THE HOLOCAUST : HISTORY, MEMORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Année universitaire 2016/2017 : Semestre de printemps (INTRO SCPO)

Wednesdays, 5-7, 9 rue de la Chaise, Room 907.

DESCRIPTIF DU COURS

More and more, the Holocaust is perceived and assessed as one of the seminal event of the 20. Century in Europe. If its consequences were not clearly embraced in the immediate after war, the long shadow of genocide shapes today’s culture and politics.

This course aims at presenting some main themes in the growing field of Holocaust studies. Themes will be on the Holocaust itself, its general interpretations, the question of victims, of perpetrators, the technologies of mass killings, but also on the consequences of genocide (justice, memorials, testimonies). It is a history class, with some interdisciplinarity: politics, literature, psychology will also be used in class.

A specific attention will be dedicated to the digital aspects of Holocaust learning, documentation and memory.

Assessments :

Participation in class : 10%

Group work in class (Session 7, March 15), on visual testimonies : 20% . Both an electronic and a printed copy must be submitted.

An essay: deadline is 17 April 2017. Both an electronic and a printed copy must be submitted, 2500 words: 50% (see the topics).

A book review : pick up a book in one of the ‘further reading’ lists. 1500 words : 20%. Read the book cover to cover ! Deadline is 19 April 2017. Both an electronic and a printed copy must be submitted.

A critical review is not merely a summary of the book's contents (though that may be included) but primarily an evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. Please, answer the following questions about the book (not especially in this set order):

1. Thesis. What is the author's main argument? Is the thesis readily apparent? Is it convincing 2. Organization. Is the book logically constructed, or is it confusing, repetitive, etc.? 3. Which is the context in which the book was written? Does it relate to a specific historiographical debate ? 4. Who is the author ? 5. Sources. Even without expertise you can quickly tell whether a book depends on such primary materials as documents, diaries, and letters, or whether it is all drawn from second-hand general texts. 6. Documentation. Any time you quote, you should cite the source 8. Conclusions. General value. How useful might the book be to a specialist in this field, or to a student investigating the subject matter for the first time?

Séance 1 : 25 January, Introduction (JMD)

a) Introduction to the course. General presentation. Description of assessments.

Documents: mapping the Holocaust (from Gilbert, Atlas of the Holocaust) ; Hilberg’s scheme
(extract) ‘.

Reading : None

Essay topics :
- How specific was the Holocaust compared to other mass atrocities of the 20th Century ?
- In what sense was the Holocaust a ‘modern’ genocide ?

Further Reading :

Bauer, Yehuda, Rethinking the Holocaust (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000).


Saidel, Rochelle G., Never Too Late to Remember (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1996).


Séance 2 : 1 February ; Explaining the Holocaust (SGM)

This session will present various theoretical explanations of the Holocaust. The traditional, not fully overcome functionalist/intentionalist debate, the nature of Nazi anti—Semitism, the role of Hitler, will be considered. The controversy with Hayden White on a post-modern view of Holocaust writing will also attract our attention.


a) Various theoretical approaches to national-socialism and the Holocaust

b) Discussion on the texts. Please, consider the following questions :
- Which are the more convincing approaches to the Holocaust, according to you ?
- How specific are theoretical approaches of the Holocaust ?
- Is interdisciplinarity needed to better approach the Holocaust ?

Essay questions :
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Further reading :


Winckler, Heinrich August, *Germany, the long road west, 1789-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).


**Séance 3 : 8 February ; Germans Jews, 1933-1941 (JMD)**

The years 1933-1941 were decisive in the implementation of the Holocaust. German Jews were submitted to a progressive process of isolation. This process was both ‘legal’ and ‘spontaneous’. The agents of persecution will be described and also the path to violence. Jewish responses will be considered and so will be the attitude of the German population. Can a gendered approach to those responses be useful?

Reading:

  a) Suppressing emancipation; escalating isolation and violence
  b) Documents on Kristallnach: video; written testimonies.

Essay questions:
- How ‘legal’ (or ‘legalised’) was the isolation of German Jews?
- Describe the various responses of German Jews towards persecution.
- What was the specific role of German Jewish women after 1933?

Further reading:


Gruner, Wolf, Jewish forced labor under the Nazis: economic needs and racial aims, 1938-1944 (New York: Cambridge University Press, USHMM, 2006).


Kershaw, Ian, Hitler, the Germans, and the final solution, Jerusalem : International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem (New Haven, [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2008).


Ogilvie, Sarah A., Miller, Scott, Refugee denied: the St. Louis passengers and the Holocaust (Madison, Wis. : University of Wisconsin Press, c2006).


Digital resources : http://www.eiu.edu/eiutps/holocaust_kristallnacht.php

Séance 4: 22 February; The Holocaust by bullets (JMD)

From July 1941 on, mobile killing units, the Einsatzgruppen, killed Jews in Eastern Poland and the newly occupied territories. They went as far as Grozny and Moscow. At the end of 1941, half a million Jews have been killed. This killing by bullets caused 1.5 million victims. How was this ‘not-modern’ Holocaust organised? Which were the reactions of the local populations? What happened to those corpses? The ‘Aktion 1005’ will be described.

