

# Holocaust Literature Section 01

## ENGL 126

Spring 2024 3 Unit(s) 01/24/2024 to 05/13/2024 Modified 02/20/2024

### Course Information

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Holocaust Literature is the study of the Jewish literary response to slavery, on-going genocide, and the attempted annihilation of world Jewry before, during, and after World War II with a special focus on antisemitism as a clear and present danger to democracies today.

In this course, we will view films and read the classic literary texts of the Shoah canon in translation – the 1933 prophetic novel *The Oppermanns*, the second-generation graphic novel *Maus*, the short memoirs (approx. 100 pages each) of Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Simon Wiesenthal, and Viktor Frankl, alongside poetry and song selections, legends, and Biblical passages. Class discussion will focus on the politics and ethics of the “Other” when bigotry goes unchecked, and the complicity inherent in silence, indifference, and denial when democratic values and principles are under attack. Discussions will also explore the possibility of forgiveness and repair, as well as the resilience empowered by resistance, altruism, and restorative justice. Viewed through the prism of democratic ideals, these texts shed light on the many ways polarized toxic environments cancel open debate, target the “Other” as enemy and demon, challenge the pluralistic norms of equality and liberty for all, and eventually erode the democratic commitment to the rule of law. According to Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, the U.S. special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism worldwide, “Antisemitism is not a niche issue....It is an existential threat to democracy” inasmuch as it combines ancient deadly national and religious prejudices with modern virulent racisms.

Holocaust Literature – English, Humanities, Foreign Languages, Jewish Studies 126-01 – fulfills the GE Global Studies Area V requirement.

The course has an on-campus creative service learning component: students will design slide presentations on the Holocaust and antisemitism for use in K-12 programs in San Jose schools, tech company DEI outreach events, Santa Clara County interfaith projects, and the “Chaim” Holocaust Exhibit. The project is coordinated by the professor with community partners meeting students on campus when necessary.

## Lecture and Workshop

Monday, Wednesday, 1:30 PM to 2:45 PM, Sweeney Hall (SH) 229

# Course Description and Requisites

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Survey of literature written by survivors or witnesses of the Holocaust, the destruction of European Jewry during World War II, focusing upon diaries, memoirs, fiction, and occasionally poetry and drama. Writers may include Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Anne Frank, Charlotte Delbo.

GE Area(s): V. Cultures and Global Understanding

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all SJSU studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

Letter Graded

## \* Classroom Protocols

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- **Student Collaboration and Participation:** Sharing ideas, asking questions, and providing valuable feedback to team and classmates are the basic contributors to a successful learning environment. Think of yourself and your classmates as your most valuable resources.
- **Diversity of Opinion is encouraged:** We will engage in reading, writing, and class discussion on complex issues. Classroom discussion will always be respectful of opposing viewpoints. Listen before responding.
- **Workshops** are an essential part of the writer's working experience. Your participation in workshops is critical to your success in this class. If you cannot attend a team meeting or peer review session, notify your team and make arrangements to exchange papers, notes, or essays with a team member.
- **Missed classes:** If you must miss class, please check Canvas for the updated schedule and announcements, and contact a team or classmate to find out what you have missed, so you can keep up.
- **Electronic equipment** is used during class for course related research and essay writing ONLY. Using electronic equipment for texting and other personal entertainment distracts others, prevents you from participating, and violates university norms of conduct. Texting in class = non-participation.
- **Tardiness:** If you are not *in* class, you are not participating. Arriving late and taking breaks disturbs the class and results in your missing important discussion and activities. If you need an extra 5 minutes to arrive to class or leave early, please notify me in writing at the beginning of the semester, so we can accommodate you. Otherwise, these disruptions will lose you points.
- **Food and drinks:** ONLY drinks properly covered and dry food such as energy bars and cold sandwiches are allowed. **Warm food is NEVER allowed in the classroom.**
- **Cannabis and tobacco may NOT be brought to campus.** SJSU is a tobacco-free campus, and as a federally-funded entity, cannabis is not legal. Non-compliance will involve the Office of Student Conduct.
- **Recording class sessions:** Since our class is participation-based, *written permission* to record the class is required from *all* class members as per [University Policy S12-7](#).

