Visual Representations of the Holocaust and Religion U04505

Course Manager:  Dr K. Hannah Holtschneider  
H.Holtschneider@ed.ac.uk; 0131 650 8933; Room 2.06  
Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-1:30pm & by appointment

Teaching Staff:  Dr K. Hannah Holtschneider

Class Contact Hours:  Semester 1, Wednesdays 10am-1pm (seminar 1 10:00-10:50am;  
lecture 11:10am-12:00pm; seminar 2 12:10-1:00pm)

Class Venue:  New College: Lecture Room 1 (lecture) / Room 1.07 (seminars)

Initial Class Meeting:  Wednesday 22 Sept. 2010, 11:10 a.m., Lecture Room 1.

Description of Course:  
In the last ten years research on the visual representation of the Holocaust in art, film and museum has flourished, now being posited at the cutting edge of Holocaust Studies. The category of ‘religion’ does not occupy an explicit or prominent place, yet is detectable in many of the representations offered. As such, this is an exciting and novel field for Religious Studies to engage in and a dedicated honours course will allow students to approach this field with current Religious Studies methods and broach new ground by introducing the field of Visual and Material Culture Studies and its bearing on Religious Studies.

The aim is to chart a history of visual engagements with the Holocaust in a variety of media and to give students the opportunity to apply methods of Cultural and Religious Studies in their analysis. An analytic thread through this diverse material will be the identification of religious motifs and inscriptions of Jewishness.

Prerequisites for Course:  
This is an honours course aimed at those studying on degree programmes in the School of Divinity and visiting undergraduates. Recommended prerequisites are Religion 1A and Religion 2A. Students may also apply to the course manager who will recommend short introductory readings for those lacking the prerequisites.

Learning Outcomes  
At the end of the course students should be able to do the following:
1. Demonstrate knowledge of major themes and works in the visual representation of the Holocaust in art, museum and film.
2. Summarise key interpretive concepts in the theory of representation.
3. Be able to apply methods of Religious and Cultural Studies to the analysis of visual representations of the Holocaust.
4. Critically assess the function of religious motifs and inscriptions of Jewishness in visual representations of the Holocaust.
5. Sensitively explore the religious, cultural and national contexts of production of visual representations of the Holocaust.

Assessment  
1. Class presentation and leading the following discussion (20%). This will help form and test oral presentation and leadership skills, build confidence and test time management.
2. Essay (20%). This will test research skills, written presentation skills, analytical skills,
demonstrate independent thought and argument. **The essay is due on the Monday of week 8**, 3. Exam (60%). This will test written presentation skills under pressure and demonstrate time management. **The exam will take place on a date tbc. between 6-17 December 2010.**

**Background**

Those who have not studied the history of the Holocaust and those who wish to refresh their knowledge: please read David Engel 2000, *The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews*, Harlow: Longman.

In addition please use these reference works and historical overviews to familiarise yourself with the history of the Holocaust:


This course will not consider the history of the Holocaust and recent developments in Holocaust historiography. Rather, the subject of this course is the representation of the Holocaust by visual means in a variety of media for a variety of purposes. Basic historical knowledge about the Holocaust is taken for granted. It is up to you to familiarise yourself with the facts using some of the sources listed here as background reading.

**Class preparation**

You are expected to have studied the key readings for each week. This includes the primary source (image, text, film, website) and a few items of secondary reading. In class you should be prepared to answer questions about the readings and use evidence from the key texts in class discussion.

**The key readings are available EITHER on WebCT via e-reserve OR through the e-journals collection of the University Library.**

The additional reading for each week is intended to help the person preparing the presentation and those who wish to write their assessed essay in this area. The additional reading is also useful for those who are thinking of preparing an honours dissertation on a related topic.

There are a few theoretical and methodological texts which inform the discussion of class topics across the course. These are intended to help us chart a way through the vast territory of ‘visual representations of the Holocaust’ and focus part of the lectures and class discussion on the ways in which we study visual representations of historical events. A thematic thread informing all classes is the visual representation of religious Jewish identifications.
Presentations
Each week there will be a presentation by one or more students (depending on the size of the class) on the key texts. The presenter should be in command of the material, highlighting important issues relating to the study of the source text and outlining key areas of academic debate. Presentations need to go beyond a summary of the texts you have read and present an critical evaluation of the readings. The presentation should include

- A short introduction to the source you are analysing. Don’t just describe its content but offer a critical interpretation of the piece.
- A brief summary of the secondary readings you have used. Be sure to convey the main points of the arguments of the texts and use them in the critical discussion of the source. It can be helpful to use quotation of significant points, but you need to be sure to explain why you are quoting and what you would like the audience to gain from this.
- Further, the presentation should identify areas of disagreement and academic debate and raise questions for further discussion in class.
- Powerpoint may be helpful to illustrate the presentation and/or a handout, summarising key points.
- Presentations should be no longer than 10min. Sticking to the allocated time is part of the assessment. I will cut off the presentation if 10min are exceeded.

