

LIT 164G: 2023 Summer Session 1  
The Question of Auschwitz: Literature and Annihilation  
MW 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM  
J Baskin Engr 169



(Marc Chagall, Noah and the Rainbow)

Prof. Filippo Gianferrari  
fgianfer@ucsc.edu  
Rm. 627, Humanities 1

Office Hour: In-person or via Zoom **M&W from 2:30-3:30 PM** (or right after class if that works best for you).

If you plan to attend office hours, [please sign up here](#) for an appointment slot.

**TA**

Melissa Mack, mdmack@ucsc.edu

20-minute appointments from 12:30 - 1:30 immediately after class on Mondays and Wednesdays – please use this link: <https://calendly.com/mdmack/20min> and schedule the day before.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores creative responses to the destruction of European and North African Jewry attempted by Nazi Germany—about six million Jews were murdered— and generally referred to as the ‘Holocaust’ or ‘Shoah.’ We will tackle two major questions:

- 1) what is left—from a philosophical, existential, and religious perspective—for language and imagination after the experience of humanity’s complete annihilation that was systematically pursued in the ghettos, mass executions, and concentration camps of Nazi-occupied Europe?
- 2) How did the traumatic experience of persecution prompt original philosophical, religious, and even ‘mystical’ thinking?

We will also observe how categories of ethnicity and race were constructed and exploited through systemic racism (specifically in the form of anti-semitism) in the construction of modern nationalisms and fascist regimes.

Our focus will be on literature—both poetry and prose—and films that either provide historical and autobiographical accounts of the Holocaust or recount fictional stories inspired by this event. We will discuss primary sources from a wide variety of genres, including memorial books, poetry, fictional novels, journals, essays, studies, graphic novels, and films, by authors from Italy, Romania, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States. In addition, we will be reading secondary sources that will help us assess the historical events and the critical questions that are at the center of Holocaust literature.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course you will be able to:

- ❖ Demonstrate substantial knowledge of the primary texts on which the course is based and good knowledge of their historical and cultural context.
- ❖ Master the basic critical and rhetorical tools to approach the genre of Holocaust literature.
- ❖ Acquire knowledge and understanding of the 20th-century Jewish Holocaust by Nazi-Fascist regimes in Europe, the events that led to it, and its unfolding, with a particular emphasis on the experience of Italian Jews in Fascist Italy.
- ❖ Appreciate how categories of ethnicity and race were constructed and exploited in the formation process of modern nationalisms and fascist regimes.
- ❖ Appreciate the challenges that the complete annihilation attempted by extermination camps posed to humanity, religion, philosophy, literature, and creative representation, and how they question modernity.
- ❖ Research and evaluate secondary sources, to facilitate an understanding of the primary material presented in class
- ❖ Communicate your own ideas and findings with clarity and coherence, both orally and in writing.

- ❖ Demonstrate a broader understanding of the intellectual and cultural activity, as carried out through honesty, accountability, humility, and criticism in the classroom, in group collaboration and in personal work. You will learn that the study of literature can provide a useful means for communicating or questioning ideological standpoints and discourses while opening our minds to realities and experiences different from our own, thus enriching our capacity for fruitful dialogue.

**MECHANICS:** You are responsible for: 1) reading and analyzing the assigned materials before class; 2) completing all assignments (quizzes, reading assignments, Canvas discussions, oral presentations, and other occasional assignments); 3) participating in our in-class conversations; 4) asking if you have questions or don't understand something (either content- or assignment-related)

**The course is managed through Canvas and students should refer to the course site daily for assignments and the latest updates.**

**Some texts, assignments, films, and other resources are also available on Canvas.**

**Students taking this class for credit in Italian Literature** will read and analyze part of the original Italian texts in Italian, and exams should be taken in Italian. Students need to reach out to and meet individually with Prof. Gianferrari to discuss expectations for this class.

