What have you done to us, you freedom-loving peoples, guardians of justice, defenders of the high principles of democracy and of the brotherhood of man? What have you allowed to be perpetrated against a defenceless people while you stood aside and let it bleed to death, without offering help or succor, without calling on the fiends to stop, in the language of retribution which they alone would understand. Why do you profane our pain and wrath with empty expressions of sympathy which ring like a mockery in the ears of millions of the damned in the torture house of Europe? Why have you not even supplied arms to our ghetto rebels, as you have done for partisans and underground fighters of other nations? Why did you not help us to establish contacts with them, as you have done in the case of the partisans in Greece and Yugoslavia and the underground movements elsewhere? If instead of Jews, thousands of English, Americans or Russian women, children and aged had been tortured every day, burnt to death, asphyxiated in gas chambers-- would you have acted in the same way?    -- David Ben-Gurion, 1944

...the question of whether the Roosevelt administration did enough to rescue Jews is from a historical vantage a peculiar one. Not all victimized groups assume, as a matter of course, that America should have acted to mitigate their crucible. Until recently the Armenians, whom the Turks slaughtered mercilessly during World War I, did not raise the question of "where was America?" Neither do the Cambodians, the Iboes, the Bahais or the countless other groups who have been history's victims. Indeed the Japanese-Americans who surely have a greater and more direct claim against the American government were until recently, quite silent. But Jews do assume that the American government should have done more and they write history accordingly... The assumption that government should help prevent suffering and affirm life is an integral part of Jewish political culture... Jews simply expect, despite the punishment they have taken at the hands of government in Russia and Roumania and numerous other host nations, that governments will behave humanely. It is characteristic of a people capable of extraordinary faith or remarkable innocence.    -- Henry Feingold, "Did American Jewry Do Enough During the Holocaust?" B.G. Rudolf Lecture in Judaic Studies, Syracuse University, 1985

The chief business of twentieth-century philosophy is to reckon with twentieth-century history.    -- R. G. Collingwood, in J. Glover, Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century

Events happen because they are possible. If they are possible once, they are possible again. In that sense the Holocaust is not unprecedented, but a warning for the future.    —Yehuda Bauer
This course is not a survey of the destruction of European Jewry during World War II, some prior study of which is assumed. Rather, it focuses on the behavior of six groups in this period: German civilians; Jews; Allies; Churches; bystanders, and rescuers; and on the factors that influenced their behavior and decision-making.

The course foregrounds our assumptions that individuals, groups, states, and institutions should have behaved morally, or at least been influenced by ethics, empathy, or altruism in this period (and by implication, any period), and asks about the role of historical analysis in any such assessment.

It examines the effects that religious and political teachings and traditions, conscious or unconscious cultural assumptions, strategic considerations, and actual, available options, had on behavior. It does not begin with a theoretical or even an operating definition of “ethics” in historical situations. Rather, we will continually ask the material and each other what we mean by this; what standard we are expecting people to have operated by and why, and how this correlates to their circumstances and thinking; what articulated or unexpressed standards seemed to have been operating among the groups we will study; and how extraordinary new definitions of “ethical” emerged under the extreme circumstances of the Shoah.

Lectures and class discussions will emphasize such variables in decision making as chronology; location; political and religious ideology; ethnic tensions; means (money, materiel, arms, visas, means of communication and transportation); weather; topography; timing; and information and knowledge (they are not the same thing).

Although we will touch on questions of representation and historiography, these are not the focus of the course, nor are debates about the Holocaust in post-war opinion, state policy, or scholarship; Hitler or the behavior of other killer-perpetrators. Time constraints prevent study of the behavior of Jews outside the Nazi orbit (US, England). However, you
may choose these or other topics not on the syllabus, as well as ones that are, for your course paper.

The subject matter in this course is very trying. I urge you to arrange a system of emotional support: friends, counselors, to whom you can turn. It is reasonable and appropriate to express reactions to the material in class, even as we link those reactions to our main focus, stated above, and to historical analysis.

This course can be taken for JWST or HIST credit (or both); successful completion gives Wr and CD credit.

REQUIREMENTS:

This SYLLABUS, from front matter to individual sessions, contains essential material for which you are responsible. If you lose your hard copy, please print out another from the JWST or HIST websites or eres. I will make periodic announcements about requirements in class (there will be no additional requirements beyond those on the syllabus), for which you are responsible, as well.

