

2:00 – 4:45 p.m.
Davis 209

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The course is primarily about Holocaust-related films—several in the documentary genre, several in the feature-length, commercial genre—but also about related literature (memoir, fiction, poetry), and a little about related music. We will view the films as artistic representations, as attempts at crafted persuasion. We will ask questions such as: does the work touch the elusive truth or truths about what actually happened and how it was actually experienced? And: do the commercial films tell a big enough “Truth” to excuse small “lies?” (Cf. Picasso’s definition of art.) What is its moral point of view? Is it emotionally recognizable? In what sense are we “entertained,” or should we be?

The course presumes some previous acquaintance with Holocaust/Shoah history, testimony, and visual images, as well as some experience in critiquing/analyzing works of film and literary art.

Prolonged exposure to dramatic eyewitness memoirs and fictions, and of course to disturbing and seductive film representations can be depressing. Anticipate these possible effects. But don’t necessarily guard against them. Arm yourself with critical distance when needed. Be cheerful. Our primary purpose is not to grapple personally with the several dimensions of this notorious evil, but rather to appraise meaning and method in these films and writings created to stir reflection on potent material.

Capsule description: The death camps of the Holocaust and Nazi terror generally (1933-1945) as this prompts eyewitness survivors and subsequent film-makers to communicate artfully and persuasively experiences and lessons of the Holocaust/Shoah. The rhetorical challenge facing all who attempt to convey its disconcerting, unlike truths in the powerful medium of film. Related memoir, poetry, fiction, music also considered.

REQUIRED READING:

Lawrence L. Langer, *Art from Ashes* (a reader)
"Film Vocabulary" (hand-out)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Two film critiques (5 pages each), due May 19 and 26 (The first, on documentary techniques; the second, on a commercial film or two)	60% of course grade
Exam , May 30 (Includes questions on the reading)	30%
Class attendance and participation	10%

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Read the authors assigned in the Langer textbook for discussion on the days indicated.

- May 12 Introduction, discuss "Film Vocabulary" (handout). Video: "Destruction of Valhalla" from Wagner's *Gotterdammerung* (Metropolitan Opera). Video: *Memory of the Camps*, 1945, narrated by Trevor Howard, 75 min.)
- 13 Read Langer's Introduction and prefaces to sections (3-9, 11-15, 153-58, 235-39, 471-76, 553-59). Also Charlotte Delbo (Langer 77-92). Issue of appropriate rhetorical modes. Videos: *Seared Souls* (SCETV, 2000, 84 min.), *Night and Fog* (Alan Resnais, 1955, 31 min.).
- 14 Langer: Dan Pagis (586-97), Paul Celan (601-17), Nelly Sachs (638-52). Hand-out: Wislawa Szymborska's "There But for the Grace." Videos: *For Every Person There Is A Name* (Survivors in South Carolina, John Reynolds, 2002, 30 min.), excerpts from Claude Lanzmann's epic *Shoah* (1985).
- 15 Langer: Jacques Furmanski (72-4), Jankiel Wiernik (Treblinka, 18-51). Video excerpts: Yale/Fortunoff archive of testimonies vs. Spielberg's Shoah Foundation *Survivors of the Holocaust* (1995); Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985). Steve Reich's "Trains" (recording).
- 16 Langer: Joseph Zelkowicz (Lodz ghetto, 200-14), Avraham Tory (Kovno ghetto, 217-33). Video: *Lodz Ghetto* (1989, Chaim Rumkowski's story, 108 min) and excerpts from *Shoah*.
- 19 Video: *Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust* (Daniel Anker, 2004, narrated by Gene Hackman, 92 min.). **Critique** of documentary treatments **due**.
- 20 Video: *The Grey Zone* (Tim Blake Nelson's adaption from the play, 2001, 108 min.). Langer: Eli Wiesel (138-52).
- 21 Langer: Tadeusz Borowski (343-56) Video: *Triumph of the Spirit* (Robert Young, 1989, 120 min.).
- 22 Langer: Primo Levi (108-18). Hand-out: Levi's dream. Video: *Seven Beauties* (Lina Wertmuller, 1976, 115 min.)
- 23 Langer: Ida Fink (242-48), Sara Nomberg-Przytyk (264-70), Arnold Lustig, (Auschwitz, 358-77). Video: *Out of the Ashes* (Joseph Sargent, 2003, 113 min.)

- 26 Langer: Jean Amery (on the effects of torture, 121-36). Video: *The Pawnbroker* (Sidney Lumet, 1965, 120 min.) **Critique** of commercial film (or two) **due**
- 27 Video: *Life is Beautiful* (Roberto Benigni, 1998, 118 min.). "Springtime for Hitler" excerpt from *The Producers* (Mel Brooks, 1968)
- 28 Langer: Adolf Rudnicki. Video: *The Night Porter* (Liliana Cavani, 118 min)
- 29 Langer: Bernard Gotfryd (258-62) Video: *The Nasty Girl* (the Anna Rosmus story, Michael Verhoeven, 1990, 94 min.). Hendryk Gorecki's "Symphony in C" (recording).
- 30 **Final Exam** during class period

Note: this syllabus is posted on Blackboard at the course site.

Also a link to my Web pages. Feel free to communicate With me by email, including suggestions for fuller use of Blackboard.