The Memory of the Holocaust and Israeli Society

OSP Course Number 13-5-556

Spring Semester 2018

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Course Description:
The Holocaust has become a founding event in the history of the State of Israel, even before the establishment of Israel. The purpose of this course is to examine how the memory of the Holocaust has been constructed in Israel, and how it has affected Israeli society. The course is based on interdisciplinary approach which integrates historical, philosophical and sociological perspectives and theories. The course will be divided into an historical section and a contemporary one. We will first get familiar with the notion of "collective memory" and clarify the difference between private memory and collective memory, and between history and memory. We shall then move on to analyze central political, social, legal and cultural events in Israel that influenced the formation of the memory of the Holocaust in the Israeli society. We will focus on the first few decades after the establishment of Israel, and discuss, among others, the reparations controversy, the Kastner trial, the Eichmann trial, and the Six Days War. In the second section we will scrutinize current themes related to the commemoration of the Holocaust and its impact on Israeli society.

Course Objectives:
- To provide basic knowledge on Israel's history and politics in the first several decades after the establishment of the state.
- To understand how the collective memory of the Holocaust has been constructed in Israel and what the political purposes of such a social construction were.
- To encourage a critical reading of texts related to this process of Holocaust commemoration, by examining its historical, social and political contexts.

Field of Education and Discipline(s):
History, Holocaust studies, memory studies, Israeli studies
Course Structure:

Lecture: 2 hour lecture each week – one semester
Total # of Credits: 2
ECTS (European Credit Transfer System): 3

Teaching Method:
The course will be conducted through a combination of formal lectures, class discussion, and students' short presentations. The lectures will be based on weekly reading assignments.

Course Requirements

Compulsory attendance YES
Pre-requisites: NONE

Structure of Final Course Grad

1. Participation 10%
2. Student presentation 20%
3. Final paper 70%

Total 100%

Note:
- Work handed in late, will not be graded!
- Penalties and course policies should be clearly articulated (i.e. students will have their final grade lowered an entire grade level if they miss more than 2 class meetings unexcused)
- Language of instruction is English.

Time required for individual work: in addition to attendance in class, the students are expected to do their assignment and individual work:

2 hours of reading each week
6 hours of work on the presentations
10 hours of work on the final paper

Those expectations are approximate and correlate with the module's ECTS.

Course Schedule Layout:

Class 1: Introduction – Overview (March 5, 2018)

- Expectations for the semester.
- Introducing key notions of the course: what is collective memory?
- An initial historical mapping of the different phases of the construction of Holocaust memory in Israel.

Readings:
**Class 2: Collective Memory** (March 12, 2018)

We will clarify the concepts of collective memory, private memory, historical memory, and the connection between them.

**Readings:**

** In-class screening the documentary film: *Night and Fog*, Alain Resnais (1955) 32 min.

**Class 3: The Establishment of the State of Israel: from Shoah to Rebirth** (March 19, 2018)

We will scrutinize the connection between the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. We will discuss the contradiction between the Zionist ethos which is based on a negative attitude toward the Diaspora and on heroism and the conception of Holocaust victims as those who were led "like sheep to slaughter."

**Readings:**

**Class 4: The Discourse of the Holocaust in the 1950's and the Reparations Controversy** (March 26, 2018)

We will discuss the absorption of immigrant Holocaust survivors in Israel and examine the argument that in the first years in which Holocaust memory was constructed in Israel their voice was silenced. We will also deal with the stormy public debate on accepting reparations from West Germany.

**Readings:**

**Class 5: The Holocaust: Legislation and Law in Israel** (April 9, 2018)

We will discuss the Law for the Punishment of Nazis and their Collaborators and the Kastner trial, which had led to the first political murder in Israel.

**Readings:**
* Yehi' am Vaits, *The Man who was Murdered Twice: The Life, Trial and Death of Israel Kasztner*, translated from the Hebrew by Chaya Naor (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, the International Institute for Holocaust Research, 2011), 15-30, 113-149.

