

The Holocaust

Spring 2016

Prof. Amos Bitzan

MWF 11-11:50 in Humanities 1217

PHOTOGRAPH: Hersch and Bluma Wasser, members of the secret Warsaw Ghetto archive *Oyneg Shabes*, looking at a tin container holding documents gathered by the collectors. Source: [YIVO](#).



Course Description

References to the Holocaust abound in contemporary political debates and in our popular culture. But most people know very little about the history of the Holocaust, despite the mountains of superb historical scholarship that experts in the field have produced over decades of dedicated research. Through concentrated reading, analysis of major issues, and explaining your insights in writing, this course will help you build in-depth knowledge of the Nazi genocide of European Jewry during WWII. You will learn how and why the Nazis and their collaborators were able to carry out a program of persecution and ultimately extermination against the Jewish communities of Europe, leading to the murder of an estimated 6 million Jews. After taking this course, you will know



SARA SPIRA
B. 1887

the events, processes, ideas, organizations, and individuals behind these crimes. You will also gain an understanding of the experiences of victims of the Holocaust in order to appreciate the options (often limited) available to them. To learn about the confrontations with the Holocaust of ordinary people, we as a class will work on a collaborative historical research project using a yet-unpublished source: a collection of postcards sent from Nazi-occupied Poland to Racine, Wisconsin from 1940-1941. The letter-writer was Sara Spira, the grandmother of a UW alum, Michael Stern '67, who has generously shared her postcards with us. Together, we will use the postcards and our study of the larger events around her to reconstruct the experience of one person swept up in the Holocaust.

Learning Outcomes

After rigorous participation in this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain key events and causes of the Holocaust
2. Use "big picture" knowledge to explain events on an individual level and draw on data from the individual level to refine the bigger picture.
3. Extract a scholar's historical interpretation about the causes of an event from a historical narrative
4. Analyze a historian's use of evidence
5. Imagine what historical context can and needs to be reconstructed to annotate a primary source
6. Research and write an accurate, documented historical annotation about a primary source
7. Orally present complex insights gained from reading, writing, and thinking about historical events

Class Format

Mondays

Panel discussion of weekly reading from Saul Friedländer's *Nazi Germany and the Jews*. Be prepared to answer the following question: What is the most important point Friedländer makes in this week's reading? Explain why it is so significant. Followed by instructor's response and analysis.

Wednesdays

Group presentations on analysis of weekly primary source reading (Sara Spira's postcards from Nazi-occupied Poland) followed by instructor's example annotation of the source.

Fridays

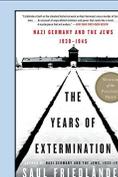
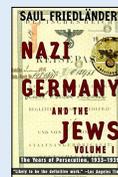
Chronological lectures on major topics with aim of building comprehensive understanding of the history of the Holocaust.

Requirements

Paper 1 (4-6 pp) due 3/13	15%
Paper 2 (4-6 pp) due 5/11	15%
Postcard Portfolio (5-7 pp)	30%
Presentations	10%
Weekly discussion summary (max 2 pp, graded pass/fail)	20%
Weekly annotation topic and lecture question (200 words, pass/fail)	10%

Schedule

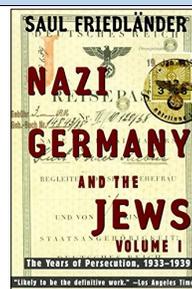
Week 1 W 1/20 F 1/22	Introduction Course Overview The Holocaust: An Overview
Week 2 M 1/25 W 1/27 F 1/29	The Nazis' Rise to Power (1918-1933) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews I</i> : Chapter 3, pp. 73-112. Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am on Learn@UW . Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW .
Week 3 M 2/1 W 2/3 F 2/5	The Nazis' First Steps in Power (1933) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews I</i> : Chapter 1-2, pp. 9-72. Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am on Learn@UW. Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW.
Week 4 M 2/8 W 2/10 F 2/12	Exclusion (1933-1935) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews I</i> : Chapter 4-5, pp. 113-173. Michael Stern. Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am. Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW.
Week 5 M 2/15 W 2/17 F 2/19	Radicalization in Peacetime (1935-1938) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews I</i> : Chapter 6-7, pp. 177-240 Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am. Lecture. Panel Summary, Lecture Question, and ANNOTATION 1 due 10 PM.
Week 6 M 2/22 W 2/24 F 2/26	Expropriation & Emigration (1938-1939) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews I</i> : Chapter 8-10, pp. 241-333. Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am on Learn@UW. Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW.
Week 7 M 2/29 W 3/2 F 3/4	Racial Policy and Terror (1939-1940) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews II</i> : Chapter 1, pp. 3-64. Writing Presentation: Constructing an Effective Thesis. Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW.