## **READING MATERIALS:**

Giorgio Bassani, *The Novel of Ferrara*

Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table* (PDF Available on Canvas, but I recommend buying your own copy if you can afford it, this book is a must-have)

Primo Levi, *If This is a Man*

Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I & II*

*The Diary of a Young Girl. Anne Frank. The Definitive Edition*, ed. By Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler

*Rywka's Diary*, ed. By Anita Friedman and translated by Malgorzata Markoff (PDF on Canvas)

Elie Wiesel, *Night*

Michael Chabon, *The Hofzinsler Club* and *Secret Skin* (PDF on Canvas)

Selected essays from Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg, *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* (Rutgers 2003); and Jenni Adams, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Holocaust Literature* (Bloomsbury, 2014). (PDF on Canvas)

Selected sources from Steve Hochstadt, *Sources of The Holocaust* (Bloomsbury, 2022). (PDF on Canvas)

## AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS:

See Canvas Site

## Course Responsibilities and Final Grading:

<p><b>Important Summer Session Remote 2021 Deadlines</b></p>	<p>Summer is unique. <b>You will not be dropped for non-attendance or non-payment. You must drop yourself.</b> Please see Summer 2021 tutorial module on Canvas Dropping before the deadline results in a full-tuition reversal/refund. Withdraw posts a W for the grade and full tuition is charged (no refund).          For all dates and deadlines, including ‘change of grade option’ (P/NP) and grades due, here is the summer academic calendar: <a href="https://summer.ucsc.edu/studentlife/index.html">https://summer.ucsc.edu/studentlife/index.html</a>          For questions about dropping, requesting a W grade for a course, or withdrawing from the summer quarter, email <a href="mailto:summer@ucsc.edu">summer@ucsc.edu</a>.</p>																													
<p>Grading Criteria</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Attendance and participation</td> <td>35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Weekly Quizzes</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reading Assignments</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Midterm (Essay Questions)</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Final</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extra Credit</td> <td>2.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>100%</b> (+ 2.5% optional)</td> </tr> </table> <p>Final course grades for the class will be calculated in accordance with the following schema:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>A+: 99% +</td> <td>A: 93.5-98.99%</td> <td>A-: 90-93.49%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B+: 87.5-89.99%</td> <td>B: 83.5-87.49%</td> <td>B-: 80-83.49%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C+: 77.5-79.99%</td> <td>C: 73.5-77.49%</td> <td>C-: 70-73.49%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D+: 67.5-69.99%</td> <td>D: 63.5-67.49%</td> <td>D-: 60-63.49%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F: 0-59.99%</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p><b>*All assignments must be completed to pass the class.</b></p> <p><b>No Make-up Quizzes.</b> All weekly quizzes must be taken on Canvas by <b>Friday at 11:59 PM</b> and will be available shortly after class on Wednesday. They will cover all readings and lectures for that week, so make sure to come to class and complete your readings for both Monday and Wednesday before you take a quiz.</p>	Attendance and participation	35%	Weekly Quizzes	25%	Reading Assignments	20%	Midterm (Essay Questions)	10%	Final	10%	Extra Credit	2.5%	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b> (+ 2.5% optional)	A+: 99% +	A: 93.5-98.99%	A-: 90-93.49%	B+: 87.5-89.99%	B: 83.5-87.49%	B-: 80-83.49%	C+: 77.5-79.99%	C: 73.5-77.49%	C-: 70-73.49%	D+: 67.5-69.99%	D: 63.5-67.49%	D-: 60-63.49%	F: 0-59.99%		
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Class Attendance	<b><u>Attendance is required and is 35% of your final grade: at least 8 lectures.</u></b> Attendance is measured based on activities that you'll be required to submit while in class.
Electronic Devices	You will be asked to use your laptop or personal data device to complete in-class activities. You are also welcome to use them for reading and taking notes. Any other use is strongly discouraged.
Academic Integrity	All work submitted for this course must be your own. If you do not understand fully the standards of academic integrity enforced at UC Santa Cruz, inform yourself by consulting <i>The Navigator</i> at <a href="https://registrar.ucsc.edu/navigator/section1/academic-integrity.html">https://registrar.ucsc.edu/navigator/section1/academic-integrity.html</a> <b>Breaches in academic integrity will result in failure of this course and may incur suspension or dismissal from the university.</b>
Inclusivity Statement	It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and with all perspectives feel included and are able to learn and achieve their goals in this course. Diversity of experiences and opinions is a resource to our communal, intellectual endeavor. Hence, not only is your contribution welcome but it is necessary in order for this class to succeed. Finally, your suggestions for making this learning community as inclusive as possible and for improving the effectiveness of this course are encouraged and appreciated.
Accessibility Accommodation	UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access to this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me, preferably within the first week of the Summer quarter. At this time, I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at <a href="mailto:drc@ucsc.edu">drc@ucsc.edu</a> .
CARE & Title IX	The following offices are also at your disposal for other resources and support on campus: <a href="#">CARE</a> , and <a href="#">Title IX</a>
UC Regulation	Because this is an intensive summer course, you will be responsible for an estimated 30 hours of course-related work per week, as follows: seven hours of class attendance, 15 hours of reading and quiz preparation, eight hours of research and exam/paper writing. You will be accountable for having effectively prepared for each class, and I will help motivate you to stay on top of the reading by giving daily reading quizzes.



