

SPRING 2025: HIST 595/POL 59000

## Holocaust and Genocide

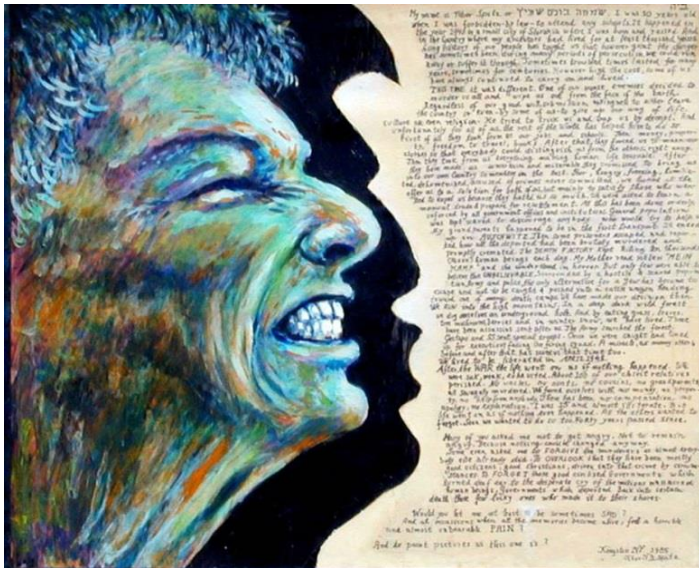
MWF 3:30-4:20pm in WALC 2127

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3-5pm in-person or [on Zoom](#)



*"This story should not have happened – it did. We believed such stories cannot happen again – they are."*  
-Judith Sherman, *Say the Name*

*"Artobiography"* by Tibor Spitz

The implications of the attempted destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis during the Second World War, what we term the Holocaust – along with millions of Roma (Gypsies), Poles, Russians, homosexuals, the disabled, and others – are terrifyingly far-reaching. Genocide and ethnic cleansing are central to our understanding of the twentieth century. This course examines the historical origins and practices of genocide, centering on the causes and nature of the Holocaust as historical event, including its aftermath, problems of its representation and commemoration. We will work through a comparative framework to explore the Armenian genocide during World War One, nation and class in the USSR, Cambodia in the 1970s, and the cases of Rwanda and Yugoslavia in the 1990s. We will make use of primary sources and secondary literature, fiction, memoirs, film and other media during our examination of the Holocaust, Genocide Studies, and Mass Atrocity Prevention. Counts toward the Human Rights Minor.

### Required Texts:

- Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, updated edition (Princeton UP, 2015)
- James Waller, *Becoming Evil* (Oxford, 2007): free access through Purdue Libraries <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/purdue/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=5763678>
- Doris L. Bergen, *War & Genocide*, 4th edition (Rowman & Littlefield, 2025) <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781538178058/War-and-Genocide-A-Concise-History-of-the-Holocaust-Fourth-Edition>
- All additional required readings available on Brightspace, marked with a "B"

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course, you will have:

- 1) Gained a deeper understanding of the patterns and processes that shaped the attempted destruction of European Jewry, which we term the Holocaust, as a historical event that occurred over time;
- 2) Explored the Holocaust both as a distinctive event and as part of a world history of genocide;
- 3) Engaged in the study of mass atrocity prevention using historical case studies drawing on all phases of the conflict cycle: upstream or the “before” analysis, midstream or real-time crisis responses, and downstream “after” efforts to rebuild and foster societal resiliency;
- 4) Used primary source and secondary source evidence to analyze fundamental problems in Holocaust, Genocide, and Prevention Studies;
- 5) Engaged in an environment of open inquiry to exchange ideas and interpretation of concepts, with the understanding that scholarly inquiry is a multidimensional conversation.

**Course Requirements and Grading: 300 possible points**

- I) **Attendance:** This is a demanding upper-level course that you have chosen to take. Attendance is mandatory following Purdue guidelines. I expect you to arrive on time. If there is a reason that you must leave early, notify me before class begins and sit near an exit.
  - Class success depends on: (1) respect for each other (students, grader, professor); (2) collegiality and civility of discourse; (3) being fully present, meaning: your attendance, your professional courtesy of arriving on-time, silencing your phones and other devices; (4) your commitment to the hard work of engaging with largely new and often difficult material with many unfamiliar names of people and places and terms.
  - This is an inclusive classroom. Purdue University and the Department of History are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. A hyperlink to Purdue’s full Nondiscrimination Policy Statement is included in our course Brightspace under University Policies and Statements.

