The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews

This course provides an overview on the encounter of the Third Reich and the Jews of Europe, discussing the historical events and exploring the possible reasons why 5.8 million Jews died. It investigates the ideological roots of the decision for mass murder, discusses the nature of the Third Reich and the developments of National Socialist policies towards the Jews of Europe. Likewise, it dedicates major attention to Jewish responses to these policies in different European countries. Moreover, this course explores the roles of non-Jews as bystanders, rescuers or collaborators in and outside of Europe. Last but not least, it also introduces students to some of the problems and controversies that characterize the current scholarship on the Holocaust.

1. Introduction
   January 16:
   Defining the terms Holocaust, Genocide, Shoah and Khurbn
   Was the Holocaust unique?
   Why study the Holocaust historically?
   Central questions in the study of the Holocaust


2. Historical Context—Why Germany?
   From Empire to Dictatorship: Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries
   January 18:
   Germany’s quest for national unification
   The German Empire 1871-1918
   The history of German anti-Semitism in the Imperial period

   January 23:
   The First World War and its aftermath
   The years of the Weimar Republic 1918-1933

   Reading:

January 25:
Hitler’s rise to power
The institutionalization of the National Socialist state

Reading:

3. The Ideological Basis of the Nazi Regime
January 30:
The Jews in Hitler’s worldview
Nazi ideology and program
How Nazi ideology was institutionalized

Reading:
S. Friedländer, Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1997, pp. 73-112.
Y. Arad et al. eds., Documents on the Holocaust, Jerusalem 1981, docs.1, 4,5.

4. Anti-Jewish Actions 1933-1939: Legislation, Boycott, Expropriation and forced Emigration
February 1:
The years 1933-1936:
Street violence versus legislation
Boycott of Jewish businesses
The Nuremberg Laws

February 6:
The years 1936-1939:
The Anschluß of Austria
The Kristallnacht-Pogrom
The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

Reading:
K. Schleunes, “Retracing the Twisted Road,” in: François Furet, Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews, pp. 54-70.*
S. Friedländer, Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1997, pp. 113-173; 241-305.
Y. Arad et al. eds., Documents on the Holocaust, docs. 7-11, 30-36, 43-50, 52, 53.
5. International Responses to Nazi Persecution
February 8:
Nazi emigration policy
The refugee crisis and the Evian Conference

Reading:
Y. Arad et al. eds., *Documents on the Holocaust*, docs. 20, 42, 47.

6. The German Jewish Response to Nazi Persecution
February 13:
The history of German Jewry since the age of Emancipation

February 15:
German Jewish communal leadership between optimism and resistance
The *Kulturbund*, the *Reichsvertretung* of German Jews and the *Reichsvereinigung* of the Jews in Germany.

Reading:
S. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, pp. 60-68.
Y. Arad et al. eds., *Documents on the Holocaust*, docs. 14-16, 21, 22, 38.

7. Organizing the Holocaust
February 20:
The “Jewish Question” and the war
Initial German plans in Poland: The Nisko Reservation

February 22:
Ghettoization and deportation
The ghettos of Lodz and Warsaw

Reading:

8. Mass Murder
February 27:  
From mass shootings to killing centers  
“Operation Barbarossa” and the Einsatzzgruppen

March 1: Review

March 6: Midterm exam

March 8 (Chapter 8 continued!)  
Mass murder is institutionalized: form Chelmno to “Operation Reinhard”

March 13, No Class—Spring Break

March 15, No Class—Spring Break

March 20:  
Mass murder is made a global policy: The Wannsee Conference and its aftermath

Reading:  
D. Engel, *The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews*, pp. 50-61; docs. 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 28.  
———., *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers and German Killers*, pp. 116-169.  

9. Strategies for Jewish Survival

March 22 and 27:  
The official Jewish leadership:  
The Jewish Councils and mass deportation

Reading:  

March 29:  
The alternative Jewish leadership:  
The ghetto underground and the question of resistance
April 3:
The alternative Jewish leadership:
Armed resistance in ghettos, camps, and forests

Readings:

10. Collaborators, Bystanders, Rescuers
April 5:
Non-Jewish responses to the fate of the Jews

April 10:
Possibilities and constraints of rescue

Readings:
E. Ringelblum, *Polish Jewish Relations During the Second World War*, Evanston IL, 1984, pp. 100-151. (optional!)*

11. In the Aftermath of the Holocaust
April 12:
From liberation to reconstruction: Holocaust survivors and the rebuilding of Jewish communities in Europe

April 17:
Holocaust on Trial: Allied justice, German crimes and Jewish victimhood

April 19:
The beginnings of Holocaust research in postwar Europe and the major debates in the scholarship today.

12. Conclusion
April 24: Towards an explanation of why the Holocaust happened in Germany

April 26: Review
All the texts marked with a * will be available on Blackboard. The following books can be purchased at the NYU bookstore:

Arad, Y. et al. eds., *Documents on the Holocaust*, Jerusalem 1981.


Course requirements: Students are required to attend classes and engage in discussion. They must do the weekly readings. There will be an in-class midterm and a final exam based on identifications and an essay. Students may enhance their grades by writing an optional 3,000 word paper.