

SYLLABUS

San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature ENGL/ForL/Hum/JwsS 126, Holocaust Literature, Spring 2013

Instructor:	David Mesher
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Office Hours:	Tuesdays and Thursdays: 8:00-8:30 and 4:30-5:30
Class Days/Time:	Tuesdays and Thursdays: 3:00-4:15
Classroom:	DMH 354
Class Web Page:	www.sjsu.edu/people/d.mesher/courses/engl126
Prerequisites:	Completion of core GE; satisfactory completion of the WST; completion of or concurrent enrollment in a 100W course
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	Area V (Courses used to satisfy Areas R, S, and V must be taken from three separate SJSU departments, or other distinct academic units.)

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Copies of the course materials such as the syllabus, major assignment handouts, and so on, may be found on the class web page at www.sjsu.edu/people/d.mesher/courses/engl126. The same information is available on the course Canvas page (sjsu.instructure.com), which you will need to access in order to submit your essays online. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU for any messages that may be sent pertaining to this class.

Course Description

This course surveys works written in languages primarily other than English by writers who were witnesses, victims or survivors of the Holocaust, the destruction of European Jewry which took place during World War II. This course will 1) provide students the opportunity to improve their abilities in reading, discussing, and writing about literature, with a focus on both form and content; 2) introduce students to examples of literature and other art forms dealing the Holocaust and other instances of genocide; 3) consider issues of historical accuracy, individual experience, and the literary construction of memory in both fiction and non-fiction; 4) enhance students' understanding of the historical, demographic, geographic, and cultural background of the Holocaust; 5) engage the larger issues and questions about genocide. Engl 126 satisfies Area V of the General Education (SJSU Studies) Requirements.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

This course should give students an appreciation for human expression in cultures outside the U.S. and an understanding of how that expression has developed over time. This course should also increase students' understanding of how traditions or cultures outside the U.S. have influenced American culture and society, as well as how cultures in general both develop distinctive features and interact with other cultures. Studying the literature of victims, survivors, and witnesses of the Holocaust, students will critically analyze the literature dealing with this and other instances of genocide in detail, in context, and in historical perspective.

GE/SJSU Studies Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments, and/or attitudes of people from more than one culture outside the U.S. This learning objective will be met by comparing the suffering and response of individuals from different countries and areas of Europe to the systematic murder of millions and Jews and others by those supporting Germany and its allies during the Second World War. The literary works under study, whether non-fiction or fictional accounts based on personal experience, portray the political and social realities in communities throughout Europe during that time, and put a human face on the otherwise incomprehensible calculus of inhumanity, during that period and at other times and places. In Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*, for example, images from Dante's *Inferno* are used as a counterpoint to scenes Levi himself encountered in the death camp; in Elie Wiesel's *Night*, the execution of a child in Auschwitz transfigures the familiar Christian image of crucifixion as a means of condemnation instead of salvation. There will be one essay on works set primarily in death camps, asking students to discuss the ways in which the authors use prior cultural assumptions to describe their experiences, and the ways in which those experiences go beyond culture and, indeed, beyond language.
2. identify the historical context of ideas and cultural traditions outside the U.S. and how they have influenced American culture. The long tradition of antisemitism is only one aspect of the bitter political, social, and religious history of Europe, with its intense national rivalries and ethnic distrust, out of which American culture originally arose. This learning objective will be met by placing the Holocaust within that tradition, as well as by making students aware of the indifference to Jewish suffering which was found at that time at all levels of societies across Europe, as well as in this country, which actively or passively produced the circumstances for genocide. The legacy of the Holocaust in contemporary America will be covered in class discussions and a final examination question dealing with the final novel of the course, *Everything Is Illuminated*, by the American writer Jonathan Safran Foer.
3. explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external pressures. Have European cultures changed in the aftermath of the Holocaust? That is certainly one of the burning questions of this course, and this learning objective will be met through discussions of the roles played by non-Jewish individuals in both the saving and condemnation of Jews, as well as of the roles played by Europeans in other, often more recent examples of genocide which have taken place in Asia, in Africa, and in the heart of Europe itself. Whether change is possible for such long-held attitudes is a frequent theme of Holocaust literature, including in Imre Kertesz's *Fatelessness*, which connects this question to the issue of fate and free will by showing that only those who reject the notion of destiny can assume responsibility for their own actions.

Course Content Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. learn to value individual experiences and perspectives, develop skills to work together in a cooperative manner as they are grappling with very difficult material, emotionally; and come to appreciate differing viewpoints and ways of knowing;
2. understand the history, sociology, psychology, literature, and art of the Holocaust period, so as to think deeply and critically about this specific genocide, as well as to understand the nature of genocide more generally;
3. understand the literary, historical, and critical texts, be able to address them logically and with insight, create and support arguments in their writing about the texts. Students will apply their comprehension and thinking skills in working with research materials to help them reach a level of understanding that leads to clarity, conciseness and coherence in writing.

