



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב

BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
ABRAHAMS-CURIEL DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LITERATURES AND  
LINGUISTICS

**Postmodernism and the Holocaust**

MA graduate seminar

2 pts

Professor Efraim Sicher

Semester Alef

THURSDAYS 16:00-18:00

**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. We will reexamine some of the post-Enlightenment assumptions in literature and survey ways in which the challenge 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"?

**Keywords:**

Holocaust; postmodernism; poetry; trauma

**Course requirements**

Active participation required in all classes 10%

Report of lecture/movie (5-6 pp) 10%

1 Final Paper 40% (20pp seminar paper or 10pp term paper)

Personal project (Oral Presentation+10pp written paper) 40%

**Required Reading**

Cynthia Ozick, *The Messiah of Stockholm*; *The Shawl*

David Grossman, *See Under: Love*

D.M. Thomas, *The White Hotel*

Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*

Further reading including critical and theoretical material will be distributed during the course

**Additional texts for Personal Project (choose one):**

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 Little, *The Kindly Ones.*

Emily Prager, *Eve's Tattoo*

Anatoli Kuznetsov, *Babi Yar*

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

Patrick Modiano, *La place de l'étoile; Dora Bruder.*

Bernard Raczynow, *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. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* (on posttraumatic literature)
4. Trauma Literature and postmodernism (Eaglestone)
5. Primo Levi, *The Memory of Offense*; Wiesel, *Is there Art after Auschwitz?*
6. Breakage in/of Poetry (Celan)
7. Breakage in/of Poetry (Pagis)
8. *Austerlitz* and the impossibility of telling the story
9. *Schindler's List*: the novel and the movie
10. Ozick, *The Shawl*
11. Redemption in Ozick and Grossman; Cynthia Ozick, *The Messiah of Stockholm*; David Grossman, *See Under: Love*
12. D.M. Thomas and Martin Amis: postmodernist history
13. Summing up.

**תקציר בעברית:**

הסמינר עוסק במשבר ייצוג הטראומה לאחר השואה. נבדוק כמה פרשות וסוגיות בעיקר ברומן העכשווי כגון אמינות התייעוד, כתיבת ההיסטוריה, טשטוש הזיכרון, והאשמה המוסרית של המחולל.

מילות מפתח:

שואה; פוסטמודרניזם; פוסטקולוניאליזם; טראומה; ספרות אירופאית בת זמננו

**מטלות הקורס ומשקל כל מטלה בציון הסופי (בעברית):**

1. רפרנט 40%
2. סמינר 40%
3. סקירת הרצאה או סרט 10%
4. השתתפות פעילה חובה 10%
5. אין מבחנים או בוחן.