- II) **Reading Questions (20 cumulative points):** *The better we each do, the better we all do.* We will be using collaborative methods to keep us all engaged with the course readings. I will be sending you reading questions on shared Google docs for asynchronous coursework. Each response is worth one (1) point. Once you reach 20 points, additional points will accumulate as extra credit.
- III) **In-Class Participation (20 cumulative points):** We will be taking part in a range of informal, exploratory in-class individual and group exercises using Google docs. You will need to use a device (laptop, phone) in class through which you can access Brightspace. Each exercise is worth one (1) point. Once you reach 20 points, additional points will accumulate as extra credit.
- IV) **Five Short Papers (SPs) (20 pts. each, 100 points total):** These are *concise, substantive* (about 300 words – about 1 page) problem-driven responses to the directed question concerning the week's readings, which you will find listed on the syllabus under the relevant Friday entry. **SPs are due on Brightspace by 3pm on the indicated Fridays.**
- V) **Book Analysis and Presentation (100 points):** You will write a 1000 word/ about 4-page double-spaced analysis of a volume chosen from a list that I will share of recent and authoritative works in the fields of Holocaust, Genocide, and Atrocity Prevention Studies. Your analysis will include discussion of the book's argument (or main message), the author's most important observations and conclusions, discussion of sources (primary [archival, newspapers, statistical, government documents, letters, photographs, etc.] and secondary [interpretive scholarly articles and books]), languages used [and how the languages used help us understand the argument], and what are the main take-aways for this course. What do you wish your colleagues in the course to learn from the book? How does it help us to better understand the cases and concepts we are studying? We will be doing book presentations during Week 15 and Week 16. You will have 7-8 minutes to present your book. **Book analysis due on Brightspace by 9pm on Friday, April 18th.** More details to follow in class.
- VI) **Exit Essay: (60 points):** What is one thing you have learned this semester that made you sit up and take notice? Write this *concise, substantive* 1-page (300-word) essay as if you were sitting down over coffee explaining a topic, theme, or idea that clicked with you during the semester. **Due on Brightspace by 5pm on Monday, May 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**Grade scale:** A+ = 98-100; A = 93-97; A- = 90-92; B+ = 88-89; B = 83-87; B- = 80-82; C+ = 78-79; C = 73-77; C- = 70-72; D+ = 68-69; D = 63-67; D- = 60-62; F = 0-59

**Schedule of Classes** (You will learn of any changes to the schedule in advance)**Week 1: Introduction**

- M, 1/13: Course Introduction and Overview, Expectations: Confronting Silences
- Dan Pagis, "Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-Car"
- W, 1/15: Social Identity and Deeply Divided Societies
- James Waller, "You're One or the Other": Social Identities in Deeply Divided Societies," ch.1 from *A Troubled Sleep: Risk and Resilience in Contemporary Northern Ireland* (Oxford, 2021) **(B)**
- F, 1/17: Breaking a Path
- Robert Melson, "Introduction: Overview and Major Themes" **(B)**

**Week 2: Dry Timber**

- M, 1/20: *MLK Day – no class*
- W, 1/22: Doris Bergen, *War & Genocide*, 4th ed., (Rowman & Littlefield, 2025), ch.1, "Dry Timber: Preconditions," pp. 15-49.
- F, 1/24: Zimmerer, "The First Genocide of the Twentieth Century" **(B)**
- **SP#1:** Do you agree or disagree with Zimmerer that "the genocide in German South-West Africa is therefore not simply a local event in the histories of Namibia or Germany nor an isolated incident in colonial history"? Why?