Essays
Rather than provide you with essay titles I am asking you to choose an art work or a memorial or a museum or a film (other than the one you presented on) and to offer a critical reflection on its ability to represent the Holocaust. Please email me with your choice of topic and a draft title by Friday 15.10. (Week 4) and make an appointment to discuss your essay title and approach to writing it in Week 5. The appointment will be between 10-15 min & I will put a sign-up sheet on my office door in Week 4.

Questions you can ask of the work you are discussing include:
- Does it meet its desired purpose/aims, is it effective? How do you know?
- Is it authentic (and what does ‘authentic’ mean)?
- Does it fit with the context in which it is situated/received?
- What kind of Jewish identifications are referenced in the work under discussion? Do you consider these to be appropriate – and why or why not? What about their limitations?
- How is religion referenced/represented in the work?
- What is meant by ‘the Holocaust’ in the work you are discussing?

You need to include critical literature in your discussion, both in terms of the method you use to assess the piece you are analysing and in terms of the criticisms which have already been voiced. The additional readings for each week will help with finding appropriate critical literature.

Essays are 2,000 words in length (max).

Schedule of Lecture and Seminar Meetings

1. 22.9. Introduction
Additional reading:

2. 29.9. Art: works of art

Key texts: Marc Chagall’s White Crucifixion (student presentation)

Additional reading:
3. 6.10. Art: Literature/Cartoons

Key texts: Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (student presentation)


Rothberg, M., 1994. “‘We were talking Jewish’: Art Spiegelman’s ‘Maus’ as ‘Holocaust’ production’, *Contemporary Literature* 35:4, 661-687.

Additional reading:

more on *Maus*:


Tabachnick, S.E., 1993. ‘Of “Maus” and memory: The structure of Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel of the Holocaust’, *Word & Image* 9:2, 154-162 (Main Library Per. 7 Wor.)


general:


IL: University of Illinois Press.


4. 13.10. Art: Monuments/memorials


Additional reading:


5. 20.10. Exhibitions, museums, photographs I

Key texts: The Sonderkommando photographs (student presentation)


Additional reading:

Representations, 69, 38-62.

6. 27.10. possible day trip to IWM; leaving Edinburgh around 6am, get to London around 10am, IWM 11am-4pm, train to Edinburgh 5pm arrive around 9.30pm, group travel
options may be possible

Additional reading:

The essay is due Monday 1.11.2010, 2pm.

There will be 3 film screenings in the weeks before the presentations on films are due – please make sure you schedule the time at the beginning of the semester!

7. 3.11. Exhibitions, museums photographs II

Key texts: Jewish Museum Berlin (student presentation)

Additional reading:
Press.

(Re)Visualizing National History: Museums and National Identities in Europe in the New
Millennium. German and European Studies. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 139-
156.

Judaism, 36(2), 26-33.

Walsh, K., 1992. The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world,
London: Routledge.


Young, J., 2000. At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and


8. 10.11. Film and TV: documentaries

Key texts: Night and Fog (Nuit et Brouillard) (Alain Resnais, 1955) (student presentation)

Delage, C., 2005. “Nuit et Brouillard”: A turning point in the history and memory of the Holocaust, in
Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in film and television since 1933, eds. T.

Additional reading:

more on Night and Fog:
Hebard, A., 1997. ‘Disruptive histories: Toward a radical politics of remembrance in Alain Resnais’s
“Night and Fog”, New German Critique 71, 87-114.
Knaap, E. van der ed., 2006. Uncovering the Holocaust: the international reception of Night and fog,
London: Wallflower.
major documentary film, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

on Shoah:
Hellig, J.L., 1998. ‘Recalling the Holocaust: Lanzmann’s “Shoah” and Spielberg’s “Schindler's List”’,
Scholars Press.
Holocaust, eds. S. Hornstein & F. Jacobowitz, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press
Spitzer, L., 2004. “‘You wanted history, I give you history”: Claude Lanzmann’s “Shoah”’, in,
Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust, eds. M. Hirsch & I. Kacandes, New York, NY:
Modern Language Association of America.

general on film:
Avisar, I., 1988. Screening the holocaust: cinema’s images of the unimaginable, Jewish literature and
culture, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Brown, N.T., 2001. ‘The Holocaust in film: Christian ideology, the enigma of indifference and the
portrayal of the Jew’, Remembering for the future III, eds. J.K. Roth & E. Maxwell-Meynard,
New York: Palgrave, 691-703.
Eaglestone, R. & Langford, B. eds., 2007. Teaching Holocaust Literature and Film, Palgrave
Macmillan. (ordered for New College Library)


Writing about film? Have a look at this site to catch up with some basic terminology and ideas for analysis: http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/


9. 17.11. Film and TV: feature film

Key texts: Life is Beautiful (Roberto Benigni, 1997) (student presentation)


more on Life is Beautiful:


Additional reading:

10. 24.11. Film and TV: TV
Key texts: God on Trial (Frank Cottrell Boyce, 2008) (student presentation)

Additional reading:
Metz, W.C., 2008. ‘“Show me the Shoah!”: generic experience and spectatorship in popular representations of the Holocaust’, *Shofar* 27:1,16-35.

11. 1.12. Revision

Exam on a date tbc. between 6-17 December 2010.