

CLARK UNIVERSITY

HIST / HGS 237 / 337

The Holocaust Perpetrators

Spring 2008

Professor Thomas Kühne

Time: Wed 9:00-11.50, Place: Cohen-Lasry House, Kent Seminar Room

Office Hours: Mon 12:15-1:15 pm Jeff 316; Wed 12:30-1:30 pm Lasry

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Description

This course explores how, and why, Germans and other parts of Central European societies committed the Holocaust. We will be looking at desktop perpetrators such as Adolf Eichmann, at medical doctors who used Jews for their experiments, at the concentration camp guards, and at the death squads (Einsatzgruppen) as the hard core of the SS elite. Furthermore, we will investigate the actions, ideologies, and emotions of “ordinary” Germans who served in Police battalions or in the drafted army, of women who served as guards or in the occupational regime, and not least if non-German collaborators. In general, the course focuses on the interrelation of individual and biographical backgrounds, of mental and ideological orientations, and of social and institutional arrangements. The key question is what made “normal” humans becoming mass murderers?

Requirements

This course will be taught in the spirit of a tutorial: once you decided to take the class, you are expected to stick to it, come to the sessions and be well prepared.

- In order to facilitate informed discussion, you are required to write a short paper of one or two pages in conjunction with the assigned books and essays to the sessions. This paper is neither a response paper nor a mere summary of the reading. Rather, it is supposed to present an original or critical analysis of *that one* aspect of the assigned texts which is most interesting or challenging to you. Feel free to relate the reading to other historical, political or personal issues. Each paper comes with a title chosen by you. The papers are due in class and must be handed in to the instructor at its end. Alternatively, you can email your paper to the instructor *before* class starts. Only the ten best (out of the twelve assigned) papers will count for your grade.
- Second, each student is in charge with taking minutes of one session and with presenting this protocol at the beginning of the following session. (Class starts at 9 am.) These minutes have to summarize the contents of our discussion, its findings and controversies, in a readable and non-partisan way. Please resist the temptation to reproduce the course of our discussion in detail. A good protocol

summarizes a discussion in a structured way. Please type out the protocol and distribute it in class.

- Finally, a research paper of 15 pages (text, excluding title and bibliography, double lined) on “Holocaust Perpetrators: A Critical Evaluation of Recent Scholarship” is due April 28; a draft or a detailed outline of five pp or more is to be submitted and discussed in the last session on April 23. No late papers will be accepted. If you are not familiar with how to write and submit such a paper, you might wish to consult books like J. R. Benjamin, *A Student’s Guide to History* (10th ed., Boston, 2007) or Ch. Lipson, *How to Write a BA Thesis* (Chicago, 2005). They offer valuable assistance, not least regarding the formal shape of your paper. The ultimate guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago, 2003).

Grading

A maximum of 100 points can be achieved:

- a maximum of 5 points for each short paper (50 in total); three points are granted if the paper demonstrates sufficient familiarity with the reading; one point for the content and its originality, and one point for the organization of the paper and the writing style
- a maximum of 30 points for the final paper (15 points for the content and the range of consulted literature, 6 for the writing style, 5 for the organization, 4 for formalities like quotation and citation style)
- a maximum of 10 points for the protocol (5 points for content, 5 points for organization)
- a maximum of 10 points for continuous participation in class discussion

You are supposed to attend class on a regularly basis. One absence will not inflict your grade. (You still have to submit the related paper). Further absences without sufficient documentation will result in a deduction of five points each.

100-95 points=A, 94-90 points=A-, 89-85 points=B+, 84-80=B, 79-75 points=B-, etc.

Required Texts (purchase recommended)

- “*The Good Old Days*”. *The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, ed. Ernst Klee, Willy Dressen, and Volker Riess (New York, 1991).
- Rudolf Hoess, *Commandant of Auschwitz* (London 2000)
- David Cesarani, *Becoming Eichmann. Rethinking the Life, Crimes, and Trial of a “Desk Murderer”* (Cambridge, MA, 2006)
- Robert Jay Lifton, *Nazi Doctors. Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York, 2000)
- Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York, 1992)

- Edward B. Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions. Enforcing Racial War in the East* (Lawrence, Kansas, 2005)
- Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries. Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York, 2006)
- Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, 2001)
- Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror. The Concentration Camp* (Princeton, 1997)

All other texts for general reading are available online or will be provided as photocopies, but you are responsible for those texts you need for your special presentation and your final paper. Please start no later than four weeks prior to the deadline with looking for them in one of Clark's libraries, or place an Interlibrary Loan (<http://www.clarku.edu/research/goddard/ill/>) or purchase them. Be sure to check on JSTOR and other electronic resources.

Recommendations for additional reading

- Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army, Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York, 1992)
- Idem, *Germany's War and the Holocaust. Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, NY, 2003)
- Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, 2002)
- Daniel P. Brown, *The Beautiful Beast. The Life & Crimes of SS-Aufseherin Irma Grese* (Ventura, CA, 1996)
- Christopher Browning and Jürgen Matthaeus, *The Origins of the Final Solution. The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 – March 1942* (Lincoln and Jerusalem, 2004)
- Inga Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust* (Cambridge, U.K., 1999)
- Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust. Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-1944* (New York, 2000)
- *Deadly Medicine. Creating the Master Race* (Washington, DC 2004)
- Deborah Dwork & Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust. A History* (New York 2002)
- *Documents on the Holocaust. Selected Sources in the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, 8th ed., ed Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman, and Abraham Margiliot (Lincoln, NE, and Jerusalem, 1999).
- Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination. Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (New York, 2007)
- Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, 1996)
- Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East. Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven, 2003)
- Raoul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (New Haven, 2003)
- Raoul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders. The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945* (New York, 1993)