ATTENDANCE is expected at all class sessions except in case of illness or emergency, and will be recorded. Absence may result in a lowered grade. Please inform me if you cannot make class and in particular, if a situation arises that affects your ability to attend or fulfill other course requirements in an ongoing way. I will do my best to work with you in such an event but can do so best if you speak with me promptly, before you have fallen much behind. Students who miss a class are responsible for obtaining class notes, handouts, announcements, from other students.

PLEASE NOTE: if weather or other circumstance causes cancellation of a class, stay on course: we will arrange a make up. Always stay current with the syllabus.

READING; INFORMED PARTICIPATION: All reading not listed as ("Recommended") is REQUIRED for the session for which it is assigned. Expect 55- 65 pages of reading per session, not including notes, illustrations, maps. If things are on the heavy side in one session, they will be less in another. If this is the first time you are taking a course with this type of history reading, hang in; you will learn how to do it and are welcome to come see me for tips, for which, see also below, “Observations.”

Class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Participation counts significantly toward the final grade (see below). Informed, thoughtful participation will not only boost your grade but enhance the learning of all.

OBSERVATIONS: Each student must come to class with a one-page written set of observations on the readings. Just make a few points, informed observations—do not hand in your notes to the reading or write essays. Rather, sit back when you’ve finished the reading and ask yourself what most struck you in the reading—and why—and say something specific and substantiated about that. Doing this will make your reading more focused and effective,
as well as giving everyone talking points for class. I will collect your observations; I will not grade them individually but their overall quality, and your consistency in submitting them, will count toward your final grade. Put your name; date; the session number and a signed Honor Code on each observation set. I prefer typed; but readable hand-written is OK. Save a copy, which will help when you prepare for the midterm.

**LEAD OFF PRESENTATION:**

Each student will have one opportunity, individually or if class size mandates, as part of a small (2-4 student) group, to give a SHORT (TOTAL no longer than 10 minute) lead-off presentation on one session’s readings. Think of this as a spoken version of your one-page observations. Raise issues; make analytical observations, links and comparisons with other readings and situations; ask substantiated questions. Talk about something that struck you and WHY—its meaning and significance.

I will clock presentations, so plan accordingly. In a group presentation, each student will have about 3 minutes and can present at most 1-2 ideas, statements, questions. Those in the group must discuss the presentation among themselves in advance of class to prevent repetition and to decide order of presentations, etc. The students in each group are responsible for coordinating with one another. Failure to do this will affect your grade.

Further specifics about arrangement of session leadoffs TBA.

It is each student’s responsibility to be signed up for a presentation, to know who else shares that session, and their contact information. Students MAY change the date of a lead off IF they locate another student willing to “trade,” and if BOTH confirm this with me.

On the day of your presentation, submit to me in class a 1-2 page OUTLINE of your points and a copy of any handouts you may have prepared for the class (e.g., maps, tables). I will grade the individual quality of each oral presentation and outline. Late submission of the outline will be penalized 1/3 grade per day of lateness (A- becomes B+, etc.) unless there is a documented illness or emergency. Your outline must be typed, with your name, session number and topic, and signed Honor Code declaration on it. If you are part of a group and your thinking has been influenced by group discussion, just note this to be in accord with Honor Code policy. On the day you present, you need not submit an observation paper.

**READING:**

See below for books on the “Required for Purchase” list; we use these titles heavily and you should have your own copies. These titles have been ordered at the Bookstore, which underbuys and returns unsold copies within a few weeks. While all required reading is on shelf reserve in Mudd, relying on reserve copies for these readings is not realistic. If purchase poses an untenable burden, Ohio Link or the public library system are other options, but be sure to order well in advance. It is a great idea to form a reading cooperative, in which a small group collaborates to obtain and circulate required readings.

Required reading NOT in books "Required for Purchase" is on ERES (jwst234).
Shelf reserve is the default option for doing the reading, since again, all assigned has been ordered for shelf reserve.

However you do it, obtaining and doing the reading for the date assigned is the responsibility of each student. Do not leave doing the reading, much less acquiring it, for the last minute. There are no excused failures to obtain the reading. If an exceptional situation prevents you from doing it, as above, see me.

If you do not find something on ERES or shelf reserve (slip ups do occur), immediately seek assistance of Reserve Room staff, preferably the Supervisor. Emailing me about a problem obtaining reading is not an effective way to get help (all I can do is email them) and will not excuse you from doing it. Do tell me, however, of a problem your efforts do not resolve. Same with the Bookstore.