## Syllabus

Week 1: Topics	Readings	Special Assignments
<p style="text-align: center;">Syllabus</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introduction to Holocaust and Holocaust Literature</p> <p style="text-align: center;">European Jewry and Anti-Semitism</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Racial &amp; Discriminatory Laws</p>	<p><b>Monday, June 26:</b> Primo Levi, <i>The Periodic Table</i>, from “Argon” to “Gold” (skip the stories “Lead” and “Phosphorus”)</p> <p><b>Wednesday, June 28:</b> Giorgio Bassani, “The Garden of the Finzi Continis” in <i>The Novel of Ferrara</i> (pp. 243-456)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sign up for one of the oral presentation slots <a href="#">Here</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Quiz 1 due by Friday at 11:59 pm</p>
Week 2: Topics	Readings	
<p style="text-align: center;">Ghettos, Hiding, and Deportation</p>	<p><b>Monday, July 3: This class will be taught remotely &amp; asynchronously. Refer to the Canvas site for instructions.</b> <i>Rywka's Diary</i>, ed. By Anita Friedman and translated by Malgorzata Markoff (PDF on Canvas) Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus I</i></p> <p><b>Wednesday, July 5: <i>The Diary of a Young Girl</i>.</b> Anne Frank. The Definitive Edition, ed. By Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler</p> <p>Watch the docufilm: <a href="#">Anne Frank Remembered</a></p> <p><b>Guest Lecturer: <a href="#">Bruce Thompson</a></b> (UCSC)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quiz 2</p>

Week 3: Topics	Readings	
The Camps	<p>Monday, July 10: Primo Levi, <i>If this is a Man</i></p> <p>Wednesday, July 12: Elie Wiesel, <i>Night</i> &amp; Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus II</i></p> <p><b>Guest Lecturer:</b> <a href="#">Alma R. Heckman</a></p>	<p>Midterm Exam (Take-home) by Tuesday at 11:59 pm</p> <p>Quiz 3</p>
Week 4: Topics	Readings	
The Question of Auschwitz	<p>Monday, July 17: Giorgio Bassani, “A Memorial Tablet in Via Mazzini,” in <i>The Novel of Ferrara</i> (pp. 60-90)</p> <p>Wednesday, July 19: Primo Levi, <i>The Drowned and the Saved</i></p> <p><b>Guest Lecturer:</b> <a href="#">Nathaniel Deutsch</a></p>	<p>Quiz 4</p>
Week 5: Topics	Readings	
Annihilation and Comic Resilience	<p>Monday, July 24: Primo Levi, <i>The Periodic Table</i>, from “Cerium” to “Carbon”</p> <p>Michael Chabon, <i>The Hofzinsler Club</i> and <i>Secret Skin</i> (PDF on Canvas)</p>	<p>Quiz 5</p>
Laugh and Cinema	<p>Wednesday, July 26: • Taika Waititi, <i>Jojo Rabbit</i> (2019)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radu Mihăileanu, <i>Train of Life</i> (1998) <a href="#">here</a></li> <li>• Roberto Benigni, <i>Life is Beautiful</i> (1997) <a href="#">here</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Guest Lecturer:</b> <a href="#">Thais Miller</a></p>	



Final Exam Week

**Final Exam**

Due Monday, July  
31 at 11:59 P