- Helmut Krausnick et al, *Anatomy of the SS-State*, transl. by Richard Berry et al (New York, 1968)
- Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover, 1987)
- Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece. The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (New Haven, 1993)
- Paul Martin Neurath, *The Society of Terror. Inside the Dachau and Buchenwald Concentration Camps* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005)
- Donald Niewyk & Francis Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to The Holocaust* (New York 2000)
- Alexander V. Prusin, "A Community of Violence: The SiPo/SD and Its Role in the Nazi Terror System in Generalbezirk Kiew," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21 (2007), pp. 1-30
- Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East. The German Army and Soviet Partisans* (Cambridge, MA 2004)
- Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil. The Origins of Genocide and other Group Violence* (Cambridge, UK, 1989)
- Matthew Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich* (London, 2003)
- *Understanding Genocide. The Social Psychology of the Holocaust*, ed. Leonard S. Newman & Ralph Erber (Oxford, 2002)
- James Waller, *Becoming Evil. How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (Oxford, 2002)
- *War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II*, ed. Hannes Heer & Klaus Naumann (New York, 2000)
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The leading journal is *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (21 vols so far). It provides further articles, book reviews and information on relevant literature. It is available online via Goddard.

Schedule

1st Session, January 16:

Introduction: "What is a Perpetrator?"

2nd Session, January 23:

Mercilessness and Morals

Reading: "*The Good Old Days*, pp. 4-7, 46-59, 63-68, 76-135, 195-274; excerpts from Heinrich Himmler's Speech to SS-Generals in Posen/Poznan, 4 October 1943, <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/English22Intro.pdf>. Paper #1 due

3rd Session, January 30:

Careerism and Nazism

Reading: Rudolf Hoess, *Commandant of Auschwitz* (London 2000). Paper #2 due. Parts of BBC-Documentation “Auschwitz-Inside the Nazi State” to be watched and discussed in class.

4th Session, February 6:

Bureaucracy and Banality

Reading: David Cesarani, *Becoming Eichmann. Rethinking the Life, Crimes, and Trial of a “Desk Murderer”* (Cambridge, MA, 2006). Paper #3 due.

See also <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/>,
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005179>,
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/genocide/eichmann_01.shtml

5th Session, February 13:

Medicine and Racism

Reading: Robert Jay Lifton, *Nazi Doctors. Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York 2000). Paper #4 due. Sections of documentary movies on racial medicine to be watched and discussed in class.

6th Session, February 20:

Group Pressure and Obedience

Reading: Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York 1992). See Stanley Milgram, “Behavioral Study of Obedience,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67 (1963), pp. 371-387 (JSTOR). Paper #5 due.

7th Session, February 27:

Antisemitism and Institutional Culture

Reading: Edward B. Westermann, *Hitler’s Police Battalions. Enforcing Racial War in the East* (Lawrence, Kansas 2005). Paper #6 due

8th Session, March 12:

Military Virtues and Virtual Partisans

Reading: Omer Bartov, “Daily Life and Motivation in War: The *Wehrmacht* in the Soviet Union,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 12 (1989), pp. 200-214; Mark Mazower, “Military Violence and National Socialist Values: The ‘Wehrmacht’ in Greece 1941-1944”, in: *Past and Present* 134 (1992), pp. 129-158 (JSTOR); Ben Shepherd, “‘Unprecedented, merciless and unrelenting harshness.’ Fanaticism and brutalization in Wehrmacht anti-partisan warfare in the Soviet Union,” in *Fanaticism and Conflict in the Modern Age*, ed.

Matthew Huges and Gaynor Johnson (London, 2005), pp. 63-80; “*The Good Old Days*, pp. 137-154. Paper #7 due. Movie “Mein Krieg [*My Private War*]” to be watched and discussed in class.

9th Session, March 19:

Greed and Welfare

Reading: Götz Aly, *Hitler’s Beneficiaries. Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York, 2006). Paper #8 due.

10th Session, March 26:

Femaleness and Maleness

Reading: Ute Frevert, *Women in German History. From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 207-52; Susanne Heschel, “Does Atrocity Have a Gender? Feminist Interpretations of Women in the SS”, in: J. M. Diefendorf (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies VI. New Currents in Holocaust Research* (Evanston, IL 2004), pp. 300-321; Daniel P. Brown, *The Beautiful Beast. The Life & Crimes of SS-Aufseherin Irma Grese*, Ventura, CA: Golden West Historical Publications 1996, ch. IV; Elizabeth Harvey, “‘We Forgot all Jews and Poles’. German Women and the ‘Ethnic Struggle’ in Nazi-Occupied Poland,” *Contemporary European History* 10 (2001), pp. 447-61. Paper #9 due

11th Session, April 2:

Neighborhood and Collaboration

Reading: Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton 2001); Darius Stola, "Jedwabne: Revisiting the evidence and nature of the crime," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17 (2003), pp. 139-152; “*The Good Old Days*, pp. 23-45. Paper #10 due.

12th Session, April 9:

The Judenräte in the Grey Zone

Reading: Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York 1989), excerpts; Inga Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust* (Cambridge, U.K., 1999), ch. 5; Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, 2002), chs. 6 & 7; Raoul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders. The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945* (New York, 1993), ch. 9. Paper #11 due. Movie on the *Lodz Ghetto* to be watched and discussed in class.

13th Session, April 16:

Terror as Social Ordering

Reading: Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror. The Concentration Camp* (Princeton 1997). No presentation. Response Paper #12 due.

14th Session, April 23:

Conclusion

Discussion of final papers. No reading, no response paper, but first draft of final paper is due for oral discussion.