Postmodernism and the Holocaust
132-2-0063
MA graduate seminar
4 pts
Professor Efraim Sicher
All year
MONDAYS 16:00-18:00

Conference hours:
Room 530 Tuesdays 10-11 or by appointment sicher@bgu.ac.il

Course Description
The liberation of the concentration camps in 1945 marks a caesura in Western culture that cannot be reversed. Adorno's declaration that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz would be barbaric must challenge our reading and writing of literature. This seminar goes back to basic assumptions in literary theory and practice to understand the difficulties in representing the Holocaust in literature, as well as the issues raised by the effects of traumatic experience on the act of writing.

Course Objectives
We will reexamine some of the post-Enlightenment assumptions in literature and survey ways in which the challenge of the impossibility of representation has been met by contemporary writers. We will ask whether postmodernism can offer an aesthetics that can cope with such horror. Has popular culture desecrated the memory of the six million in its appropriation of the Holocaust for ideological agendas? Has globalization of the memory detached the Holocaust from the “event”? Must we read differently "after Auschwitz"?

Course requirements
Active participation required in all classes 10%
Report of lecture/movie (5-6 pp) 10% due 29 July 2018
1 Final Paper 40% (20-25 pp seminar paper or 10pp term paper), due 2 October 2018.
Personal project (Oral Presentation+10pp written paper) 40%, due 29 July 2018

Required Reading
Paul Celan, “Deathfugue”
Dan Pagis, “Written in Pencil in a Cattle Car”
Cynthia Ozick, The Messiah of Stockholm; The Shawl
David Grossman, See Under: Love
D.M. Thomas, *The White Hotel*
Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*
Critical and theoretical material will be distributed during the course

**Additional texts for Personal Project (choose one, pending approval by the lecturer):**

- Walter Abish, “The English Garden”; *How German Is It*
- H. G. Adler, *The Journey*
- Raymond Federman, *Double or Nothing: a real fictitious discourse*; *The Twofold Vibration*; *The Voice in the Closet.*
- Ian McEwan, *Black Dogs*
- Marcie Hershman, *Tales of the Master Race*
- Jonathan Littell, *The Kindly Ones.*
- Emily Prager, *Eve’s Tattoo*
- Bernhard Schlink, *Der Vorleser (The Reader)*
- Anatoli Kuznetsov, *Babi Yar*
- Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*
- Patrick Modiano, *La place de l’étoile; Dora Bruder.*
- Georges Perec, *W, ou, le souvenir d’enfance*
- Bernard Raczymow, *La cri sans voix (Writing the Book of Esther)*
- Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer; The Plot against America*
- Michael Chabon *The Adventures of Kavalier and Klay; The Final Solution*
- W.G Sebald., *Austerlitz.*
- Rachel Seiffert, *The Dark Room.*
- George Steiner, *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*, 

**Tentative Schedule**

1. Introduction: Between history and memory
2. Postmodernism in theory and practice
3. Writing or Life? (Semprun)
4. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* (on posttraumatic literature)
5. Trauma Literature and postmodernism (Eaglestone)
7. Breakage in/of Poetry (Celan)
8. Breakage in/of Poetry (Pagis)
9. Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*
10. Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*
13. Schindler’s List: the novel and the movie
14. The impossibility of telling the story (*Austerlitz*)
15. The impossibility of telling the story (Perec; Modiano)
16. Feminist Readings of the Holocaust: *Eve’s Tattoo*
17. Ozick, *The Shawl*
20. Proving it happened: Photography and (non)representation (Seiffert; Liss).
21. Writing history after Auschwitz (Hayden White)  
22. The Perpetrator’s Gaze  
23. Postcolonialism and multidirectional memories  
24. Summing Up

*You are urged to use the lecturer’s conference hours for consultation and guidance. All references must be cited. Any papers suspected of containing work that is not original will be graded zero and forwarded to the university authorities for possible disciplinary action.*