Women and Shoah Memory, Memoirs and Memorials

This course will survey a number of memoirs by first-hand victims and second-generation Shoah writers. Using the vast theoretical body of work produced in the last 30 years on trauma, post-memory, feminist voices in autobiographical narratives, we will analyze works by women who live in Europe, the United States and Israel and examine the ways these authors have dialogued with, challenged, affected the male Shoah canon and the contemporary practice, discourse and politics of memorialization.

Requirements:
Attendance is mandatory
Consistent and informed participation (30%)
Weekly reading responses & posts (15%)
In-class presentations (35%)
Final project (20%)

Performance reader:
A (100-90): perfect
B+ (89-86): very good
B (85-80): good
C+ (79-76): satisfactory
C (75-70): poor
D+ (69-66): deficient
D (65-60): seriously deficient
F (<69): failed this course’s expectations

Primary texts:
The Shawl
by Cynthia Ozick [It’s a 2-part book: you must read both sections, i.e. the entire book]

Lifesaving Letters: A Child’s Flight from the Holocaust
by Milena Roth

Rue Ordener, Rue Labat
by Sarah Kofman [orig. French]

Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered
by Ruth Klüger [read the English edition; if you speak German, for the sake of comparison you can also read the German version of Klüger’s memoir, weiter leben: Eine Jugend, but be aware that it is a different text]
The Diary of Anne Frank [make sure to get a post-1995 edition]
by Anne Frank [orig. Dutch]

Night
by Elie Wiesel [read the English edition; you can read the Yiddish or French editions in addition, but keep in mind they are different texts]

Survival in Auschwitz [also published/translated as If This Is a Man]
by Primo Levi [orig. Italian]

Maus: A Survivor's Tale
by Art Spiegelman [Some recent editions have split this book into 2 volumes. Make sure to buy/get/read the entire Maus (vol. 1 and 2)]

I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors
by Bernice Eisenstein

Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language
by Eva Hoffman

**Secondary texts:**
Extra and secondary readings are handed out by the instructor or posted on Blackboard; films are on reserve at Cooper Library

**Attendance:**
Students are allowed no more than 2 absences (of whatever nature).

**Presentations:**
A. Each week one or more students (depending on the enrollment numbers) will present a paper as if part of a conference panel. The subject matter of the presentation will be the book assigned for that particular week. The maximum time allowed is 10 minutes—and one of the colleagues in the class, each time, will make sure to keep track of time, tell the presenter how many minutes are left before he/she must stop, and eventually, if needed, stop the presenter when time is up. Depending on each student’s style, papers can be read or recited (if you have the mind of an ancient Orator and can keep stuff memorized and declaim it without reading, go right ahead!). However there are very specific guidelines on what is expected from your presentation, both in terms of content and style of presentation. This is done with the hope that one day such exercise will come in handy as you put yourself on the job or conference market.

B. Perhaps the most important aspect of each presentation (as well as of all public speeches) is the Q&A session that follows. It is the responsibility of all students present in the classroom to engage the presenter with comments and questions: Q&A are not supposed to be show-off sessions for the questioner but a way to productively critique someone’s work, to constructively share one’s ideas and doubts, to gain knowledge, and, most of all (in my opinion), to honor the work and effort of our colleague who’s just presented a paper.

- Needless to say: Disagreement is valuable and welcome, **but** it must be expressed respectfully, unthreateningly and in a spirit of open-mindedness and civility.
- Non-presenting students **have an obligation** to read the texts being presented.

**C.** When your turn to present is up, you will email me a short summary of your presentation (no more than 1-page long), and a bibliographical note of secondary sources. In order to grant me enough time to read it, this document must be received no later than Monday mornings 10 am. For minimal (and only minimal) changes you can of course send an *errata corrige* or “update/segue” message up until Tuesday morning at 8.

**Discussion points:** No later than 12 pm on Mondays, each student will send everybody else (though Blackboard posts, if I figure out how that works!) their ideas on what should be discussed in class: A point of interest, a specific issue, an aspect of concern etc. raised by the primary and/or secondary reading... We must have time to look at everybody’s suggested topic-for-discussion and prepare: so please, send them as early as you can!

**Weekly responses to the readings:** Each week, all students hand in a one-page (or 1½) response to the reading. This should not be a summary, but a critical response or sum-up of your first impression of the given text.

**Final paper:** A 13-page-long paper to be handed in on a date to be announced during the semester. A substantial bibliographical note, which signal the research done for the paper, and supporting quotations from primary and secondary texts are an essential part of a good manuscript. You are free to choose the main text or texts and the thematic/theoretical angle for your work. Your paper can’t be on the same subject as your oral presentation. This should be a paper about what interests you and speaks to your passion and curiosity. For special projects (documentary or other artistic productions, etc.) you should discuss your idea with me and make sure to get my approval beforehand.

**Learning Outcomes:** By the end of the course:
- students will have been exposed to an array of primary texts which, together with some very famous names, include less known authors that will allow for a deeply comparative look at what has been published outside of the United States on the subject of the Holocaust;
- students will have learned several theoretical approaches to the subject matter;
- by the time they write their final projects, students will have acquired a vast theoretical support from which to choose how to frame the subject of their research and interest;
- Holocaust theory has developed a vocabulary of its own to deal with issues of memory, memorialization and trauma categorization: students will be exposed to and will learn the terminology and understand how it both originated in Shoah discourse while slowly being appropriated, morphed and reused/misused by other similar or dissimilar contemporary discourses.

**Plagiarism:** A strict ethical sense is expected from everybody. No re-submitting or double-submitting allowed. However, if you think you fall under a special category in this regard, discuss your case with me and get my approval beforehand.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/date</th>
<th>Films on reserve @ Cooper Lib.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Aug. 28</td>
<td>INTRODUCTIONS TADEUSZ BOROWSKI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Sep. 4</td>
<td>PRIMO LEVI PAUL CELAN Garden of Finzi Contini</td>
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<td>III Sep. 11</td>
<td>ELIE WIESEL</td>
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<td>IV. Sep. 18</td>
<td>Rosh haShanah Schindler's List</td>
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<td>V. Sep. 25</td>
<td>Yom Kippur Au revoire les enfants</td>
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<td>VI. Oct. 2</td>
<td>KOFMAN</td>
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<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>On 10/4 The Jewish Studies Program will host the yearly Solomon-Tenenbaum Lectureship. This year’s guest will be Todd Gitlin, and he’ll present on: &quot;The Chosen Peoples: America, Israel and the Ordeals of Divine Election.&quot; It would be great if you could all attend. [It’ll also give us something nice to talk about for our course, I think] (Place/hour TBA)</td>
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<td>VII. Oct. 9</td>
<td>MILENA ROTH</td>
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<td>VIII. Oct. 16</td>
<td>ANNE FRANK</td>
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<td>IX. Oct. 23</td>
<td>ART SPIEGELMAN</td>
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<td>X. Oct. 30</td>
<td>BERNICE EISENSTEIN</td>
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<td>Nov. 6</td>
<td>Election Day NO CLASS</td>
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<td>XI. Nov. 13</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<td>XII. Nov. 20</td>
<td>CINTHIA OZICK, MARGULIES*</td>
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<td>XIII. Nov. 27</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>XIV. Dec. 4</td>
<td>LAST DAY OF CLASS</td>
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*Students presenting on this day are free to choose to either present on one of the two works or write their paper about both, analyzing them comparatively.