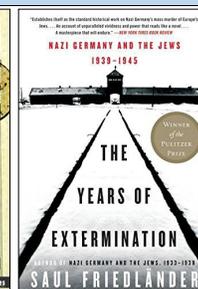
Required Books and Reading

In preparation for discussion on MONDAYS, read that week's assigned selection in Saul Friedländer's *Nazi Germany and the Jews Vol. 1: The Years of Persecution* or *2: The Years of Extermination*. For WEDNESDAYS, read the primary source posted on Learn@UW for that week, usually the contents of a postcard by Sara Spira. Ahead of PAPER 2, you will need to read Browning's *Ordinary Men* on your own.

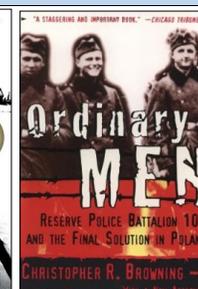
Sara Spira's postcards were transcribed and translated by [Rebekka Grossmann](#), a doctoral student from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, visiting our Department as a Mosse Fellow. She will give several Wednesday presentations.



VOLUME 1

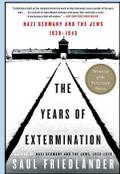
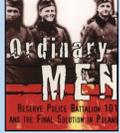


VOLUME 2



ORDINARY MEN

Office Hours: W 3-4 PM in 4116 Humanities
Email: abitzan@wisc.edu
Phone: 608.263.1812

<p>Week 8 M 3/7 W 3/9 F 3/11 S 3/13</p>	<p>Expulsion as “Final Solution” (1940) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews II</i>: Chapter 2, pp. 65-128. In-class Peer Review Workshop. Submit paper draft by 9 am on Learn@UW. Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW. PAPER 1 due 9 PM on Learn@UW Dropbox.</p>	
<p>Week 9 M 3/14 W 3/16 F 3/18</p>	<p>The Ghettos (1940-1941) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews II</i>: Chapter 3, pp. 129-194. Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am on Learn@UW. Lecture. Panel Summary, Lecture Question, and ANNOTATION 2 due 10 PM on Learn@UW.</p>	
<p>Week 10 M 3/28 W 3/30 F 4/1</p>	<p>Invasion of Soviet Union & Mass Murder (1941) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews II</i>: Chapter 4, pp. 197-260. Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am on Learn@UW. Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW.</p>	
<p>Week 11 M 4/4 W 4/6 F 4/8</p>	<p>Mass Killing on the Eastern Front (1941) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews II</i>: Chapter 5, pp. 261-328. Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am on Learn@UW. Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW.</p>	
<p>Week 12 M 4/11 W 4/13 F 4/14</p>	<p>Formulation of the “Final Solution” (1941-1942) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews II</i>: Chapter 6, pp. 329-395. Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am on Learn@UW. Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW.</p>	
<p>Week 13 M 4/18 W 4/20 F 4/22</p>	<p>The Extermination Camps I (1942-1943) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews II</i>: Chapter 7, pp. 399-468 Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am on Learn@UW. Lecture. Panel Summary, Lecture Question, and ANNOTATION 3 due 10 PM on Learn@UW.</p>	
<p>Week 14 M 4/25 W 4/27 F 4/29</p>	<p>The Extermination Camps II (1943-1944) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews II</i>: Chapter 8, pp. 469-538. Lecture. No primary source reading: use time to read Browning, <i>Ordinary Men</i>. NO CLASS. Use time to read <i>Ordinary Men</i>. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM.</p>	
<p>Week 15 M 5/2 W 5/4 F 5/6</p>	<p>The End of the Holocaust (1944-1945) Panel. <i>Nazi Germany & the Jews II</i>: Chapter 9-10, pp. 3-64. Group Presentation. Read posted primary source. Topic due 9 am on Learn@UW. Postcard Project Status Report. Lecture. Panel Summary & Lecture Question due 10 PM on Learn@UW.</p>	
<p>End W 5/11 F 5/13</p>	<p>Complete Remaining Assignments Paper 2 DUE at 9 PM on Learn@UW Dropbox. Final polished annotations portfolio due at 6 PM on Learn@UW Dropbox.</p>	