**Week 3: What is Extraordinary Evil?**

- M, 1/27: James Waller, *Becoming Evil* (Oxford, 2007), pp. pp. 9-24, 33-53, 59-91.
- **Choose your book for the Book Analysis Project**
- W, 1/29: Waller, pp. 137-161, 196-220, 230-271.
- F, 1/31: Milgram, "Behavioral Study of Obedience" **(B)**
- View "Milgram Experiment, Real Footage"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uh4IRQ3bTTQ&t=49s>
  - View "Agentic State" scene from film *Experimenter: The Stanley Milgram Story*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAuGFEMgm5Y>

**Week 4: The Armenian Genocide**

- M, 2/3: Weitz, *A Century of Genocide* (Princeton, 2015) "An Armenian Prelude," pp. 1-7.
- W, 2/5:
- Waller, "Dovey's Story," pp. 54-58.
  - <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-armenian-genocide-1915-16-in-depth>
- F, 2/7: Robert Melson, ch.5, "The Turkish Revolution and the Armenian Genocide" **(B)**
- **SP#2:** What was the so-called "provocation thesis," and what counterarguments does Melson present to combat it? What do you think is the most effective part of his argument?

**Week 5: Nation, Race, and Class in the Soviet Union**

- M, 2/10: Weitz, ch.2., "Nation, Race, and State Socialism," pp. 53-74.

- W, 2/12: Naimark, "How Holodomor can be Integrated into Our Understanding of Genocide" **(B)**
- F, 2/14: Weitz, ch.2, pp. 74-101: How did the Soviet leadership make class, national background and political perspective key features in their attempt to create a new society?
- Week 6: **Upstream: From Revolution to Routine to Open Aggression**
- M, 2/17: Bergen, ch.3, "From Revolution to Routine," pp. 77-113.
- W, 2/19: Bergen, ch.4, "Open Aggression," pp. 115-145.
- F, 2/21: Lucy Dawidowicz, "The First Stage: Anti-Jewish Legislation" **(B)**
- **SP #3:** When you read these pieces of legislation intended to deprive Jews of their civil equality, and exclude them from the wider German society, what features of the legislation stands out to you? Is there anything that surprises you?
- Week 7: **Upstream: Geographies of Escalation and Expansion**
- M, 2/24: Bergen, ch.5, "Brutal Innovations," pp. 147-181.
- W, 2/26: Bergen, ch.6, "Escalation and Expansion," pp. 183-219.
- F, 2/28: Lucy Dawidowicz, "The Ordeals of the Ghettos in Eastern Europe" **(B)**
- *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto* **(B)**
- Week 8: **War of Annihilation**
- M, 3/3: Bergen, ch.7, "The War of Annihilation," pp. 221-267.
- W, 3/5: Bergen, ch.8, "The Peak Years of Killing Jews, 1942-1943," pp. 269-312.
- F, 3/7:
  - Weiss Halivni, paragraph from the *Book and the Sword* **(B)**
  - The Second World War through the Eyes of Roma and Sinti from the Czech Lands and Slovakia <https://www.romatestimonies.com/>
    - **SP#4:** In these two chapters, Bergen discusses the crucial turn in World War Two to a "War of Annihilation." Where do you see that change occur? Discuss one consequence of the change that makes a deeper impression on you now.
- Week 9: **A World in Flames and Ash**
- M, 3/10: Bergen, ch.9, "Death Throes and Killing Frenzies, 1944-1945," pp. 313-339.
- W, 3/12: Dawidowicz, "Saving Remnants" **(B)**
- F, 3/14: **Complete Exercise – No Class Meeting:** Deák, "Incomprehensible Holocaust" **(B)**
- Week 10: 3/17-3/21: **Spring Break – no class**
- Week 11: **Cambodia: The Killing Fields**
- M, 3/24: **Complete Reading Questions – No Class Meeting:** Weitz, ch.4, "Racial Communism," pp. 144-189
- W, 3/26: <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/cambodia>

F, 3/28: Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, third edition (2008), ch.11, "The End of the Pol Pot Regime," pp. 440-466. **(B)**

Week 12: **Rwanda: Civil War and Genocide**

M, 3/31: Mamdani, "Introduction," ch.3 "The Racialization of the Hutu/Tutsi Difference under Colonialism" **(B)**

<https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/rwanda>

W, 4/2: Mamdani, ch.7 "The Civil War and the Genocide" **(B)**

F, 4/4: Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak* (selections) **(B)**

- **SP#5:** "In Rwanda...your neighbors killed you," said a minister in the RPF-led government. To what extent does this statement help us understand the nature of the genocide in Rwanda?

Week 13: **Bosnia: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia**

M, 4/7: Weitz, ch.5, "National Communism," pp. 190-209.

<https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/bosnia-herzegovina>

W, 4/9: Weitz, ch.5, "National Communism," pp. 209-235.