** In-class screening of clips from the documentary *Killing Kasztner*, Gaylen Ross (2008).
**Class 6: The Eichmann Trial-Part I (April 16, 2018)**

We will deal with one of the most crucial moments in the history of the formation of public memory of the Holocaust in Israel: the capture of Adolf Eichmann and bringing him to trial in Israel. We will discuss the significance of the kidnapping of Eichmann and its influence on Israeli society.

**Readings:**

**Class 7: The Eichmann Trial-Part II (April 23, 2018)**

We will analyze Hannah Arendt’s conception of the banality of evil, and continue to discuss the influence of the Eichmann trial on the formation of the memory of the Holocaust.

**Readings:**

** In-class screening of clips from *The Specialist*, Rony Brauman’s & Eyal Sivan’s (1999).

**Class 8: The Reception of Immigrant Holocaust Survivors (April 30, 2018)**

In this class we will analyze the development of the reception of immigrant Holocaust Survivors by the veteran population of Israel. We will return to the argument of silencing the survivors in the early years after the establishment of Israel, and examine whether indeed the Eichmann trial served as a pivotal point that changed the attitude towards the survivors. We will also deal with the theme of Holocaust testimonies and their significance.

**Readings:**

** In-class screening of clips from the documentary *Memories of the Eichmann Trial* (Israel, 1979) by David Perlov.

**Class 9: The Holocaust and Israeli Wars (May 7, 2018)**

We will discuss the influence of the memory of the Holocaust on Israeli secure beliefs. We will examine the political atmosphere that prevailed in the country before the outbreak of its central wars, beginning with the Six Days War, following the Yom Kippur War, until the First Lebanon War and the First Intifada. We will examine the concept of "Siege Mentality" in relation to the trauma of the Holocaust.

**Readings:**
Class 10: Teaching the Holocaust in Israeli Educational System (May 14, 2018)

How do educators teach the issue of the Holocaust in Israeli educational system? We will discuss the argument that teaching the Holocaust has become over the years a sphere of political and ideological battles regarding the meaning of this event to Israeli society. On the one hand, a particular perception that emphasizes the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its crucial role in building Israeli national identity; and on the other hand, a moral and universal perception of the Holocaust which believes in endowing democratic values.

Readings:

Class 11: The Marches of Living and the Construction of National Identity of Israeli Youth (May 21, 2018)

Following our last class, in this class we will examine one aspect of teaching the Holocaust in Israeli educational system – youth voyages to the concentration and extermination camps sites in Poland. We will discuss the place of these "pilgrimages" in the intensification of the Holocaust role in the Israeli-Jewish collective memory in the last three decades in order to construct national identity.


** In-class screening of clips from the documentary *Defamation*, Yoav Shamir (2009)

Class 12: The Holocaust and Otherness (May 28, 2018)

We will begin our discussion by clarifying the notions of the "other" and "otherness." We will then examine the exclusion of Mizrahi and Arab Israelis from the hegemonic narrative of the memory of the Holocaust. We will also examine the nature of the commemoration of the Holocaust in secular society vs. orthodox society.

Readings:

** In-class screening of clips from the documentary *Don't Touch My Holocaust*, directed by Asher Tlalim (1994)
**Class 13: Alternative Memory (June 4, 2018)**

In this class we will discuss alternative memorial ceremonies of the Holocaust and compare them with the mainstream ceremonies. We will also examine the themes of banalization of the Holocaust and humor and the Holocaust. We will ask how do these alternative commemoration methods challenge the hegemonic narrative of the Holocaust in Israeli society?

**Readings:**

**Class 14: Conclusion: Israeli Society and the Holocaust (June 11, 2018)**

In the final class we will review all of the major themes we dealt with throughout the course, focusing on the issues of the memory of the Holocaust and Israeli identity, and the connection between the Holocaust and Israeli society.

**Reading:**
We will return to the text from the first class: