FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

REL 3603: Judaism after the Holocaust: A Focus on Elie Wiesel

ONLINE course: full details available in Canvas

Dr. Oren Baruch Stier
Remote Office Hours: by appointment
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Course Description:
The Holocaust, the Nazi assault on European Jewry from 1933-1945, was an unprecedented historical upheaval that impacted and continues to impact Judaism and Jewish life and culture immeasurably. But the enormity of the Holocaust challenges us to grasp its wide-ranging influence. One way to distill that influence into something more manageable is through focusing on the work of Elie Wiesel. Before his death in 2016, Wiesel was surely the most well-known survivor of the Holocaust. The voice of the survivor generation, he is the author most closely associated with the Nazi assault on European Jewry. What is less known is that Wiesel published over 50 books on a wide range of subjects, including biographies of famous rabbis, essays on Biblical and Talmudic personalities, impassioned pleas on behalf of Soviet Jewry, narratives about the nascent State of Israel and the lost world of European Jewry, and more. Even after his death his voice rings out as a clarion call against injustice and inhumanity worldwide. His corpus includes novels, of course, but also plays, memoirs, liturgies, essays, and speeches. While many see him either as solely a Holocaust author or some sort of contemporary theologian, in actuality he is a multifaceted witness to the many contours of the modern Jewish experience before, during, and after the Shoah. This course utilizes a selection of Wiesel’s wide-ranging published works to analyze and discuss the varieties of post-Holocaust Judaism and Jewish experience they reflect. Throughout the course, we will have the opportunity to reflect on the themes of witnessing, ethics, testimony, theology, justice, outrage, and silence, among others.

Course Goals:
By the end of this course,
• Students will be familiar with and appreciate the diversity of Jewish expression after the Holocaust.
• Students will have learned about the wide impact and influence of Elie Wiesel and his writings.
• Students will have gained facility with primary source materials.
• Students will have become more empathetic.

Course Learning Objectives:
At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to...
• Recognize a range of sources relating to the modern Jewish experience [CLO1].
• Compare first-person accounts of the Holocaust [CLO2].
• Identify and distinguish a range of trends in post-Holocaust Jewish life [CLO3].
• Differentiate prospects and problems facing Jews in the post-Holocaust era as reflected in Wiesel’s writings [CLO4].
• Appraise a selected work representing a key course theme [CLO5].
• Produce a short video assessing at least one aspect of the contemporary legacy of the Holocaust [CLO6].

Course Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites for this course.

Required Texts:
• Selection of PDF essays, speeches, and Op-Eds.

This syllabus is subject to change with written notice from the professor.

Expectations of this Course
This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:
• Review the how to get started information located in the course content
• Introduce themselves to the class during the first week by posting a self-introductory video to the “Introduce Yourself” assignment
• Interact online with instructor and peers
• Review and follow the course calendar
• Log in to the course at least 3 times per week
• Respond to messages within 2 days
• Submit assignments by the required deadlines

The instructor will:
• Log in to the course at least 3 times per week
• Respond to messages within 2 days
• Grade assignments within 7 days of the assignment deadline (excluding Sabbaths and Jewish holidays)

Assessments/Assignments:
There are two general categories of assessments/assignments in this course; some are low-stakes, formative assessments for which points are generally awarded for completion of a task or series of tasks, and some are higher-stakes, summative assessments that are evaluated and graded according to a set of rubrics. This course includes four different types of assignments as follows, plus a GeoStory Project performed mostly on IWitness, an external website:
• **PlayPosit Videos**: These are interactive videos using the PlayPosit tool, which interjects informational pauses and quizzes into online video content; students must read through these informational panels and correctly answer all quiz questions in order to complete each video and attain one completion point per video. All 12 PlayPosit Videos are formative assessments; each one is worth 1% of your final grade.

• **Journal Entries**: These are text box entries that are read only by me: while they will be introduced by reflective prompts, students may actually write anything they wish for these journal entries; they are an opportunity to tell me about your experiences in the course without judgment or evaluation. There are 4 required Journal Entries; each one is worth 2% of your final grade, and all four are formative assessments.

• **Discussions**: There are written and video-recorded Discussion posts in the course encompassing both categories of assessment: The first video Discussion is formative and requires students to introduce themselves, and students will receive 2 completion points for it. Throughout the course, there are 3 written Discussions: in each case, students will respond to a prompt with a post and will reply to others’ posts; these will be graded according to a rubric and are summative; they are each worth 5% of the final grade. Finally, as a concluding project, all students will produce a short video edited from a selected Holocaust survivor testimony (the same testimony used for the IWitness GeoStory project (see below) and then share that video in a zoom-recorded video Discussion post that will comment on the video and assess the legacy of the Holocaust; this summative project will be graded according to a rubric and is worth 10% of the final grade.

• **Essays**: There are three required Essays in the course, as indicated below; the first two, worth 5% and 10% of the final grade respectively, are evaluations of two assigned books by Wiesel; the third essay, worth 10% of the final grade, is a final thematic essay based on course themes: students will select from a list of topics and associated readings. All Essays will be graded according to a rubric and are summative.

In addition, all students will complete the IWitness GeoStory activity: this activity spans three weeks of the course and will mostly be completed on the IWitness platform; altogether it is worth 28% of the final grade. It includes both formative and summative components: summative components include a written summary of a Holocaust survivor testimony worth 5% of the final grade and assessed according to a rubric, as well as some written portions of the GeoStory activity itself worth another 5%; the remainder of the GeoStory activity is formative and requires students to use IWitness’s online tools to create an annotated timeline that includes clips of survivor testimony identified by the students.

In sum, 40% of the course grade is based on non-evaluative, formative activities that must be completed and 60% of the course grade depends on evaluative, summative assignments that assess student learning and command of course content.

**Late Policy:**
ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS are due in Canvas by 11:59pm on Fridays at the conclusion of each module unless otherwise indicated. As a courtesy, all assignments will stay open for 24 hours,
one day past the posted due date, to allow for late submissions with no late penalty. *This grace period will not be extended.* Students who are unable to submit assignments by the conclusion of the grace period, for any reason, must contact the instructor prior to the deadline; late assignments will be accepted on a case-by-case basis, with a penalty, at the discretion of the instructor.

**Grading:**

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