Assignments in Detail

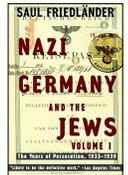
Polished Writing Assignments Graded A-F (60% of grade)

I. Paper 1: Friedländer's Argument

What overriding explanation does Saul Friedländer present in Volume 1 for the dynamics of anti-Jewish persecution under Nazi rule from 1933 to 1939? Analyze the most important evidence that Friedländer uses to argue for his historical interpretation.

1200-1800 words (4-6 pages) due Sunday, March 13 at 9 PM (15%)

SKILLS: Extracting an interpretation and analyzing a historian's use of evidence.

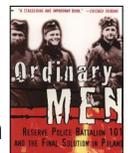
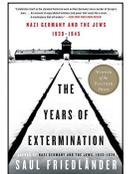


II. Paper 2: Browning vs. Friedländer

Christopher Browning's book *Ordinary Men* makes an argument for how and why the Holocaust took place using the example of Reserve Police Battalion 101. Explain Browning's thesis and analyze the most important evidence he offers for it. Identify a major point of disagreement that Browning's explanation for the Holocaust has with Friedländer's in Vol. 2 and analyze why Friedländer differs with Browning on the particular point you have identified.

1200-1800 words (4-6 pages) due Wednesday, May 11 at 9 PM (15%)

SKILLS: Extracting an interpretation, analyzing a historian's use of evidence, and drawing on data from the individual level to refine knowledge about the bigger picture.



III. Postcard Portfolio

Compile, revise based on feedback, and polish the three historical annotations you have written over the course of the semester.

1500-2100 words (5-7 pages) total due Friday, May 13 at 6 PM (30%)

SKILLS: Imagine what historical context can and needs to be reconstructed to annotate a primary source, research and write an accurate, documented historical annotation about a primary source, use knowledge about the bigger picture to explain events on an individual level.



Weekly Assignments Graded Pass/Fail (30%)

I. Annotation topic proposals (5%)

Submit one topic or term related to this week's primary source reading (usually a postcard by Sara Spira) that you think should be written about in a brief historical commentary explaining the topic's role in the source and its connection to the larger historical picture. 200 words max.

Due each Wednesday by 9 AM on Learn@UW. Must complete assignment every week or you earn 0/5%.

II. Critical historical question about lecture (5%)

Submit one critical historical question about something mentioned in lecture: ask about the how or why of an event or seek clarification about an interpretation or a more complicated fact. 200 words max.

Due Friday at 10 PM on Learn@UW. Must complete assignment every week or you earn 0/5%.

III. Summary of Monday's Discussion (20%)

Submit concise summary of what panelists and professor argued (plus any important Q&A's) so that a person who wasn't there could get the gist of the discussion. Due Friday at 10 PM on Learn@UW. 2 pp max.

You may skip this assignment 3x over the course of the semester; fewer submissions will earn 0/5%.

"Pop Quiz" Presentations Graded A-F (10%)

- Up to 2 Group Presentations on Primary Source (5%): present your annotation topics and take questions. Presenters announced at beginning of lecture: you must be prepared to present each class.
- Up to 2 Panel Presentations on Friedländer (5%): Be prepared to answer the following question: What's the most important point Friedlander makes in this week's reading? Explain why it is so significant.

Getting Started With Writing and Revising

If you need help getting started or you really want to push your argumentation to the next level, make an appointment TODAY at the [Writing Center](#) or at our very own [History Lab](#). Instructors there can help you get started with the writing process, even if you haven't begun an outline yet. They can also help you answer the following tough questions about your draft:

- Have I proven my argument?
- Do I have a discernible argument?
- Do I need to develop one?
- Are my main points clear?
- Is my draft effectively organized?
- Have I responded to the assignment?
- Is my style effective, and is it appropriate for my audience?

The History Lab

The History Lab is a resource center where experts (History PhD students) will assist you with your history papers. No matter your stage in the writing process— choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts—the History Lab staff is here, along with your professors and teaching assistants, to help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Sign up for a one-on-one consultation online: <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab>.