Professor – Student Collaboration

- **Office hours are part of the college experience:** University professors expect students to visit us during office hours to get acquainted, share ideas, ask questions, discuss assignments, and learn tips for success.
- **Email** is useful to schedule appointments, share your concerns about your progress, and ask questions about an assignment that can't be answered by rereading the prompt or consulting with teammates.
- **Canvas:** Our syllabus and assignments are posted on Canvas and all your major essays are uploaded to the appropriate assignment box on Canvas. I send announcements through Canvas.

## Program Information

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Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

**Goal 1:** To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

**Goal 2:** To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

**Goal 3:** To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website](#).

### English Program Information

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: 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. 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.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

### Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able 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, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

### Department Information:

**Department Name:** English and Comparative Literature

**Department Office:** FO 102

**Department Website:** [www.sjsu.edu/english](http://www.sjsu.edu/english) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

**Department email:** [english@sjsu.edu](mailto:english@sjsu.edu) (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

**Department phone number:** 408-924-4425

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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### GE Area V Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area V course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze historical, social, and/or cultural significance of creative works of human expression (examples include, but are not limited to, written works, images, media, music, dance, technologies, designs), from at least one cultural tradition outside the United States;
2. Examine how creative works of human expression [as defined in #1] outside the United States have influenced the United States' cultures;
3. Explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external influences;
4. Appraise how the study of creative works of human expression from outside the United States shapes one's own understanding of cultural experiences and practices.

**Writing Practice:** Students will write a minimum of 3000 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

## Course Materials

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US Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://www.ushmm.org/>

USHMM Encyclopedia: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/introduction-to-the-holocaust>

USHMM Traveling Exhibition: <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/museum-exhibitions>

Feuchtwanger, Lion. *The Oppermanns*. (McNally, NY) 978-1-946022-33-2 (trans. from German, 366 pp)

Frankl, Viktor *Man's Search for Meaning*. (Beacon Press) 978-0-8070-1427-1 (trans. from German, 154 pp)

Levi, Primo *Survival in Auschwitz*. (Simon & Schuster) 978-0-684-82680-6 (trans. from Italian, selections from 173 pp)

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus I*. (Random House) 978-0-394-74723-2 (graphic novel, U.S. English, 159 pp)

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. (Hill & Wang) 978-0-374-50001-6 (trans. from French, Yiddish, 120 pp)

Wiesenthal, Simon. *The Sunflower*. 978-0-8052-1060-6 (trans. from German, 98 pp + symposium optional)

Short stories poems, articles posted in modules on our Canvas course, including

*Hassidic Tales* (on Canvas)

*The Golem* (on Canvas)

*Genesis and Exodus* (selected chapters) (translated from Hebrew on Sefaria.com)

*People Love Dead Jews*, "On Jewish Story," and "Intro to the Pawn Broker," Dara Horn

Definitions and articles on antisemitism

*Transatlantic* (Netflix), *The US and the Holocaust* by Ken Burns (opt.)

## Course Requirements and Assignments

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Weekly required readings as listed in Class Schedule and on Canvas, class and team participation, one presentation, and writing assignments as described below:

**6 bi-weekly reports for a Service Learning Project – approx. 1,500 total words = 40% of class grade.**

Using assigned readings and viewings as well as class and team discussions (participation required), students will submit work in pairs as either slides for JCRC presentations on antisemitism or help redesign a section of the CHAIM/SVHRA Holocaust Museum, including creating new visuals and posters. (GELOs 1-4)

One essay written in 2 parts with peer review, feedback, editing – total words 2,000 = 40% class grade.

