The Holocaust in American Art

Tuesday 12 – 2 p.m. Room 201 Course starts: 19.10.2004

In this seminar we will explore the representation of the Holocaust in American art (literature, film and the fine arts) over the past 50 years or so. We will trace how art has dealt with the phenomenon of the Holocaust from the beginnings in the late 1940s until the most immediate past and how in the process the understanding of the event itself and the parameters of its representation have changed. While strategies of representing the Holocaust have always been a subject of debate, beginning in the 1990s the basic principles of the controversy have shifted significantly. We will discuss how this change can be accounted for and if and how it can be correlated with the process commonly called "The Americanization of the Holocaust". The seminar will comprise film screenings, guest lectures and a trip to the Jüdisches Museum Berlin. There will be a sequel to this seminar in the summer semester 2005, taught by Stefan Brandt from the department of culture, that will explore the topic from a Cultural Studies perspective.

We will read and study the following novels:
Elie Wiesel, *Night* (1958)
Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews* (1979)

We will also deal with the following essay, poem, short story and comic book: Norman Mailer, "The White Negro" (1957); Allen Ginsberg, "Kaddish" (1959); Cynthia Ozick, "Envy" (1969) Art Spiegelman, *Maus II* (1986) as well as with two of the following four films: *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955); *Judgment at Nuremberg* (Stanley Kramer, 1961) or *The Pawnbroker* (Sidney Lumet, 1964) or *Sophie's Choice* (Alan Pakula, 1982).

Credit requirements:
Regular attendance, oral presentation, term paper of 15-20 pages length to be handed in no later than 28 March, 2005. Please note: There is no extension of this deadline, I will not accept essays handed in later than that date.

A summary of the oral presentation and guiding questions for the required reading have to be posted on the e-learning platform of the course one week prior to the presentation. Further information on the procedure will be given in class. Please note: All groups have to discuss their presentation with me during my office hours one week ahead of the actual date.

Course material: You can buy the books by Wallant, Epstein and Foer at Buch Express, Unter den Eichen 97, 12203 Berlin, Tel.: 831 40 04. For those who buy all the three books there the Buch Express offers a special price. A reader containing the material by Wiesel, Ginsberg, Mailer, Ozick, and Spiegelman can be obtained at Copy-Repro-Center at Habelschwerder Allee 37 (next to the Rostlaube’s parking lot, vis à vis the Department of Philosophy). You can find further material on the reserve shelf (Handapparat # 22) in the library.

Introductory text:
Syllabus

I. 19.10.04 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

II. 26.10.04 INTRODUCTION OF BACKGROUND AND KEY CONCEPTS
Please read and prepare for today:
Texts in your reader!

III. 02.11.04 THE 1950S – TESTIMONY I:
FILM SCREENING I
Alain Resnais, Night and Fog (1955)

IV. 09.11.04 THE 1950S – TESTIMONY II:
Please read and prepare for today:
Elie Wiesel, Night (1958)

V. 16.11.04 THE LATE 1950S – INDIRECT, YET REBELLIOUS STATEMENTS:
Please read and prepare for today:
Norman Mailer, "The White Negro" (1957)
Allan Ginsberg, "Kaddish" (1959)

VI. 23.11.04 THE EARLY 1960IES – SEARCHING FOR THE VOICE I
Please read and prepare for today:
Edward Lewis Wallant, The Pawnbroker (1961), Chapter 1-13

VII. 30.11.04 THE EARLY 1960IES – SEARCHING FOR THE VOICE II
Please read and prepare for today:
Edward Lewis Wallant, The Pawnbroker (1961), Chapter 14-end
VIII. 07.12.04  
**LATE 1960IES – ONE VERY STRICT ONE**  
Please read and prepare for today:  
Cynthia Ozick, "Envy" (1969)

IX. 14.12.04  
**FILM SCREENING II**  
To be determined:  
*Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961, Stanley Kramer; 178 min.)  
or  
*The Pawnbroker* (1964, Sidney Lumet; 116 min.)  
or  
*Sophie's Choice* (1982, Alan Pakula; 150 min.)

