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## Literature of the Shoah

**Dr. Miryam Sivan**

**Course Number:** 702.2128.01.A

**Semester:** Fall 2018

**Class Time:** Thursday 12-15

**Class Location:**

**Office Hours:** Monday 9:30-12 & by appt.

**Location:** 236 Student Building (Int'l. School)

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### Course Description:

The *Shoah* is a historical fact which continues to baffle, appall, and chide humanity. In this course, we will be reading authors whose work grapples with the multi-faceted implications of this war and its myriad experiences. Some of the authors we will be reading are people who lived through the worst of Europe, 1933-1947. Some will be by children of those who did. And some of the literature we will read has been written by Jews and non-Jews who struggle to fathom the unfathomable, and who are not only keen on 'never forgetting,' but are as frequently intent on trying to place themselves and their generation in relation to this tragedy.

Some of the 'classics' of *Shoah* literature will be on the syllabus. But lesser known works by young European, American, and Israeli authors will also appear. Most of what we read will be prose, but we will also be looking at poetry, non-fiction, a play, and watching two movies.

### Course Requirements (Overview):

- Weekly Reading/Viewing Assignments – posted on Moodle website
- Weekly Writing Assignments on readings/viewings (Transcription Notes)
- Class Participation
- Weekly presentation of artist biographies
- Mid-Term Exam (take home essay questions: 1500 words)
- Term Paper **BA Elective:** 2000 words, no secondary sources  
**MA Regular Essay:** 2500, 2 secondary sources  
**BA and MA Seminar:** 5000-6000 words, research paper

### Final Grade:

- |                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| 1. Participation & Bios: | 5%  |
| 2. Transcription Notes:  | 15% |
| 3. Take-home Midterm:    | 30% |
| 4. Final Essay:          | 50% |

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### **Course Requirements Detailed:**

\*Attendance is mandatory. The University policy allows for a 20% absentee rate. This breaks down to 3 classes this semester.

\*Lateness is not acceptable and will be noted. Excessive lateness will have a negative effect on the grade.

\*Students are expected to come to class prepared. This means they must read the material, as indicated on the accompanying syllabus, and participate in class discussions.

\* For each text read, students will be required to hand in **Transcription Notes**. This means you are to choose and write out in their entirety three (3) sentences or paragraphs or verses which you consider especially significant to understanding the work being discussed that week in class. After each quote, free-write about what is important and/or significant about the passage. Do these select passages act as a key to unlocking the meaning of the text? Do they cause a personal reaction, emotionally, intellectually?

These Transcription Notes will not be corrected (for grammar, spelling, etc.) nor will they be graded. But they must be handed in on the day we read the specific text and they constitute 15% of the final grade. Points will be deducted for Notes handed in late or not at all.

Please e-mail the Transcription Notes to me *in the body of the mail* – not as attachments -- before the start of every class.

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By the second to last day of class (the penultimate week of the semester, December 27, 2018) students are expected to have discussed (in person or by email) their thesis statement with me for their final paper. It is mandatory that students receive my approval before they write the full length paper.

### **Final Paper Deadlines:**

**Regular BA and MA** -- January 18, 2019

**BA and MA Seminar** – Feb. 15, 2019

It is highly recommended that those students who are planning to leave the country immediately after the end of classes hand in their paper on the last day of class or before they leave.

Please send me the final papers as attachments. The file name should be your name.

And please CC the International School Office as well: [uhisfinalpapers@gmail.com](mailto:uhisfinalpapers@gmail.com)

\*My office hours are on Mondays between 9:30-12 in Room 236, the International School. I may also be available to meet with you at other times. Speak to me and we'll arrange a place and time.



**Cell phones and electronic devices:** Please make sure your cell phone is turned off, or silenced – no buzz -- during class and put away in your bag -- out of sight (not upside down on your desk or lap). You may use a laptop to take class notes. If I see anyone surfing the internet on any site NOT RELATED to the class discussion, your arrival that day will be counted as an absence. If the temptation is too great, then be honest with yourself, and turn off the internet option on your computer. Or bring a paper notebook to class. Take notes the old fashioned way.



