

Political Science 497: Life, Death, and the Holocaust

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: 8:30-9:30 Monday-Thursday
And by appointment

Course Description: This is a seminar about the spiritual and intellectual crises of modernity as illustrated by the horrific events that are known collectively as “The Holocaust.” The Shoah (to give it its proper designation) was both unique and typical at the same time. The unleashing of the destructive forces inherent in human nature was made possible by the peculiar combination of technological advancement and spiritual emptiness that seems to be characteristic of the modern (and now “post-modern” age). Our concern in this class is the dearth of the soul that must be filled and the role of ideology in providing meaning to human existence with disastrous consequences for human existence.

This seminar will examine the history of the ideological predilection that both created and sustained the Shoah.

Course Objectives: Students in this course will--

1. Understand the modern expression of ideological thinking.
2. Recognize the elements of ideological thinking as opposed to noetic and philosophical reasoning.
3. Analytically examine and discuss key primary and secondary source material to develop their perspective.
4. Communicate ideas verbally and in writing in a clear, concise, and logical way using appropriate grammar, syntax, and structure appropriate to a scholar.
5. Critically approach and examine texts.

Required Texts: The following books are required for this seminar. A list of recommended readings will also be provided at a later date. Students will also be required to be familiar with materials on reserve in the library and provided by the instructor as assigned.

Allport, Gregory W. 1979. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Basic Books.
978-0201001792

Bankier, David. 1992. *Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion Under the Nazis*. Blackwell.
978-0631201007

Beller, Steven. 2015. *Anti-Semitism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
978-0198724834

Botwinick, Rita. 2003. *A History of the Holocaust: From Ideology to Annihilation*, 3rd edition. Routledge. (There are two later editions, however, they are prohibitively expensive. Get the third edition.)
978-0131773196

Harand, Irene. 2010. *Hitler's Lies: An Answer to Hitler's Mein Kampf*. Jaico Publishing House/Mumbai/India.
978-8184950700

Hayes, Peter. 2018. *Why? Explaining the Holocaust*. W.W. Norton.
978-0393355468

Hitler, Adolf. 1998. *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim. Houghton Mifflin.

Hochstadt, Steve, ed. 2004. *Sources of the Holocaust*. Palgrave.
978-0333963456

Optional Texts: These may be helpful, but are not required reading. There will be presentation of some of the issues raised by these works in the context of the course.

Hanebrink, Paul. 2018. *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism*. Belknap.
9780674047686

Bryant, Michael. 2005. *Confronting the "Good Death": Nazi Euthanasia on Trial, 1945-53*. University of Colorado Press.
970870818097

Chapoutot, Johann. 2018. *The Law of Blood: Thinking and Acting Like a Nazi*, translated by Miranda Richmond Mouillout. Belknap.
978-0674660434

Friedlander, Henry. 2000. *The Origins of the Holocaust: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*. University of North Carolina Press.
9780807846759

Serreni, Gitta. 1983. *Into That Darkness: An Examination of Conscience*. Vintage.
9780394710358

Course Requirements and Grading: This course is organized as a series of mini conferences with presenters and discussants. Each week you will be responsible for either a brief critical précis of the reading assigned to be presented to the class or you will act as a discussant for the presentation. In other words we are creating a situation in which you will gain experience as a responsible for developing a final presentation to be delivered to the class at one of our last two meetings at which time every student not presenting will act as a discussant for the presenters.

Details of the final class presentation will be distributed separately as it is a more formal paper and presentation than the weekly assignment.

The critical précis is a brief paper (4-8 pages) that examines some aspect of the reading assigned in a given week. The précis is not merely a synopsis, but rather builds on the text to make a comprehensive argument based on the text. It is an exercise in critical and creative thinking. The précis will be due on Friday by 6:00 p.m. prior to the class meeting at which it will be presented. In other words, if you are assigned a précis for September 2, your paper must be email to the participants in the class by 6:00 p.m. on August 30. This will allow time for the class to read, think, read again, think again and develop a series of talking points, questions, and conclusions based on the précis and the assigned text.

Discussants will be specifically assigned to each précis assignment. The role of the discussant is to act as a peer reviewer for the presenter. Discussants are expected to come to class prepared to challenge the presenter's arguments and conclusions respectfully, thoughtfully, and offer alternative explanations for assertions made in the précis argument. The point is to generate thoughtful and meaningful discussion of the topics and arguments at hand.

Formatting and style for all written work should follow APSA style (available here: <http://www.apsanet.org/media/PDFs/Publications/APSAStyleManual2006.pdf>) and use conventional structure, syntax and grammar. You should use one inch margins and either Calibri (no larger than 11 pt.) or Times New Roman (no larger than 12 pt.) font with pages numbered. Be sure that you include a title and your name on the first page of all written work and that multiple pages are stapled together (no paper clips, binder clips, glue, etc.).

You will receive a grade both as a presenter and as a discussant in addition to an overall participation grade. In other words, even though you may not be formally designated as a discussant for a given précis you are expected to participate in the general discussion.

The grade distribution for the this course is as follows:

Critical précis assignments:	20%
Discussant scores:	15%
Final paper:	30%
Final presentation:	15%
Participation:	20%

Final grades will be determined on the following scale:

93-100%	A
82-92%	B
71-81%	C
61-70%	D
0-60%	F

Students with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services Texas A&M University-Commerce Gee Library Room 132 Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148 StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Campus Carry: Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

Conduct: Student Conduct: Texas A&M University – Commerce policy dictates that all syllabi include the following excerpt from the student handbook: “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.”

In seminar classes (especially at the graduate level), you are expected to challenge and push one another forward. For some people this is awkward and discomfiting. You are expected to be respectful to one another, this class, and the institution. After all, a university education is a privilege, not a right—and a public institution such as ours it is a privilege given to you by the citizens of Texas that ought not be abused. Your professor reserves the right to drop any student from the course whom he deems to be incapable of following “the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.”

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