facing the Holocaust

Week 2: The Rise of Fascism: Artistic Responses and Fascist Aesthetics

Film Screening: *Good Morning Mr. Hitler, The Eternal Jew, Triumph of the Will*

- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "Chagall's White Crucifixion," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1991), pp. 138-153, 180-181.
- Peter Adam. "The Great German Art Exhibit" in *Art of the Third Reich*, 1992.
- Rachel Perry, "Hitler's Sculptor" International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem. <https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials/lesson-plans/germanys-sculptor.html>

Week 3: Art in the Ghettos, Camps and in Exile

- Mary Felstiner, "Charlotte Salomon's Inward-turning Testimony," *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Hartman (1994)
- Pnina Rosenberg. "Mickey au camp de Gurs" by Horst Rosenthal: Humour in the Art of the Holocaust" *Stirling French Publications: University of Stirling* (10), pp. 1-16.
- Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Complexities of Witnessing," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 1, Pp. 123-147.
- Sybil Milton, "Art of the Holocaust: A Summary" Randolph L. Brahm (Ed.), *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature*, City University of New York, New York, 1990, pp.147-152.

Web sites: <http://www.ijm.nl/collection/themes/charlotte-salomon>
<http://www.osnabrueck.de/fnh/english/default.asp>

Week 4: Cinematic Representations: Fact or Fiction?

Film Screening: *Night and Fog, Shoah, Schindler's List*

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- Imre Kertesz, "Who Owns Auschwitz?"
- Lawrence Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust*, Yale University Press, 1998
- Claude Lanzmann, Seminar at Yale 1990; "Why Spielberg has distorted the truth," *Village Voice*, 3/29/94, "Schindler's List is an Impossible Story"
- Elie Weisel, "Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory," *NY Times*, 1989

Week 5: **Is the Shoah Comic? MAUS and Beyond** (*Deuxieme Generation, The Search*, Pascal Croci, *Episodes from Auschwitz, Snow White in Auschwitz*)

- Terrence Des Pres. "Holocaust Laughter?" *Writing and the Holocaust*. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988. 216-233
- Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, vols. 1-2.
- M. Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory" in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*. Ed. Zelizer, Rutgers, 2001
- James Young, "Maus" in *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, Yale Press, 2000.

Week 6 **MIDTERM**

Week 7: **Photography's Dilemma: Is Seeing Believing?**

Film Screening: Hersonski, *Film Unfinished*, 2011. Jablonski, [Fotoamator, 1998](#).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvUdffAhFH4> selections

- Selections from Susan Sontag, *On Photography*. Picador, 2001. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images Malgré Tout*, 2003.

Week 8: **Photographic Practices in Contemporary Art**

- Young, "Sites Unseen: Shimon Attie" in *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 3
- James Young, "David Levinthal," *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 2.

Week 9: **Memorialization and Monuments**

- James Young, "Memory, Countermemory and the End of the Monument" in *At Memory's Edge*, ch. 4, 5.
- Nathan Rapoport, "Memoir of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument"
- Hans Haacke, "Und ihr habt doch gesiegt"
- Matthew Baigell, "George Segal's Holocaust Monument"

Week 10: **Mirroring Evil/Fascinating Fascism**

- Alan Schechter, www.dottiecommies.com
- Dalia Manor, "From Rejection to Recognition: Israeli Art and the Holocaust," in Stephen Feinstein, Ed. *Absence/Presence*, 2005.
- Tami Katz-Frieman, "Don't Touch My Holocaust," in *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art After the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein. New York University Press, 2003
- Adi Ophir, "On Sanctifying the Holocaust," *An Anti-Theological Treatise*, Tikkun 2, 1987.

FINAL: Take Home Exam handed out on last day of class



Course Readings and/or Required Materials

PDF files of assigned articles and other documents may be downloaded or printed directly from the Moodle website under Course Library. Because this class only meets once a week, it is critical that you leave yourself enough time to read the material each week so that you will be able to discuss new concepts and arguments in class discussions.