**Academic Honesty:** All work submitted for this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. The library homepage has a link "Citation Rules" to remind and guide you how to cite according to the MLA guidelines: <http://lib.haifa.ac.il/reference/citations/index.php/mla-heb>

In cases where academic dishonesty has been clearly established, a student will receive a zero for the paper AND fail the course.



## **Course Outline and Reading List**

### ***Introduction to Course:***

**October 11:** Historical survey of literary works about the Shoah. Overview of themes related to the field of study: the relationship of aesthetics and ethics; ambivalence about non-survivor 'imagined' texts; Shoah hierarchy; art and trauma; literary progressions from first to second to third generation after historical epoch; where we are now.

Read and discuss poetry by Paul Celan, Dan Pagis, Nellie Sachs.

*Original language: Celan – German; Pagis – Hebrew; Sachs – German.*

### ***Writers who were 'there':***

**October 18:** "The Hunt," Aharon Appelfeld  
"The End" and "The Threshold," Ida Fink

Short stories by two European Jews (who moved to Israel after war) which deal with their characters' worlds at the edge of the cataclysm.

*Original language: Appelfeld – Hebrew; Fink – Polish*

**October 25:** *Night*, Elie Wiesel

The novel which helped generate worldwide discussion and knowledge about the deportations and concentration camps. It basically created the genre of the Shoah memoir.

*Original language: Yiddish to French*

**November 1:** *This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentleman*, Tadeusz Borowski

A 'political' Polish prisoner's account of the moral vertigo of the Auschwitz world.  
*Original language: Polish*

**November 8:** *None of Us Will Return*, Charlotte Delbo

A 'political' French prisoner's account of Auschwitz and the way women banded together to stem the tide of dehumanization.  
*Original language: French*

***Women, Madness, and Sexual Abuse:***

**November 15:** "The Woman from Hamburg," Hanna Krall  
"The Shawl" (*read this story first*) and "Rosa," Cynthia Ozick

Two short stories, one by a survivor (Krall) and another by an American old enough and fortunate enough not to have been in Europe (Ozick), about women who became mothers against their will and their tragic relationships to their daughters.  
*Original language: Krall – Polish; Ozick -- English*

**November 22:** *The Kommandant's Mistress*, Sherri Szeman

A novel which deals directly with sexual slavery in the camps.  
*Original language: English*

***Children Lost and Found:***

**November 29:** *Lady of the Castle*, Leah Goldberg  
"Purim Night," Edith Pearlman

A play and short story about Jewish children saved from the camps.  
*Original language: Goldberg – Hebrew; Pearlman – English*

**MIDTERM HANDED OUT**

### ***A Compounded Othering:***

**December 6:** *Bent*, Sean Mathias (film)

A film written by Martin Sherman based on his play about the persecution of homosexuals in the Third Reich.

*Original language: English*

### **MIDTERM HANDED BACK**

### ***Second Generation:***

**December 13:** "Cattle Car," Thane Rosenbaum  
excerpts from *Nightfather*, Carl Friedman

Three stories which deal with the idea of inherited trauma and responsibility.

*Original language: Rosenbaum- English; Friedman -- Dutch*

### ***History and the Absurd:***

**December 20:** "Shoes," Etgar Keret  
"The Third Generation," Tova Reich  
"Tumblers," Nathan Englander

Confronting and trying to make sense of the past...

*Original language: Keret -- Hebrew; Reich and Englander – English*

### **Thesis statements need to be approved by me.**

### ***German POV:***

**December 27:** *The Nasty Girl*, Michael Verhoeven (film)  
"Micha," chapter from *The Dark Room*, Rachel Seiffert

Second and third generation Germans confront their past.

*Original language: Verhoeven – German; Seiffert - English*

### ***Back to the Second Generation via the marriage of text and image:***

**January 4:** *Maus I and II*, Art Spiegelman

A graphic novel about a son's attempt to understand his life in relation to his parents' Shoah trauma.

*Original language: English*