Please note that readings may be listed on ERES by title, author, or if in an edited volume, by editor. Check more than one way; ask reserve room staff for help.

I occasionally put some suggested additional reading on the syllabus in parentheses, and will also give you a separate, Select Bibliography geared to this course, intended to help with your papers. This is solely FYI. It is NOT REQUIRED.

REQUIRED FOR PURCHASE:

Leni Yahil, The Holocaust
Lucy Dawidowicz, A Holocaust Reader
Leslie Epstein, King of the Jews
Yehuda Bauer, Rethinking the Holocaust
Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, Auschwitz, True Tales from a Grotesque Land
Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History

OTHER WRITTEN WORK:

There will be an in-class, mid-term exam on March 13. Details about format and preparation TBA.

One 12-15 page final research paper, in lieu of a final, on the day and time set for the final exam for this course by the Registrar’s office. Instructors have no discretion with this date; see the Dean of Studies for extension/ incomplete. Those taking this course for four credits will write a 17- 20-page paper. These limits do NOT include Notes and Bibliography or illustrations.

You MAY choose a topic on the syllabus for your paper (e.g., going into greater depth about one Judenrat leader, or comparing two; researching one rescuer). You may also choose a topic off the syllabus. In any case, you must consult with me and get approval for your paper topic.
before Spring Break and hand in a preliminary title and bibliography in our first session back from Break. Sign up for office hour time about your topic well in advance of Break.

Figure on ca. 5 books or the equivalent in articles (8-10 articles= book), of new reading (not assigned in the course), for the paper, and ca. 8 books of new reading or equivalent in article if doing the course for 4 credits. Your paper MUST use primary sources in a significant way.

Tips to successful writing: Your paper must have a theme or question that draws you to this paper and makes it cohere for the reader. Your paper must be analytical, not a report on books you have read, or a summary of findings. Your topic must relate to the question of ethics and behavior during the Shoah.

Clear thinking and writing and substantiated argumentation (cite relevant specifics and show why they matter) are basic requirements for doing history. Your writing must be logical, organized, coherent, and use grammatical English and correct spelling. Write simply, directly, and precisely, using the fewest, least pretentious words possible to convey your meaning clearly. Avoid complicated terms or sentence structures, the use of “impact” as a verb unless you mean collision (use "affect," "influence"), and passive tense (unless you really do not know who is the agent of some action, which sometimes does happen—the only legitimate use of passive tense).

Your writing must be self-sufficient: clear to someone who has not taken this course and has no independent knowledge of your subject; such a person should be your imagined audience. It is the writer’s job to make her/himself clear and convincing.

To achieve this level of clarity and control in writing, drafts and revision are essential. I will read drafts if you give me a few days to get back to you. Do use the writing tutors the College makes available. Pair with one another to read and comment on each others’ drafts; if you adopt an idea you get from someone in this way, just cite it as you would any other source, and you will have adhered to the Honor Code.

Use of Rampolla for the research paper is required. The paper (but not other required writing) must have either end or foot notes and a Bibliography of works you have used produced using the conventions Rampolla lays out. This WILL count in your grade. A signed Honor Code declaration must be on your paper for me to grade it; see below.

Other works on writing and style (these are recommended only):

William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style
Howard S. Becker, Writing for Social Scientists
Jules Benjamin, A Student’s Guide to History (a guide to reading history, even note taking and oral presentations, as well as research and writing skills).
HONOR CODE:

This course, as all at Oberlin, operates under the College Honor Code, whose provisions it is the student’s responsibility to know. College rules require a signed declaration of the Honor Code on all written work. If you have questions about using and citing the work of others, including on-line sources, or other aspects of the HC, please see the HC section in Fussers and the College website; a member of the HC Committee; Mudd reference staff; me.

Grading:
participation: 33% (of which the lead off presentation and outline write-up are 12%)
midterm: 33%
research paper: 34%

One or more lectures may be arranged, attendance at which is required.

There will be one visit to the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage in Beachwood, OH on a Sunday (further details TBA), during which we will hold one of our regular class sessions (in lieu of a regular session); attendance required.
Jewish Studies/ History 234

Good and Evil: Ethics and Decision-Making in the Holocaust

1. Introductory: Subject and Approaches  2/5

Terms:

Good; evil; ethics; history

Jews; "non-Jews"

"Holocaust;" "Final Solution;" "Shoah;" "War Against the Jews;" "extermination;"
"annihilation;" anti-Semitism; "antisemitism;" "Jew-hatred;" "Judeophobia;" "genocide;"
"ethnic cleansing"

Small group and full group discussion: the quotes at the beginning of this syllabus.