Reading :

Spector, Shmuel, Operation 1005
Website of Yahad-In Unum : http://www.yahadinunum.org/

 Essay questions :
- How ‘modern’ was the Holocaust by bullets ?
- Describe the operation 1005.
- How can you explain the sheer ‘efficiency’ of the Einsatzgruppen.
- Was it possible to put the Einsatzgruppen on trial ? Describe the Nuremberg trial.

 Further Reading :
Dean, Martin C., 'The German Gendarmerie, the Ukrainian Schutzmannschaft and the 'Second Wave' of Jewish killings in occupied Ukraine: German policing at the local level in the Zhitomir region, 1941-1944', in: German History 14 (1996) H. 2, S. 168-192.
Gitelman, Zvi, Bitter legacy: confronting the Holocaust in the USSR (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, c1997).
Session 5: 1 March; The question of the decision (SGM)

The question of the decision was much discussed by Holocaust historians, as no order signed by Hitler or by any other Nazi leaders has been found (does any exist?). Was a single decision taken? Or several ones? And when? What kind of documents can be used to assert that a single decision was taken? What is the chronology of escalation, knowing that the first deportees to the East were not immediately killed?

The Protocols should be read in advance.

a) General presentation on the decision process.
b) Document: the proceedings of the Wannsee Conference


Questions: what was decided in Wannsee on 20 January 1942? Who where the participants? What was their ranking in the Nazi hierarchy?

A clip from the fiction movie ‘The Wannsee Conference’: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URSNN5mnI2g

Essay questions:
- Historian Karl Schleunes described a ‘twisted road to Auschwitz’. Analyse this expression.
- Describe the ‘Nisko plan’ of a Jewish reservation near Lublin.
- Describe the Madagascar plan to resettle the Jews.
- Describe the difficult memorialization of the House of the Wannsee Conference.

Further reading:


Roseman, Mark, *The villa, the lake, the meeting : Wannsee and the final solution* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 2002).


Digital resources: The House of the Wannsee Conference [http://www.ghwk.de/gb](http://www.ghwk.de/gb)

**Session 6 : 8 March ; Technologies of death camps (JMD)**

This is the most gruesome session, the one also most problematic: how dare we approach the killing facilities of Auschwitz and other death camps? On the other hand, refusing to consider gas chambers and crematoria and how they were conceived, built and improved would be treacherous move in the field of Holocaust studies (many Holocaust courses just skip this central chapter of the Holocaust). Deportations to death camps will be described and also the very killing facilities, that evolved from makeshift chambers to highly designed technologies in Birkenau). The Jews forced to work in the killing facilities, named ‘Sonderkommandos’, will be considered. We will also consider the ethics of dealing with such extreme themes.


a) Gas chambers and crematoria
b) Testimonies of the Sonderkommando
We will consider the ethics of representation of the Sonderkommando, using various medias: the drawings by David Olère, the four pictures taken by the Resistance, a clip from the film Shoah (Claude Lanzmann) with the famous interview of Avraham Bomba (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8mcNYVkdJQ).

Further reading:


Essay questions:
- Contrast the death camps of the Reinhardt operation (Treblinka, Chelmno, Sobibor and Belzec), to Auschwitz II – Birkenau
- Which are the differences between death camps and concentration camps?
- Men and women in Auschwitz
- Rudolph Hoess: his testimony.

Digital resources: The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum’s official website http://auschwitz.org/en/

Session 7; 15 March: Testimonies, the Spielberg Project (JMD)

The USC Shoah Foundation: https://sfi.usc.edu/


This is a two hours workshop in group, searching the database of the Spielberg Shoah foundation and analysing video testimonies of survivors. Please, bring your laptop!

Essay questions:

- How reliable are survivors’ testimonies?
- Why did Primo Levi’s book become the most iconic text of Holocaust literature?
- What is Holocaust literature? Define the ‘blurring of genres’.
- Holocaust memory without survivors.
- Which are the problems caused by the massive campaigns of videorecording Holocaust survivors?

Further reading:


Graif, Gid'on, We wept without tears: testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz (New Haven, Conn., London: Yale University Press, 2005).


Rittner, Carol, Different Voices (New York: Paragon House, 1993).


Session 8 : 22 March; How to become a perpetrator (SGM)

Reading:
- a) Social psychology: reading Christopher Browning’s ‘Ordinary Men’
- b) A film ‘If that is, I am a murderer’ (60 mn).

Essay questions:
- Why did they kill?
- Is the history of German culture necessary to understand the psychology of Holocaust perpetrators?
- Adolf Eichmann was described by Hannah Arendt as the seminal ‘desk’s perpetrators’, who was not in direct contact with victims. Explain this concept and discuss it.
- Discuss the theory of Daniel Goldhagen on Holocaust perpetrators (‘eliminationist anti-Semitism’).

Further reading:


The secret conferences of Dr. Goebbels, October 1939 - March 1943 / edited and selected by Willi A. Boelcke; translated from the German by Ewald Osers (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970).