Students submit a researched essay (**scope: approx. 1,500 words**) that explores the way *at least* two major and two short creative works from the Jewish cultural tradition discussed in class have influenced United States' cultures politically, socially, philosophically, and/or psychologically. Your essay will need to contextualize these works in the Shoah, which will require defining the Holocaust/Shoah (its category, the distinguishing features that set it off from others in this category, and its function) as well as the U.S. role in the Shoah and its aftermath. (GELOs 1, 2)

1. **Your essay should cite *at least* 10 sources**, both the primary sources we've read and discussed in class and academic level secondary sources from the SJSU library database.
2. **Your essay should focus on a single theme or question that the two or more creative works have in common.**
3. **Your essay will be submitted in two parts** – the first part analyzing one of the major creative works discussed in class, to be submitted during a scheduled meeting with me, and the final draft discussing at least two major and two short creative works, to be submitted after peer review and revision/editing workshops.

Final Panel PPT Presentation to the class – total words 500 = 20% of class grade.

Together with the members of your team, present your own individual reflection in approximately **10-15 minutes** that appraises how 1) the **study of creative works from the Jewish cultural tradition** (Weeks 1-15) and 2) **your service learning experience with Jewish community organizations** have shaped your understanding of how cultures change, especially your own **cultural experiences, practices, and heritage in the US or elsewhere.** (GELOs 3, 4)

### Work Submission Policy

- **Submit** your final version on Canvas, where it will be graded with comments.
- **Format** your paper double spaced, no cover page. (For researched papers, use **MLA style**).
  - **Top left corner of the first page** → **Your name, class - section number, my name, and date**
  - All subsequent pages show **your last name and page number in top right corner.**
- **Revise, peer review, and edit** your work before submitting it to me for a grade.
- There is **no extra credit** for additional work. Invest this time in revising and editing for a higher grade.
- **Plagiarism**, the use of another's *words* or *ideas* without clearly acknowledging the source of information, earns an F on the assignment, which cannot be rewritten for a grade. Always check your originality score on Canvas.

## Grading Information

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### Criteria for Grading Essays

In English Department courses, instructors 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:

- An **“A” essay (100-90)** is **complete** inasmuch as it fulfills *all* prompt and assignment requirements *and* offers new insights on the topic; **coherent/cohesive** in that it is organized and well-developed, **convincing** in that it provides compelling evidence to prove its point and detailed examples to explain them in a voice that is clearly the student writer’s; **concise** using grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics that enable readers to easily follow the argument, and **with plenty of critical thinking** – is a *researched, fact-based, in-depth* exploration of the topic that explains connections and the bigger picture while framing the argument in language that strengthens the *writer-audience ethos*. The essay is submitted on time, formatted according to requirements, and uses language effectively – strategic word choice, grammar, and punctuation.
- A **“B” essay (89-80)** demonstrates competence in the same categories as the “A” essay. The chief difference is that the “B” essay will show some describable slight weaknesses in one of these categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, generally research and context, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.
- A **“C” essay (79-70)** 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; or it may rely on too few relevant sources to support a convincing analysis or argument, or may cite relevant sources but in a way that is difficult for the reader to find; or may develop the essay with so many fused sentences, missing/extra verbs, or wordiness and repetition that the reader cannot easily follow the argument.
- A **“D” essay (69-60)** 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 or support generalizations, or it may fail to stay on topic. It may contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that interfere with reader comprehension. There is no match between in-text citations and the entry on the Works Cited list.
- An **“F” essay (59-0)** does not fulfill the assignment. It demonstrates a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

Your final class grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined by the SJSU Catalog (Grades-Letter Grading). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A+/A/A- = excellent; B+/B/B- = above average; C+/C/C- = average; D+/D/D- = below average; F = failure.