Survey of European Jewry in the thirties: who were Europe's Jews?

2. History and Mystification; Choice in Extremis, Possibilities for Good  2/7

Please look over the syllabus and come to next class with a list of three choices of sessions
you'd like to lead off on so we can make assignments. I'll do my best to honor your
preferences, if possible.

Yehuda Bauer, "Against Mystification: The Holocaust as a Historical Phenomenon," in
Bauer, The Holocaust in Historical Perspective (Seattle, 1978), 30-49; also in Michael Marrus,
ed., The Nazi Holocaust: Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews, v.1, pp.98-
117

Jacob Katz, "Was the Holocaust Predictable?" Commentary, May, 1975, 41-48; reprinted in
Marrus, ed. The Nazi Holocaust, v.1 (see above), pp.118-137

3. “Ordinary Germans” in the 30s: Voters; Opponents of Nazis 2/12

Presenter:

Sarah Gordon, *Hitler, Germans, and the "Jewish Question"*, chps. 2, 7, pp.50-90, 210-245

4. German Churches in the 30s 2/14

Presenter:

Gordon, chp.8, pp.246-262

Robert Eriksen and Susannah Heschel, eds., *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*,” Introduction, pp.1-4 only, and chp. 6, Kenneth Barnes, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hitler’s Persecution of the Jews,” pp.110-128

The *Jew in the Modern World, A Documentary History*, P. Mendes-Flohr and J. Reinharz, eds. (SECOND edition), pp. 640-656 (be sure to read the introductory comments and notes to these documents)


5. German Jewish Responses 2/19

Presenter:

Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, Introduction, chps.1, 5, pp.3-49, 119-144

Mendes-Flohr, Reinharz, pp.640-641, 643-645

(Recommended: Lucy Dawidowicz, *A Holocaust Reader*, pp.143-170: further documents from German Jews)

6. September 1939-Spring 1941: Nazi Policy, Jewish Responses 2/21

Presenter:

Read ONE of the following:

Leni Yahil, *Holocaust*, chps. 5-6, pp.125-185

OR:

Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust, A History*, chps. 7-8, pp. 166-238
7. Ghettos, Judenraete  2/26

Presenter:

Yahil, chp.7, pp. 186-214

Dawidowicz, *A Holocaust Reader*, pp.171-193

(Recommended: Philip Friedman, *Roads to Extermination*, much on the ghettos, including social conflict, and on heads of various Judenraete); Raul Hilberg, *Documents of Destruction*, chp. 10, pp.38-42)


Please locate Lodz on map, using Yahil or other source; bring map to class

Presenter:

Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews*  this is an historical novel, based on the experience of the Jews in the ghetto of Lodz under its Nazi-appointed head, Mordekhai Chaim Rumkovsky, called Trumpelman in the novel. Read as much as you like, but for today's class, everyone should have read chps. 2-5, which in the Avon paperback, 1979 edition is pp.30-149


9. Ethics and Decision Making: Ghetto and Judenrat Warsaw; Vilna; Bialystok  3/4

Please locate these on map and bring to class

Presenter:

Yahil, pp.214-224

Dwork and van Pelt, chp. 9, pp.239-255 only


"A Birthday Trip to Hell," exhibition catalog, in class viewing


Presenter:

Yahil, chps. 9-10, 243-287

Dwork and van Pelt, chp. 10, pp.259-284

* Reminder: a statement of your paper topic and preliminary bibliography is due the first class after spring break. Both require my approval so sign up now on the sheets on my door for office hour time (please do not email re: time unless you cannot make any of the appointment times on those sheets). Given the enrollment, it is imperative that you sign up now. I cannot promise to accommodate requests for time if left to the last minute before Break and outside of documented emergency, cannot conduct paper topic consultation on email.

Once you know even the general area you are interested in (e.g., Judenraete; rescuers), I urge you to make an appointment with a research librarian in Mudd. They are wonderful at helping you locate good sources effectively. They are also busy, so—make this appointment now, too. See the Select Bibliography I have prepared.

11. Deportation to Mass, Industrialized Murder 3/11

Presenter:

Yahil, chps. 13, 14 (selections), pp.320-335, 442-456

Dawidowicz, Holocaust Reader, pp.289-316

* See “Reminder,” above


Presenter:

Dwork and van Pelt, chp. 11, pp.285-315

Yahil, chp. 15, selections, 356-394, 401-403

13. Mid-Term Exam 3/18

In essay and other formats, the mid-term will call on you to engage material (assigned readings, lectures, and class discussion), from sessions 1-12. Further details TBA.