English Major Student Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, in all aspects of coursework but, in particular, in frequent and detailed quizzes, as well as in essays;
2. show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to European literature from ancient Greece to medieval Italy, and to demonstrate that familiarity in class discussions, essays, and examinations;
3. write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and the nature of the subject, as demonstrated in two essays and the final examination;
4. develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively, as demonstrated particularly in the second essay;
5. articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, in both class discussions and written assignments.

Required Texts/Readings

Jiri Weil, *Life with a Star*. Northwestern. 978-0810116856.
Alicia Appleman-Jurman. *Alicia*. Bantam. 978-0553282184.
Ida Fink, *The Journey*. Farrar. 978-0374701246.
Elie Wiesel, *Night*. Hill and Wang. 978-0374500016.
Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*. Touchstone. 978-0684826806.
Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*. Yale. 978-0300070576.
Imre Kertesz, *Fatelessness*. Vintage. 978-1400078639.
Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*.

Other Texts

Suggested: Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*. Franklin Watts.

Library Liaison

Toby Matoush, toby.matoush@sjsu.edu, 808-2096

Classroom Protocol

Preparation and Participation: Students should come to class having read the day's assignment and prepared to discuss it. Opportunities for such contributions may take the form of small-group or full-class discussions; in either situation, individual students may be called upon by the instructor to answer a question, interpret a passage, or express an opinion.

Quizzes: In order to ensure that you get credit for the hard work you do in reading and reflecting on the works assigned for this course, there will be frequent quizzes (on average, one every two or three class meetings). I think of quizzes as one of the best ways for you to measure how carefully you are reading the texts, and how much of that reading you retain (at least for a day or so). The quizzes will cover significant information from that day's reading assignment, though that information may not be the sort readily accessible to you in plot summaries, outlines, or synopses, but only through personally experiencing the text for yourself. If you read well ahead of the assigned schedule, be sure to review your notes and come to class with a fresh and detailed impression of the works. A pattern of poor results on these quizzes should indicate to you that you are not doing the reading, or not reading attentively enough, or not reading with the care and analysis necessary to understand and appreciate the texts.

Written Work: There will be two essays, both about 1500 words and counting 25% of the final mark each, and a final examination counting 25%. There will also be frequent quizzes, which will help determine the remaining 25%, along with participation in class discussions, the timely completion of readings and written work, an oral presentation to the class, and a few online chat sessions and other activities. The first essay will be due in two or three stages; the second essay will require research beyond the class texts themselves. Grading will be on a 100-point scale for each assignment. For the final mark, 100-97 will be an A+, 96-94 an A, 93-90 an A-, 89-87 a B+, 86-84 a B, 83-80 a B-, 79-77 a C+, 76-74 a C, 73-70 a C-, and so on.

Submission of written work: The two essays must be double-spaced, without a cover page but otherwise following MLA guidelines, in Word (.doc or .docx) or Rich Text (.rtf) format, and submitted online only on Canvas by the beginning of class on the days they are due. Late work will only be accepted by prior arrangement. Please do not email or leave at my office any work for this class. Corrected papers will be returned online in your Canvas account in pdf format. Please keep a copy of all work submitted on disk, and retain all graded work returned until the end of the semester; English majors should save the graded copies of their essays in all department classes, since these will be required for the portfolio in their senior seminar. Students should anticipate a significant delay in the return of late work. Please note that many people find it harder to proofread work on a computer screen than in printed form and, if that is true in your case, you may want to print out your final draft and make corrections to that, before submitting the finished file online. Finally, remember that I will also be keeping a copy of your marked work during the semester so that, when you submit your second essay, I will begin by reviewing the technical mistakes you made in the first one, and looking to see if you have made any progress in those areas on the second. You, too, should take the time to review those errors, and improve your writing.

Class reports: Topics will be assigned early in the semester. Reports should be no more than five minutes, followed by time for questions. Please present, in a clear, organized, and interesting way, your research on the given topic. You may use visual aids if you would like, but please arrive early if you want to make a Powerpoint or other computer-supported presentation, to ensure that everything is working properly. Please submit a bibliography of your research at the time of your report, which will be graded along with your oral presentation.

Written Responses and Online Chats: Several times a semester, students will be asked to write short responses to assigned readings not yet discussed in class. Such responses may take the form of a paragraph or an online written chat with a small group of other students. Class meetings may even be suspended in order to allow time for more complicated chats. Such activities will be announced, in class and online, at least one class session in advance.

