

# Holocaust representation

Literatur und kulturelle Praxis 1800 bis 2000 (Modul 19.1/Modul 6.3), Frühjahr 2019

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This course starts with a riddle: Can a mirror reflect darkness? Part of your task in this class will be to find an answer to the riddle.

Representation of the Holocaust and Holocaust remembrance are key phenomenon in post-war Germany, which is one main source for modern German society's identity as a post-war and post-Holocaust society. Focusing on this topic is necessary to understand this aspect of modern German culture and explains directly or indirectly public and private debates and parts of today's German mentality. Holocaust remembrance is based not only on academic historiography, but also on original memoirs of survivors or Holocaust victims who were able to give oral or written accounts of their lives during the Holocaust. In this course, we will examine different types of memoirs such as poetry, songs of Jewish resistance groups, diaries, film clips, or autobiographical texts.

"Auschwitz affects everything after it" – The world before Auschwitz is separated from the world after it: We now live in a world in which Auschwitz has been possible. This leads to a couple of unsettling questions: How could a civilized country like Germany with such a wide range of globally-recognized and appreciated culture turn Europe into a slaughterhouse? How does that affect art, education, philosophy, and culture? For instance, can the Holocaust be an inspiration for art, as Elie Wiesel has rhetorically asked? Is writing poetry after Auschwitz barbaric, as Theodor W. Adorno is often famously quoted? And how can children be raised without developing an authoritarian character, which is suspected to be a precondition of a totalitarian regime? We will try to discuss these questions regarding the representation of the Holocaust. After this class, you will have a deeper understanding of the different dimensions of how Auschwitz affects everything after it.

We will also be pursuing the following question: How is Holocaust remembrance and Holocaust representation anchored in German society? Holocaust remembrance is not

only followed by the official German governments, but mainly shaped and carried out by NGO's, intellectuals, the German speaking Feuilleton, schools and universities, and private initiatives. We will have a brief overview on agents, discourse positions, and the latest tendencies in German public debate.

The course language will be English, but some sources might be provided in German or Yiddish.

### **Course requirements**

Your writing assignments and other assignments will depend on your requirements. As an international student, it depends on how many ETCS points you need; in this class, you can be awarded 3 to 5 points: The more points you need, the more tasks you will have to complete. Possible tasks may include writing assignments, an oral presentation or leading a group discussion.

As a regular student of EUF, you can take your *Modulprüfung* in this class (Modul 19.1. and 19.2 only). Details on your writing assignments will be provided in the first session of the semester. Writing assignments will be accepted in both German and English.