*See reminder, above... you should already have/ had these appointments

Presenter:

Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, Auschwitz, True Tales From a Grotesque Land, pp.3-66
(recommended: 94-99)

SPRING BREAK 3/22-3/30

REMINDER: Your statement of paper topic and preliminary bibliography is due in class our first session back from Break.

And heads up: Viewing of Claude Lanzmann's film, "Shoah," will be the main assignment beginning our second session back from Break and will be the subject of two class sessions. It is a long and emotionally difficult film; you may wish to obtain a copy from your local library and start viewing it during break. Keep paper handy, jot down notes for class discussion.

15. Morality in the Concentration Camps 4/1

PAPER TOPICS/ BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE IN CLASS TODAY

Presenter:

Tzvetan Todorov, Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps, pp.47-118

16, 17. Victims; Bystanders: “If He Cuts Himself, Does It Hurt Me?" 4/3, 4/8 (*possible visit to Maltz Museum in lieu of one of these class times, to view Holocaust portion of the Museum’s permanent exhibit, and to discuss “Shoah.” TBA)

Presenter:

Presenter:

Viewing Claudia Lanzmann’s film, "Shoah," on reserve for this course, is the main assignment for these two sessions.

The only reading for these two sessions is a short article:

Gordon Horowitz, “Places Far Away, Places Very Near: Mathausen, the Camps of the Shoah, and the Bystanders,” in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham Peck, eds., The Holocaust and History, pp.409-420 (two of these pages are Notes).

You must have viewed at least half (4-5 hours) of “Shoah” for our first session and all of it for the second. Keep paper handy; jot down thoughts and bring these to class for discussion.
We will discuss arrangements for group viewing of the film, which is imperative given its length (and I think, its content); no individual may check out the College copy. You may be able to get other copies (from public library system); feel free to do so.

18. France and the Holocaust; Rescuers in France  4/10

Presenter:

Dwork and van Pelt, pp.232-238 only (Recommended: Yahil, pp.431-435)

Susan Zuccotti, "Surviving the Holocaust: the Situation in France," in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham Peck, eds. The Holocaust and History, pp.492-509


19. Individual Rescuers  4/15

Presenter:

Hallie, chp. 6, pp.139-165 (if you can read through p.200, great)

Deborah Dwork, Voices and Views, A History of the Holocaust, pp.541-581  (a fair number of these pages are photos and Notes)

(Recommended: Robert Satloff, Among the Righteous, Lost Stories From the Holocaust’s Long Reach Into Arab Lands – re: Arab rescuers of Jews hunted by Nazis)


Presenter:

“...Even my first feeble efforts to help the Jews back in the Radom ghetto could have brought me a bullet in the head; I knew I could only be killed once, and as the saying went, I might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb.”—Irene Gut Opdyke, In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer


Nechama Tec, Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust, chps. 3, pp.38-75
21. Organized Rescue: Jewish Efforts; Attempted Deals With Nazis; Successes and Failures: 
The Cases of Denmark; Bulgaria; Slovakia; Hungary  4/22

Presenter:

Yahil, chps.20-21, selections, pp.573-576, 578-593, 595-600, 605-608, 611-621, 622-642, 646-648

Dawidowicz, Reader, pp.316-327 (Bund appeal to Polish Government in Exile; the Europa scheme)

(Recommended: Michael Marrus, The Holocaust in History, chp. 7)


Presenter:


23. Resistance  4/29

Presenter:


Yehuda Bauer, Rethinking the Holocaust, chps. 6-7, pp.119-166

(Recommended: Yahil, pp.457-493: on revolts in ghettos and concentration camps; this chapter written by Y. Gutman, a major scholar of Jewish armed resistance; Tzetvan Todorov, Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps, Prologue, pp.3-30, on different kinds of “resistance”)

24. The Pope, the Vatican  

Presenter:

Susan Zucotti, *Under His Very Windows*, Introduction (section), chps.11, 19, Conclusion, pp.1-6 only, 150-170, 276-290, 300-326


25. Allies: US, Britain, USSR  

Presenter:


Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, chp. 10, pp. 213-241


26. The US; Course Conclusions  

Presenter:

Henry Feingold, *Bearing Witness*, chps. 5, 13, pp.73-93, 255-276 (Recommended: chp. 9, pp.183-201)