The course is primarily about Holocaust-related films—several in the documentary genre, several in the feature-length, commercial genre—but also about related literature (memoir, fiction, poetry), and a little about related music. We will view the films as artistic representations, as attempts at crafted persuasion. We will ask questions such as: does the work touch the elusive truth or truths about what actually happened and how it was actually experienced? And: do the commercial films tell a big enough “Truth” to excuse small “lies?” (Cf. Picasso’s definition of art.) What is its moral point of view? Is it emotionally recognizable? In what sense are we “entertained,” or should we be?

The course presumes some previous acquaintance with Holocaust/Shoah history, testimony, and visual images, as well as some experience in critiquing/analyzing works of film and literary art.

Prolonged exposure to dramatic eyewitness memoirs and fictions, and of course to disturbing and seductive film representations can be depressing. Anticipate these possible effects. But don’t necessarily guard against them. Arm yourself with critical distance when needed. Be cheerful. Our primary purpose is not to grapple personally with the several dimensions of this notorious evil, but rather to appraise meaning and method in these films and writings created to stir reflection on potent material.

Capsule description: The death camps of the Holocaust and Nazi terror generally (1933-1945) as this prompts eyewitness survivors and subsequent film-makers to communicate artfully and persuasively experiences and lessons of the Holocaust/Shoah. The rhetorical challenge facing all who attempt to convey its disconcerting, unlike truths in the powerful medium of film. Related memoir, poetry, fiction, music also considered.

REQUIRED READING:

Lawrence L, Langer, *Art from Ashes* (a reader)
"Film Vocabulary" (hand-out)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Two film critiques* (5 pages each), due May 19 and 26 60% of course grade
(The first, on documentary techniques; the second, on a commercial film or two)
Exam, May 30 30%
(Includes questions on the reading)
Class attendance and participation 10%
COURSE SCHEDULE:

Read the authors assigned in the Langer textbook for discussion on the days indicated.

May 12  Introduction, discuss "Film Vocabulary" (handout). Video: "Destruction of Valhalla" from Wagner's *Gotterdammerung* (Metropolitan Opera). Video: *Memory of the Camps*, 1945, narrated by Trevor Howard, 75 min.)


21  Langer: Tadeusz Borowski (343-56) Video: *Triumph of the Spirit* (Robert Young, 1989, 120 min.).


26 Langer: Jean Amery (on the effects of torture, 121-36). Video: The Pawnbroker (Sidney Lumet, 1965, 120 min.) Critique of commercial film (or two) due

27 Video: Life is Beautiful (Roberto Benigni, 1998, 118 min.). "Springtime for Hitler" excerpt from The Producers (Mel Brooks, 1968)

28 Langer: Adolf Rudnicki. Video: The Night Porter (Liliana Cavani, 118 min)


30 **Final Exam** during class period

Note: this syllabus is posted on Blackboard at the course site.
Also a link to my Web pages. Feel free to communicate With me by email, including suggestions for fuller use of Blackboard.