Waller, "The 'Safe Area' of Srebrenica," pp. 272-278.

F, 4/11: Scenes from film *Quo Vadis, Aida?* (2020)

<https://tubitv.com/movies/100016494/quo-vadis-aida>

Week 14: **Downstream: Memory, Rebuilding, Fostering Resiliency**

M, 4/14: Waller, ch.9, "Conclusion," pp. 281-298.

W, 4/16: Scott Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*, ch.9, "Rebuilding States and Societies after Atrocity": **free pdf download; or \$2.99**

**Kindle version** <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/reports-and-resources/fundamentals-of-genocide-and-mass-atrocity-prevention>

F, 4/18: Memory: Whose Pasts?

- **Book Analysis due by 9pm**

Week 15: **Book Analysis Presentations: Connecting Themes**

M, 4/21:

W, 4/23:

F, 4/25:

Week 16: **Book Analysis Presentations: Connecting Themes**

M, 4/28:

W, 4/30:

F, 5/2:

Finals Week: 5-10 May: **Exit Essay due Monday, May 5<sup>th</sup> by 9pm**

**Have a great summer!**

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

### Protect Purdue Pledge

Being a part of the Boilermaker community means that each of us must take extraordinary steps to stay well and persistently protect each other, on campus and in the community. Accountable together, I pledge to take responsibility for my own health, the protection of others and help keep the Purdue community safe from spread of COVID-19 and other infections as identified and instructed by the university.

**PROTECT PURDUE WEBSITE:** <https://protect.purdue.edu/>

#### DISCLAIMER

In the event of a major campus emergency, the above requirements, deadlines and grading policies are subject to changes that may be required by a revised semester calendar. Any such changes in this course will be posted on Brightspace once the course resumes or can be obtained by contacting the professor via email.

#### EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Outside of class or office hours, communicate with your professor by email. State the reason for your email in the subject line (ex: "question about essay"). Include a full salutation (ex: "Dear Professor") and closing with your full name (ex: "Sincerely, Eleanor Roosevelt"). Use full sentences, correct grammar, and punctuation. If you fail to follow this etiquette, I will not respond to your email. I will usually respond to your emails within 24 hours, with the exception of weekends.

#### CHEATING / PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism refers to the reproduction of another's words or ideas without proper attribution. University Regulations contain further information on dishonesty. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will be treated as such in this class. **You are expected to produce your own work and to accurately cite all necessary materials.** Cheating, plagiarism, and other dishonest practices will be punished as harshly as Purdue University policies allow. Any instances of academic dishonesty will likely result in a grade of F for the course and notification of the Dean of Students Office. Please make sure that you are familiar with Purdue's academic integrity policies:

<http://www.purdue.edu/odos/aboutodos/academicintegrity.php>

Using an AI-content generator such as ChatGPT to complete assignments without proper attribution violates academic integrity. By submitting assignments in this class, you pledge to affirm that they are your own work, and you attribute use of any tools and sources.

#### GRIEF ABSENCE POLICY

Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family

member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS). Students will be excused from classes for funeral leave and given the opportunity to complete missed assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student's family.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Purdue University is committed to providing equal access and equal opportunity to university courses, activities, and programs for students with disabilities. Students with documented disabilities that substantially limit a major life activity, such as learning, walking, or seeing, may qualify for academic adjustments and/or services. If you have a disability that requires special academic accommodation, please make an appointment to speak with me within the first three weeks of the semester in order to discuss any adjustments. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Disability Resource Center of any impairment/condition that may require accommodations and/or classroom modifications. To request information about academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, or services, please contact the Disability Resource Center in the Office of the Dean of Students, 830 Young Hall, (765) 494-1247 (V/TTY), [drc@purdue.edu](mailto:drc@purdue.edu).

### **NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT**

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life.

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a veteran. The University will conduct its programs, services and activities consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and orders and in conformance with the procedures and limitations as set forth in Executive Memorandum No. D-1, which provides specific contractual rights and remedies.

### **VIOLENT BEHAVIOR POLICY**

Purdue University is committed to providing a safe and secure campus environment. Purdue strives to create an educational environment for students and work environment for employees that promote educational and career goals. Violent behavior impedes such goals. Therefore, violent behavior is prohibited in or on any university facility or while participating in any university activity.