Digital resources: Holocaust photography
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/libpictoc.html
Session 9: 29 March; Holocaust denial (JMD)

This is the great fear of Holocaust activists, human rights organisations, survivors’ associations, etc. This very strange idea of denying the very fact that the Holocaust took place. This phenomenon needs to be analysed? Why is the Holocaust denied? Would you deny that WWI did take place? How widespread is Holocaust denial today? Via which medias? Who are those deniers? How are they organised? What is their political agenda? Is Holocaust denial anti-Semitic? In which way? Is it an anti-Israel movement? In this session, we will try to describe a ‘genealogy’ of this ‘thinking’, together with the methods employed. It is a French invention! And confront the question of free speech.

Reading:
- A ‘lecture’ by Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tvy-Gtu5CR8
  a) Holocaust denial as a French invention
  b) Discussion: how to fight Holocaust denial?

Documents: the Gayssot French law; the verdict of the David Irving trial.

Essay questions:
- Is the Gayssot law useful to fight Holocaust denial?
- Why should we take Holocaust denial seriously?
- Analyse the verdict of the Irving trial: did the judge tell history?
- What was the role(s) of historians in the Irving trial.
- Holocaust denial in the Middle-East: its role and its uses.

Further reading:
Session 10: 5 April; The Holocaust on trial (SGM)

To the contrary of what is commonly thought, Allied nations very early in the war planned to put on trial perpetrators of mass crimes and genocide. The project of an International Military Tribunal dates back to 1943. It was set up in the German city of Nuremberg. The main trial attracted much media attention. It was a major turn in international criminal justice, especially after the failed attempts to judge war crimes after WWI – and the crimes against Armenians. But many more trials occurred in Germany and all over Europe: subsequent Nuremberg trials, war crimes trials in the various zones of occupation, trials in Eastern Europe. From 1949 and the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany, the responsibility to judge Nazi criminals was transferred to the German judicial system: from that moment, prosecution proved difficult. Only from the early 1960s, were German judges (and politicians) ready to face the past. The seminal trial was the Auschwitz one in Francfort/Main in 1964. We will address in this session the following questions: - how was it possible to judge crimes perpetrated at such a massive scale? – can one put the Holocaust on trial? – what was the impact of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem? – Can justice be made?

Reading:


Documents on the Eichmann trial: - Session n°64 – The verdict.

   a) An impossible justice
   b) The Eichmann trial

Essay questions:

- Can one judge the Holocaust ?
- Why were so few Holocaust perpetrators put on trial ?
- Explain the controversy over the book by Hannah Arendt ‘Eichmann in Jerusalem’
- Analyse one of the subsequent Nuremberg trial.
Which were the argument opposed by Holocaust perpetrators on trial?

Further reading:


Heberer, Patricia, Matthäus, Jürgen, (eds.), *Atrocities on trial: historical perspectives on the politics of prosecuting war crimes* (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press ; Washington, DC : Published in association with the United States Holocaust Museum c2008).

Hebert, Valérie, *Hitler's generals on trial. The last war crimes tribunal at Nuremberg* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2010).


*The Trial of Adolf Eichmann* (Jerusalem : Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in co-operation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem - The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1995), 8 volumes.


Digital ressources : The Avalon project brings many fascinating documents of Holocaust trials

[www.yale.edu/wawweb/avalon/imt/imt.htm](http://www.yale.edu/wawweb/avalon/imt/imt.htm)

The Eichmann trial on Youtube:
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Eichmann+trial

**Session 11**: 12 April ; Memory and Memorials (SGM)


a) The texture of memory

b) The USHMM

Essay questions:

– What do Holocaust memorials tell us about national cultures ? You can choose one country (Israel, United States, France, Poland etc.) or compare memorials in two countries.

– Fiction writing and the memory of the Holocaust.

– How has humor been used to transmit and memorialize the Holocaust (in cinema, theater, etc.)?

Further reading:


Digital resources: the United States Holocaust Memorial-Museum: [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

**Session 12**: 19 April; The Holocaust in France. Conclusive session 19 April (JMD)

a) The Holocaust in France: why did 75% of Jews in France survive the Holocaust?

b) Conclusion: the Holocaust in the 21st Century


Essay questions:

- why did 75% of Jews in France survive the Holocaust?
- Describe the complex memory of the Holocaust in France
- What was the role of the United States (or at least of some Americans) in the confrontation France had with its past?
- Describe the controversy over the SNCF in the Holocaust.

Further Reading:


Libraries: Sciences Po’s library is well furnished in books about the Holocaust and its aftermath. More books are freely available at the German Historical Institute (no loans permitted though). See: [http://www.dhi-paris.fr/fr/bibliotheque/apercu.html](http://www.dhi-paris.fr/fr/bibliotheque/apercu.html)

You can also visit the ‘Mémorial de la Shoah’; this institution offers a wide library of books in various languages: [http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/archives-et-documentation/le-centre-de-documentation/la-bibliotheque-du-memorial.html](http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/archives-et-documentation/le-centre-de-documentation/la-bibliotheque-du-memorial.html).

A few specialised, academic journals deals with the Holocaust and other genocides: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*; *Holocaust Studies. A Journal of Culture and History*; *Dapim. Studies on the Holocaust*. 