Instructor Biography

Dr. Perry is received her doctorate in Art History at Harvard University, specializing in art in France during the Holocaust. Her research straddles the fields of Art History, Visual Culture and Holocaust Studies with a strong focus on visual ethics, atrocity photography, exhibition design, the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and questions of cultural diplomacy and nationalism. The recipient of a Getty Postdoctoral Fellowship and the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Senior Fellowship at CASVA at the National Gallery in Washington DC, her articles have appeared in many peer reviewed journals including *October*, *History and Memory*, *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, *Revue 20/21ème siècle*, *Holocaust Studies: a Journal of Culture and History*, *French Cultural Studies*, *RIHA* and *Art Bulletin*. In 2018, she curated the exhibition "Arrivals, Departures: The Oscar Ghez Collection" at the Hecht Museum and authored the catalogue *A Memorial to Jewish Artists, Victims of Nazism*. Her most recent article, entitled "Nathalie Kraemer's Rising Voice: Letting the Silence's of History Speak" appeared in *Ars Judaica* in March 2020. Dr. Perry also lectures at Yad Vashem's International School of Holocaust Studies. A fellow of the Weiss-Livnat International Center for Holocaust Research, Dr. Perry was awarded the Humanist of the Year Award for excellence in teaching, curation and scholarship by the Rogatchi Foundation.

TAU International Academic Guidelines

Students may only attend classes which they are officially registered for. No auditing of courses is permitted. Students are responsible for reading and adhering to all policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#) at all times. Below is a summary of some of these relevant policies and procedures.

Learning Accommodations

In accordance to University guidelines, TAU International may be able to accommodate students with learning disabilities or accommodation requests if these requests are also honored at the student's home university or home school. To be considered, students must submit official documentation from their home school or university (if not in English, a notarized official copy translated into English is required) to TAU International in advance of arrival describing in detail any specific needs and how these are accommodated at the home school or university. Students must also bring a copy of this documentation with them on-site and give it to their faculty on the first day of class while introducing themselves so that the faculty know who they are and what sorts of needs or accommodations they may have. **Without official documentation from the home school submitted on or before the first day of courses, TAU will not be able to honor accommodation support.**

With supporting documentation and by following the correct procedure as outlined above, TAU International and its faculty will do the best it can to make any suitable accommodations

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possible. However, we cannot guarantee that all accommodations received at the home school can be similarly met at TAU. For example, TAU is usually not able to offer note-taking services in English, private testing rooms, or advance viewing of classroom presentations, exams, or assignments.

It may be an option to provide a student with additional tutoring or support outside the classroom as needed. Students should be aware that this additional support cannot be guaranteed and is based on teacher availability in the subject as well as the specific student level. If available, the cost of additional tutoring or support will be the sole responsibility of the student.

In-Class Exams

TAU does not permit, under any circumstances, taking any in-class (including mid or final) exams early or later than the scheduled exam day. When selecting courses, it is thus very important to note if there is an in-class midterm or final exam as this date/exam cannot be changed. It is also the student's responsibility to clarify exam dates with the professors at the beginning of a course, with the understanding that not all exam dates can be decided up front as it can sometimes depend on the pace of the course and class learning. It is the student responsibility to plan to be present for all courses including the final day of class for this reason. Early departures from the program are not approved, nor are early or exception in-class exams.

TAU International Absence Policy

Attendance is mandatory in all of the courses including Hebrew Ulpan. Faculty can and will take attendance regularly. Missing classes will be reflected in the final grade of the course. Up to three justified and properly documented absences from classes may be accepted (for example: emergency matter or illness, both of which will require a doctor's note). Such cases of absence should be reported to the faculty immediately and again, a doctor's note is required. Teachers are entitled to treat any lateness or absence without documentation as unexcused. Some of our courses such as Service Learning or the Internship Seminar require more practical in-class work; thus, attendance policies may be stricter in some courses and students then must adhere to the stricter attendance policy as outlined by the faculty/syllabus.

Students are required to arrive on time for classes. Teachers are entitled to treat any single case of lateness and/or repeated lateness as an unjustified absence.

Please note that according to official TAU Academic Policy, if a student's behavior or attendance during is disagreeable his/her course participation may be cancelled at the discretion of TAU with no due refund.

Grade Appeals

Students are responsible for checking grades once posted or distributed by faculty. The limited grade appeals window and the detailed procedure for appealing a grade – whether a graded assignment, exam or final grade – is outlined clearly in the policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#).

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