



Art After Auschwitz: Representing the Holocaust
Dr. Rachel E. Perry

Class Time: TBD

Class Location: TBD

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:

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 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.

Film Screenings: Film screenings are scheduled throughout the semester both in class and as homework assignments. If you cannot make a screening, you must inform me in advance.

Required readings: 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.

Grade Distribution:

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

Office Hours: By appointment. I can be reached at 054-772-1169. Email: perryrub@bezeqint.net

TAU International Course Guidelines

Rules and Respectful Behavior

- No cell phones or laptops permitted in class unless approved by instructor for use
- Tardiness to class is not permitted
- As our courses bring together students from many different styles of learning and from a wide variety of home institutions, we ask that students remain respectful to and patient with fellow classmates at all time as some students may be more familiar with certain course material or procedures than others.

Learning Accommodations

In accordance to University guidelines, students with learning disabilities or accommodation requests must submit official documentation from their home country / university (translated into English by notary if not already in English) to TAU International (tauiacademic@tauex.tau.ac.il) in advance of arrival describing in detail any specific needs they have. 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 they may have. TAU International and its faculty cannot guarantee that all accommodations received at the home school can be similarly met at TAU but certainly does the best it can to make any suitable accommodations possible that are needed.

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 below if there is an in-class midterm or final exam as this date/exam cannot be changed. 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. Missing classes will be reflected in the final grade of the course. Up to three justified absences from classes will be accepted (for example: emergency matter or illness, both of which will require an official doctor's note sent to the faculty **on the day of the absence**). Such cases of absence should be reported to your lecturer immediately and again, a doctor's note is required. 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 TAU Academic Policy, if a student's behavior or attendance during the semester is disagreeable his/her course participation may be cancelled at the discretion of TAU.

Students are responsible for reading and adhering to the policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#) at all times.

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*

Readings:

- 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**

Readings:

- 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. Braham (Ed.), *Reflections of the Holocaust in Art and Literature*, City University of New York, New York, 1990, pp.147-152.

Web sites: <http://www.jhm.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*

Reading:

- 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*)

Reading:

- Terrence Des Pres. "Holocaust Laughter?" *Writing and the Holocaust*. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988. 216-233
- Art Speigelman, *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)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvUdffAhFH4> selections

Readings:

- 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

Reading:

- James Young, "Memory, Counteremory 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

Reading:

- 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 Exam