Classroom conduct: Please do not read non-course related materials during class, and refrain from conversations or inappropriate comments while the instructor or classmates are speaking. Turn off cell phones, music players, and other likely distractions while in class. Computers and other electronic devices may be used only for note-taking and other course-related activities; otherwise they must be turned off. Since images on a screen, whether moving or still, are particularly visible and distracting to those around you, please do not access them during class and be sure your screen saver is off. Permission of the instructor (and, possibly, other students) is needed to make sound or video recordings during class.

Assignments and Grading Policy

1. Class participation, presentation, quizzes, and timely completion of work: 25%
2. First essay (1500 words total, in two parts): 25%
3. Second essay (1500 words): 25%
4. Final exam: 25%

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance and will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:

The **"A"** essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The **"B"** essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the **"A"** essay. The chief difference is that the **"B"** essay will show some descriptably slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The **"C"** essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the **"B"** essay.

The **"D"** essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment—that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The **"F"** essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student

performance: A= excellent; B= above average; C= average; D= below average; F= failure. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC shall replace D or F. In such cases, NC shall also substitute for W (or Withdrawal) because neither grade (NC or W) affects students' GPA.

University Policies and Statements

SJSU Policies and Procedures for Spring 2013

Links to many policies and procedures governing this semester can be found at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. A few others can be found below.

Academy Integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The University's Academic Integrity policy, located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The Student Conduct and Ethical Development website is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

The University's policies on Academic Integrity, as well as Student Conduct and Ethical Development, are also outlined in the online catalog at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/integrity.html>.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please discuss this with your instructor as soon as possible. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability. The DRC's web site is www.drc.sjsu.edu.

Adding and Dropping Classes

The last day to drop a class without a W grade is Monday, February 4. The last day for adding classes without a late fee, for registering late, or for requesting grade options is Monday, February 11. Information regarding the university policy on late drops can be found on the Academic Advising website at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/>.

Estimation of Per-Unit Student Workload

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities

including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Student Resources

SJSU Writing Center



The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the Writing

Center website: <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>.

For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook.

Peer Connections

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) and the Peer Mentor Program have merged to become Peer Connections. Peer Connections is the new campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring. Our staff is here to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. Students are encouraged to take advantage of our services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals. In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the WST, improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. We are located in SSC 600 (10th Street Garage), at the first floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. See the [Peer Connections website](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) for more information (peerconnections.sjsu.edu) and be sure to come see us!

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

Engl 126: Holocaust Literature, Spring 2013, Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class at least one week in advance. If you miss class, please check for changes to the schedule on the class web page at www.sjsu.edu/people/d.meshner/courses/engl126.

January	24	Thursday	Introduction
	29	Tuesday	Alicia, pages 1-75
	31	Thursday	Alicia, pages 76-157
February	5	Tuesday	Alicia, pages 158-233
	7	Thursday	Alicia, pages 234-336
	12	Tuesday	Alicia, pages 337-433; "The Holocaust as Adventure"
	14	Thursday	Life with a Star, pages 3-72
	19	Tuesday	Life with a Star, pages 72-147
	21	Thursday	Life with a Star, pages 147-208; "The Other as Other"
	26	Tuesday	The Journey, pages 3-89
March	28	Thursday	The Journey, pages 90-167
	5	Tuesday	The Journey, pages 167-250; "Memory, History, and Reality"
	7	Thursday	Night, pages 3-65
	12	Tuesday	Night, pages 66-115; "Faith and the Holocaust"
	14	Thursday	Survival in Auschwitz, pages 9-64
	19	Tuesday	Survival in Auschwitz, pages 65-130
	21	Thursday	Survival in Auschwitz, pages 131-173; "Intellectual Holocaust"
	25-29	Spring Break	
April	2	Tuesday	Fatelessness, pages 3-57
	4	Thursday	Fatelessness, pages 58-134
	8	Monday	Holocaust Remembrance Day
	9	Tuesday	Fatelessness, pages 135-189
	11	Thursday	Fatelessness, pages 190-262; "An Anti-Hero's Holocaust"
	16	Tuesday	Auschwitz and After, pages 3-61
	18	Thursday	Auschwitz and After, pages 62-114
	23	Tuesday	Auschwitz and After, pages 118-180
	25	Thursday	Auschwitz and After, pages 181-231; "Time and the Holocaust"
May	30	Tuesday	Everything Is Illuminated, pages 1-74
	2	Thursday	Everything Is Illuminated, pages 75-145
	7	Tuesday	Everything Is Illuminated, pages 146-213
	9	Thursday	Everything Is Illuminated, pages 214-276
		17	Friday

The first essay for the class (covering *Life with a Star*, *The Journey*, and *Alicia: My Story*) will be due in two parts, on March 12th and April 2nd. The second essay (covering *Night*, *Survival in Auschwitz*, and *Fatelessness*) will be due on April 25th. You will have an opportunity to write on *Auschwitz and After* and *Everything is Illuminated* on the final exam.