20.12.04 – 02.01.05  
* SEMESTER BREAK! ENJOY AND RELAX! *

X. 04.01.05  
**THE 1970IES: BLACK HUMOR BEGINNING TO SEEP IN I**  
Please read and prepare for today:  
Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews* (1979), Chapter 1-5

XI. 11.01.05  
**TRIP TO JÜDISCHES MUSEUM BERLIN**  
Due to extensive security precautions we have to meet at **11.30** at the **group entrance of Jüdisches Museum, Lindenstr. 9-14, 10969 Berlin (U Hallesches Tor, U Kochstraße)**.  
We will first get a tour through the museum to study the architecture and will then meet for a discussion with the artist Joachim Seinfeld.  
End of the discussion at 13.30. If you wish, you may stay in the museum to embark on an individual tour.

XII. 18.01.05  
**THE 1970IES: BLACK HUMOR BEGINNING TO SEEP IN II**  
Please read and prepare for today:  
Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews* (1979), Chapter 6-end
XIII. 25.01.05  THE 1980IES: THE HOLOCAUST AS COMIC STRIP

GUEST LECTURE BY DR. ANNETTE JAELE LEHMANN ON ART SPIEGELMAN'S MAUS.
Please read and prepare for today:
Art Spiegelman, Maus II (1986)

XIV. 01.02.05  THE NEW MILLENNIUM – MORE HUMOR SEEPING IN I
Please read and prepare for today:

XV. 08.02.05  THE NEW MILLENNIUM – MORE HUMOR SEEPING IN II
Please read and prepare for today:
Jonathan Safran Foer, Everything Is Illuminated (2002), from above mentioned letter until the end.

XVI. 15.02.05  THE NEW MILLENNIUM – WHAT ABOUT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS, THOUGH?
The Holocaust in the Visual Arts.
Bibliography


The Holocaust in American Art
List of Oral reports.

Please sign up and give name, telephone number and e-mail address!

IV. 09.11.04  **THE 1950S – TESTIMONY II:**
Elie Wiesel, *Night* (1958)

**Material:**

V. 16.11.04  **THE LATE 1950S – INDIRECT, YET REBELLIOUS STATEMENTS:**
Norman Mailer, "The White Negro" (1957)
Allan Ginsberg, "Kaddish" (1959)

**Material:**
Please develop questions to pre-structure the discussion.

VI. 23.11.04  **THE EARLY 1960IES – SEARCHING FOR THE VOICE I**

**Material:**
VII. 30.11.04  THE EARLY 1960IES – SEARCHING FOR THE VOICE II
Edward Lewis Wallant, *The Pawnbroker* (1961), Chapter 14-end

**Material:**

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VIII. 07.12.04  LATE 1960IES – ONE VERY STRICT ONE
Cynthia Ozick, "Envy" (1969)

**Material:**

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X. 04.01.05  THE 1970IES: BLACK HUMOR BEGINNING TO SEEP IN I
Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews* (1979), Chapter 1-5

**Material:**
XII. 18.01.05  **THE 1970IES: BLACK HUMOR BEGINNING TO SEEP IN II**  
Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews* (1979), Chapter 6-end

**Material:**  

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XIV. 01.02.05  **WRITING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM – MORE HUMOR SEEPING IN I**  

**Material:**  
Slavoj Zizek. "Camp Comedy."  

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XV. 08.02.05  **THE NEW MILLENIUM – MORE HUMOR SEEPING IN II**  

**Material:**  
The Holocaust in the Visual Arts.

Material:
Holocaust Art (1933-1945): How Artists Depicted the Shoah in Sculpture, Drawing and Painting. It thus seems powerless before the horror and cruelty of the Holocaust in which six million people were slaughtered in ways that can only arouse feelings of disgust and revulsion. Theoreticians have questioned whether it is worthwhile attempting to bridge this chasm: do not the documentary photographs that were taken at the time fulfil the need for visual testimony? The Holocaust in American Film (Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music, and Art). Item Preview. > remove-circle. The Holocaust in American Film (Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music, and Art). by. Judith E. Doneson. Published in 2020, Americans and the Holocaust features more than 60 of these items in full color. Taken together, these artifacts—from children's playthings, to a high school yearbook, to vivid US propaganda—reveal the complexity of what in hindsight can seem like a simpler time. Copies of this 64-page volume are available on Amazon or in the Museum shop. Order a Book. Related Publication.