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
Phone: (508) 793-7523, email: tkuehne@clarku.edu

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)

- Rudolf Hoess, Commandant of Auschwitz (London 2000)
- David Cesarani, Becoming Eichmann. Rethinking the Life, Crimes, and Trial of a “Desk Murderer” (Cambridge, MA, 2006)
- Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland (New York, 1992)

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/](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)
- Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, 2002)
- Inga Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust* (Cambridge, U.K., 1999)
- *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).
Schedule

1st Session, January 16:
Introduction: “What is a Perpetrator?”

2nd Session, January 23:
Mercilessness and Morals
3rd Session, January 30:
**Careerism and Nazism**

4th Session, February 6:
**Bureaucracy and Banality**

5th Session, February 13:
**Medicine and Racism**

6th Session, February 20:
**Group Pressure and Obedience**

7th Session, February 27:
**Antisemitism and Institutional Culture**

8th Session, March 12:
**Military Virtues and Virtual Partisans**

9th Session, March 19:
**Greed and Welfare**

10th Session, March 26:
**Femaleness and Maleness**

11th Session, April 2:
**Neighborhood and Collaboration**

12th Session, April 9:
**The Judenräte in the Grey Zone**

13th Session, April 16:
**Terror as Social Ordering**
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.