



Holocaust and Genocide Review (HGR) Information Resources  
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## **HOLOCAUST, GENOCIDE AND MEMORY STUDIES THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS**

In fall 2009, the Program in Jewish Culture and Society at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign launched a new initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies (HGMS).

Created with seed money from Jewish Studies and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, this new program includes faculty and graduate student affiliates from many different departments and units across campus—including American Indian Studies, Anthropology, Art and Art History, Comparative Literature, English, German, History, and Slavic Studies—and from neighboring campuses such as Illinois State University. The new program in HGMS provides a platform for cutting-edge research, teaching, and public engagement. With strengths in the history of anti-Semitism, Nazism, and the Holocaust as well as the memory and representation of genocide and trauma, faculty associated with the HGMS initiative are making the University of Illinois one of the leading sites for research in this field. Illinois faculty are producing important scholarship on the history, literature, memory, and artistic representation of genocide and trauma.

Recent, new, and forthcoming books by core faculty in our program consider the history, implications, and aftereffects of the Holocaust in Austria, France, Germany, Russia/the Soviet Union, and the United States. These books include Matti Bunzl's *Antisemitism and Islamophobia*, Peter Fritzsche's *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, Brett Ashley Kaplan's *Unwanted Beauty*, Anke Pinkert's *Film and Memory in East Germany*, and Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory*, as well as a forthcoming book by Harriet Murav on Jewish writing in the Soviet Union and Russia. Faculty offer courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels through departments such as Anthropology, Comparative Literature, English, German,

History, Religion, and Slavic Studies. The initiative also sponsors a busy schedule of public lectures, workshops, and conferences.

The Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies program kicked off in October 2009 with a weeklong visit by the New York artist Shimon Attie and the University of Massachusetts Holocaust scholar James Young. Attie is well known for his photography- and projection-based artworks that resurrect the Jewish history of Europe after the Shoah. Young is one of the world's leading scholars of Holocaust art, literature, and memorialization, whose writings on Attie helped bring this important artist to the attention of many in Jewish Studies and Holocaust studies. Made possible by a generous gift to the Program in Jewish Culture and Society by the Krouse Family, the visit of Attie and Young included individual and joint lectures, seminars, and meetings with faculty, students, and classes. These well-attended events created excitement across campus and brought together creative artists, scholars, and community members for a stimulating series of events about art, memory, the Holocaust, and other traumatic events, such as the attacks of September 11, 2001.

One month later, on November 5-6, the HGMS initiative held its inaugural scholarly conference, "*Genocide, Memory, Justice: The Holocaust in Comparative Contexts*," organized by Peter Fritzsche (History), Harriet Murav (Slavic/Comp Lit), and initiative director Michael Rothberg (English), with substantial financial support from the Office of the Chancellor. Featuring keynote lectures by the CUNY historian Dagmar Herzog and the Brown University historian Carolyn Dean, the conference brought together scholars of anthropology, art, film, history, literature, and politics with specializations not only in Holocaust Studies and Jewish Studies, but also in comparative genocide studies and American Indian Studies. Topics of the lectures included sexual violence in comparative perspective; reflections on perpetrators and victims; literature and memory; reparations for Roma in the Czech republic; and legal responses to anti-Semitic violence.

Many other events took place throughout the initiative's first year. In spring 2010, HGMS teamed up with the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory to co-sponsor a faculty/graduate student seminar and an international conference called "*Bios: Life, Death, Politics*." The seminar and April 30-May 1 conference included readings and lectures on topics such as human rights, genocide, genomic research, medical anthropology, international law, and political economy in locales such as China, South Africa, Bosnia, Greece, Italy, and the United States. HGMS also paired with the Jewish Studies Workshop to present work-in-progress by faculty

and graduate students. History graduate students Andrew Demshuk and Elana Jakel presented work from their dissertations, and James Young, Barbara Hahn (Vanderbilt), and Elisabeth Friedman (Illinois State) shared their new research.

Plans are currently underway for a workshop that will take place in March 2011, titled "Annihilation, Archive, Autobiography: Networks of Testimony in German-Occupied Europe." Organized by Fritzsche, Murav, and Rothberg, this workshop will feature a keynote lecture by Samuel Kassow, Charles H. Northam Professor of History at Trinity College and author of the definitive study of Emmanuel Ringelblum and the Oneg Shabes Archive. It will feature presentations of work-in-progress by scholars from Midwestern universities and will investigate in comparative fashion the task of archiving Jewish life in eastern Europe. The sustained effort to retrieve the history of Jewish communities in eastern Europe marked the twentieth century, but the disaster of World War II at once imperiled, made more necessary, and led to the reconceptualization of archival and autobiographical endeavors. The workshop's ambit will include the wartime assembly of archives and the documentation of autobiography across Europe among Jews and non-Jews, but the focus will be on Jews in eastern Europe. The workshop will be particularly interested in the investigation of how documentation was conceptualized and theorized and how the war transformed notions of the archive, autobiography, and testimony.

In addition to a lively year of public events, the Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies initiative was also actively involved during its first year in promoting teaching, especially at the graduate level. A certificate in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies is offered for graduate students enrolled in an MA or PhD program. In spring 2010 we granted our first certificates to Melissa Bushnick, who completed a master's thesis in Art History on Shimon Attie, and Andrew Demshuk, who completed a dissertation on the memories of German expellees.

Each semester the program lists courses by affiliated faculty from across campus relevant to HGMS. In fall 2009, Cary Nelson (English) offered a seminar on Holocaust poetry and Kent Ono (Media) offered a course on memory and history in communication studies. In spring 2010, Peter Fritzsche offered a history seminar on "Catastrophe and the Modern Imagination," Rebecca Ginsburg taught a course on "Landscape, Commemoration and Trauma" that focused on slavery sites, and Michael Rothberg's English seminar explored "Trauma, Memory, and Justice" in comparative contexts.

During the 2010-11 academic year, courses related to HGMS will include Harriet Murav's Yiddish courses, Peter Fritzsche's seminar on modern Germany, and Michael Rothberg's "Introduction to Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies," a course that will be taught by a rotating group of faculty and become a core course for the initiative. Undergraduate students are always welcome at HGMS events and many were in attendance throughout the year. A brown-bag workshop in fall 2010 will also focus on pedagogy for courses in Holocaust and genocide studies at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

The Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies initiative at Illinois is still in its early stages, but we are excited about its potential and eager to see it grow and move in new directions in the coming years. Please visit our website to find out more about our program:

<http://www.jewishculture.illinois.edu/programs/holocaust/>.

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