Visual Representations of the Holocaust and Religion

REST10033

The Holocaust in Visual Culture REST11017

Course Manager: Dr K. Hannah Holtschneider
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Office hours: Tuesdays 12:00-1:00pm & by appointment

Teaching staff: Dr K. Hannah Holtschneider

Class contact hours: Semester 1, Wednesdays 11:10am-1pm; REST11017 10am-12pm
REST11017 students will follow a mutually agreeable schedule of seminar meetings at 10am each week and will join the honours students for the lecture at 11:10am. Please meet with the course manager in the break between the two halves of the FIRST class to discuss the schedule of PG seminars for this course.

Class Venue: Room 1.07, New College
Initial class meeting: Wednesday 17 September 2014, 11:10 am, Room 1.07, NC.

Description of course
In the last twenty years research on the visual representation of the Holocaust in art, film and museum has flourished, now being posited at the cutting edge of Holocaust Studies. The category ‘religion’ does not occupy an explicit or prominent place, yet is detectable in many of the representations offered. As such, this is an exciting and novel field for Religious Studies to engage in and this dedicated honours course will allow students to approach this field with current Religious Studies methods and broach new ground by introducing the field of Visual and Material Culture Studies and its bearing on Religious Studies.

The aim is to chart a history of visual engagements with the Holocaust in a variety of media and to give students the opportunity to apply methods of Cultural and Religious Studies in their analysis. An analytic thread through this diverse material will be the identification of religious motifs and inscriptions of Jewishness.

Prerequisites for the course
This is an honours course aimed at those studying on degree programmes in the School of Divinity and visiting undergraduates. Recommended prerequisites are Lived Religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Religion in Culture: Theory, History, and Interpretation.
Students may also apply to the course manager who will recommend short introductory readings for those lacking the suggested prerequisites.

REST11017 is aimed at taught postgraduate students in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.
Learning outcomes
At the end of the course students should be able to do the following:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of major themes and works in the visual representation of the Holocaust in art, museum and film.
2. Summarise key interpretive concepts in the theory of representation.
3. Be able to apply methods of Religious and Cultural Studies to the analysis of visual representations of the Holocaust.
4. Critically assess the function of religious motifs and inscriptions of Jewishness in visual representations of the Holocaust.
5. Sensitively explore the religious, cultural and national contexts of production of visual representations of the Holocaust.
6. Demonstrate an ability to identify key terms and their meanings.
7. Demonstrate good judgment about how to judge the relative importance of items on course bibliographies.

Assessment
1. Class presentation and leading the following discussion (20%). This will help form and test presentation and leadership skills, build confidence and test time management.
2. Essay (20%). This will test research skills, written presentation skills, analytical skills, demonstrate independent thought and argument. The essay is due on Monday 10.11.2014, 2pm.
3. Exam (60%). This will test written presentation skills under pressure and demonstrate time management. The exam will take place on a date tbc. between 8.-19.12.2014.

REST11017 Learning outcomes
1. Work confidently with a range of theoretical approaches to the study of visual culture and religion.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of major themes and works in the visual representation of the Holocaust in a range of genres.
3. Analyse the use of religious motifs and inscriptions of religiosity and Jewishness in visual representations of the Holocaust.
4. Conduct independent research into the area of visual culture and the Holocaust.

REST11017 assessment
Students are required to write an essay of 3,000-4,000 words on an agreed topic. The essay is due Monday 15.12.2014.
Background


In addition please use these reference works and historical overviews to familiarise yourself with the history of the Holocaust:


This course will not consider the history of the Holocaust and recent developments in Holocaust historiography. Rather, the subject of this course is the representation of the Holocaust by visual means in a variety of media for a variety of purposes. Basic historical knowledge about the Holocaust is taken for granted. It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the facts using some of the sources listed here as background reading.

Class preparation

You are expected to have studied the key readings for each week. This includes the primary source (image, text, film, website) and a few items of assigned secondary reading. In class you should be prepared to answer questions about the readings and use evidence from the key texts in discussion.

The key readings are available EITHER on Learn via e-reserve OR through the e-journals and e-book collection of the University Library.

The additional reading for each week is intended to help the person preparing the presentation and those who wish to write their assessed essay in this area. The additional reading is also useful for those who are thinking of preparing an honours dissertation on a related topic.

There are a few theoretical and methodological texts which inform the discussion of class
topics across the course. These are intended to help us chart a way through the vast territory of ‘visual representations of the Holocaust’ and focus part of the lectures and class discussion on the ways in which we study visual representations of historical events. A thematic thread informing all classes is the visual representation of religious Jewish identifications.