HISTORY LAB: [4255 HUMANITIES](#)

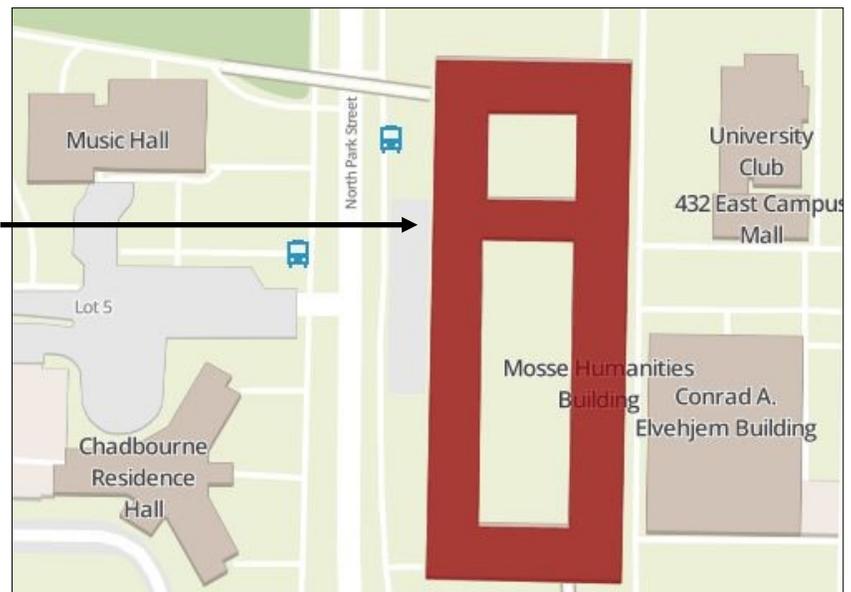
Enter street-level doors on the right as you approach the building through the N. Park Street parking lot. Take the stairs or elevator up to the Fourth Floor and go through the doors on the left and down that hallway. You'll find the lab just as you round the corner at the end of that hallway.

Phone: (608) 890-3309

Email: uwhistorylab@gmail.com

Book an appointment on the web site!

 Book Appointment



The Writing Center



Call the [Writing Center](#)'s smart, friendly telephone staff at 608.263.1992 or visit [6171 Helen C. White Hall](#) to make appointments.

The Writing Center

Office Hours

Prof. Bitzan is available for office hours at 4116 Humanities on W 3-4 PM and by appointment at various points during the week. Please email him: abitzan@wisc.edu or call his office 608.263.1812.

Rebekka Grossman, who transcribed and translated the postcards we are studying as primary sources and knows them inside out, can be reached via email at rgrossmann@wisc.edu. She will give several tutorials.

Goals of the History Major

The goal of the history major is to offer students the knowledge and skills they need to gain a critical perspective on the past. Students will learn to define important historical questions, analyze relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing arguments and conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. In History, as in other humanistic disciplines, students will practice resourceful inquiry and careful reading. They will advance their writing and public speaking skills to engage historical and contemporary issues.

To ensure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers breadth, depth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. Broad acquaintance with several geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
2. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
3. In-depth understanding of a topic of their choice through original or creative research.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.

Skills Developed in the History Major

DEFINE IMPORTANT HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

1. Pose a historical question and explain its academic and public implications.
2. Using appropriate research procedures and aids, find the secondary resources in history and other disciplines available to answer a historical question.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases of pertinent historical conversations in order to highlight opportunities for further investigation.

COLLECT AND ANALYZE EVIDENCE

1. Identify the range and limitations of primary sources available to engage the historical problem under investigation.
2. Examine the context in which sources were created, search for chronological and other relationships among them, and assess the sources in light of that knowledge.
3. Employ and, if necessary, modify appropriate theoretical frameworks to examine sources and develop arguments.

PRESENT ORIGINAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Present original and coherent findings through clearly written, persuasive arguments and narratives.
2. Orally convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.
3. Use appropriate presentation formats and platforms to share information with academic and public audiences.

CONTRIBUTE TO ONGOING DISCUSSIONS

1. Extend insights from research to analysis of other historical problems.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of a historical perspective to contemporary issues.
3. Recognize, challenge, and avoid false analogies, overgeneralizations, anachronisms, and other logical fallacies.