**A (100-90)** = Exceptional communication and critical thinking skills as demonstrated on all major assignments; intellectual curiosity and exemplary mastery of course readings and concepts as shown by excellent preparation for in-class writing and quizzes, class discussion, and team work; initiative during

group activities with insightful contributions to class and team discussions.

**B (89-80)** = Good communication and critical thinking skills as demonstrated by responding to all points on the prompt of all major assignments; interest and engagement in course readings and concepts, and solid preparation for in-class writing and quizzes, class discussion; consistently meaningful and voluntary contributions to group and class activities.

**C (79-70)** = Satisfactory communication and critical thinking skills; competence in course readings and concepts as shown in fair but inconsistent preparation for class discussion; positive, but noncommittal attitude towards class; sporadic contributions to class and team activities.

**D (69-60)** = Limited communication and critical thinking skills; uneven preparation for class; demonstrated indifference to class activities and course readings as shown in rare contributions to class and group activities, inattentiveness during class discussions, and other factors such as consistent tardiness, leaving class early, texting, and other disruptive behaviors; failure to submit essays and homework on time, or at all.

**F (59-0)** = Weak communication and critical thinking skills; little to no preparation for class; no contributions to class and team discussions; no commitment to class concepts and goals; failure to submit essays and homework.

#### Grade Distribution

A plus = 100-97%	A = 96-93%	A minus = 92-90%
B plus = 89-87%	B = 86-83%	B minus = 82-80%
C plus = 79-77%	C = 76-73%	C minus = 72-70%
D plus = 69-67%	D = 66-63%	D minus = 62-60%

F = 59-0% Fail

## University Policies

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Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

## Course Schedule

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*This is a schedule for readings throughout the semester, as well as your essay due date. Topics may be revised and short readings added to the schedule below. You will also meet with me at least twice (during my office hours, before or after class, or on Zoom during February and March) to discuss your progress on*



*your essay.*

*Check our Canvas modules for updates, links to articles and videos, pdfs, explanations, and questions to prepare for class.*

*We will also work together to create a schedule for your service learning presentations.*

Week	Reading Assignment Due Date for Discussion Topic
1: 1/24	Syllabus, Browse Hol. Memorial Museum <a href="https://www.ushmm.org/">https://www.ushmm.org/</a>
2: 1/29-31	Antisemitism, an Attack on Democracy: Definitions, Service Learning
3: 2/5-7	<i>Oppermanns, "Yesterday"</i> : Defining Terms, History, "The Other" as Target
4: 2/12-14	<i>Oppermanns, "Today"</i> : History, Crimes Against Humanity
5: 2/19-21	<i>Oppermanns, "Tomorrow"</i> : Justice vs. Dangers of Denial - Blutinger
6: 2/26-28	<i>TransAtlantic</i> (Netflix) Righteous Among the Nations vs. Ethical Relativism
7: 3/4-6	<i>Night</i> , Elie Wiesel: Resilience in Faith, Hassidic Tales
8: 3 /11-13	<i>Survival in Auschwitz, or Is this a Man?</i> Primo Levi (pp.TBA), "The Golem"
9: 3 /18-20	The Religious Origins of Modern Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism - Hassner
10: 3 /25-27	<i>The Sunflower</i> , Simon Wiesenthal (1-98): Forgiveness/Restorative Justice
4/1-5	SPRING BREAK
11: 4/8-10	Final draft of essay due for peer review, revision & editing workshops
12: 4/15-17	<i>Man's Search for Meaning</i> , Viktor Frankel: Positive Psychology in U.S.
13: 4/22-24	Excerpts from <i>Exodus</i> : Passover and Resilience, brief history of Judaism
14: 4/29-5/1	Excerpts from <i>Genesis</i> : Jewish Wisdom Literature, Debate, and Humor
15: 5/6-8	Yom HaShoah, Anniversary Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; Presentations Prep.
16: 5/13	First 4 Final Panel Presentations
Final 5/16	Thursday 12:15-2:30pm: Final Presentations