**Presentations REST10033**

Each week a student will give a 10min presentation, analysing the key texts for the week. The presentation should demonstrate that you are in command of the material, highlighting important issues relating to the study of the source text and outlining key areas of academic debate. The presentation needs to go beyond a summary of the texts you have read and present a critical evaluation of the readings. The presentation should include

- A short introduction to the source you are analysing. Don’t just describe its content but offer a critical interpretation of the piece.
- A brief summary of the secondary readings you have used. Be sure to convey the main points of the arguments of the texts and use them in the critical discussion of the source.
  It can be helpful to use quotations of significant points, but you need to be sure to explain why you are quoting and what you would like the audience to gain from this.
- Further, the presentation should identify areas of disagreement and academic debate and raise questions for further discussion in class.
- A summary of key points may be useful.
- **Presentations can be no longer than 10min. (This is a text of c.1,500 words spoken slowly.)**

Presentations can be accompanied by powerpoint presentations and / or handouts. It would be helpful if these are available to all members of the class electronically after the presentation has been given. If you write a full script for your presentation you can also submit this alongside your ppt slides and / or handout for grading. Presentation grades will take into account all materials submitted and the actual presentation itself. It is useful to include full bibliographic details of all items you reference in your presentation, on the slides / handout and written presentation text (if you choose to write this down).

**All students are responsible for preparing the key texts and raising at least one point for class discussion.**

**Essays**

A list of essay titles is provided on Learn. When writing the essay, you may wish to bear in mind the following questions:

- Does the visual representation you are discussing meet its desired purpose/aims, is it effective? How do you know?
- Is it authentic (and what does ‘authentic’ mean)?
● Does it fit with the context in which it is situated/received?
● What kind of Jewish identifications are referenced in the work under discussion? Do you consider these to be appropriate – and why or why not? What about their limitations?
● How is religion referenced/represented in the work?
● What is meant by ‘the Holocaust’ in the work you are discussing?

You need to include critical literature in your discussion, both about the method you use to assess the representation(s) you are analysing and about the criticisms which have already been voiced. The additional readings for each week will help with finding appropriate critical literature.

Essays are 2,000 words in length (max).

Schedule of Seminar Meetings

Please note that the reading list for this course is also available online via Learn.

1) Introduction


Additional reading:


Buettner, A., 2011, Holocaust images and picturing catastrophe: the cultural politics of seeing, Ashgate, Burlington, VT.


2) Art: works of art

Key texts: Marc Chagall’s White Crucifixion

Additional reading:
Feinstein, S.C., 2005. Absence/presence: critical essays on the artistic memory of the Holocaust,
3) Art: Literature/Cartoons

Key texts: Art Spiegelman, Maus


Rothberg, M., 1994. “We were talking Jewish”: Art Spiegelman’s “Maus” as “Holocaust” production’, Contemporary Literature 35:4, 661-687. [e-journal available via the Library catalogue]

Additional reading:
more on Maus:


general:
4) Art: Monuments/memorials


Additional reading:


5) Photographs

Key texts: The Sonderkommando photographs


Didi-Huberman, G., 2008. Images in spite of all: Four photographs from Auschwitz, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1-18, 41-88. [e-reserve] (please note that pages 44-88 are not on e-reserve)
Additional reading:


### 6) Exhibitions, museums I

**Key texts:** *The Imperial War Museum Holocaust Exhibition*


**Additional reading:**


### 7) Exhibitions, museums II

**Key texts:** Jewish Museum Berlin


**Additional reading:**


8) **Film and TV: documentaries**

Key texts: *Night and Fog (Nuit et Brouillard)* (Alain Resnais, 1955)


Additional reading:

more on *Night and Fog*:


on Shoah:


general on film:


Baron, L., 2005, Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary
Holocaust Cinema, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD.

Wanting to write about film? Have a look at this site to catch up with some basic terminology and ideas for analysis: http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/.
REST10033 essay due 10.11.2014, 2pm.

9) **Film and TV: feature film**

**Key texts:** *Life is Beautiful* (Roberto Benigni, 1997)


**more on Life is Beautiful:**


Wright, M., 2000. ‘“Don’t Touch My Holocaust”: Responding to Life is Beautiful’ *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 9(1), 19-32. [e-journal available via the Library catalogue]


**Additional reading:**


Metz, W.C., 2008. ‘“Show me the Shoah!”: generic experience and spectatorship in popular representations of the Holocaust’, *Shofar* 27:1,16-35.


10) **Film and TV: TV**

**Key texts**: *God on Trial* (Frank Cottrell Boyce, 2008)

Additional reading:


**Avisar, I., 1988. Screening the holocaust: cinema’s images of the unimaginable, Jewish literature and culture, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.**


**Bartov, O., 2005. The ‘Jew’ in cinema: From The Golem to Don’t touch my Holocaust, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.**

Meynard, New York: Palgrave, 691-703.

11) Revision

The exam will take place on a date tbc. between 8.-19.12.2014.
REST11017 is due Monday 15.12.2014.