The Holocaust in American Art

Tuesday 12 – 2 p.m.  
Room 201  
Course starts: 19.10.2004

In this seminar we will explore the representation of the Holocaust in American art (literature, film and the fine arts) over the past 50 years or so. We will trace how art has dealt with the phenomenon of the Holocaust from the beginnings in the late 1940s until the most immediate past and how in the process the understanding of the event itself and the parameters of its representation have changed. While strategies of representing the Holocaust have always been a subject of debate, beginning in the 1990s the basic principles of the controversy have shifted significantly. We will discuss how this change can be accounted for and if and how it can be correlated with the process commonly called "The Americanization of the Holocaust". The seminar will comprise film screenings, guest lectures and a trip to the Jüdisches Museum Berlin. There will be a sequel to this seminar in the summer semester 2005, taught by Stefan Brandt from the department of culture, that will explore the topic from a Cultural Studies perspective.

We will read and study the following novels:
Elie Wiesel, Night (1958)  
Edward Lewis Wallant, The Pawnbroker (1961)  
Leslie Epstein, King of the Jews (1979)  
Jonathan Safran Foer, Everything is Illuminated (2002)

We will also deal with the following essay, poem, short story and comic book: Norman Mailer, "The White Negro" (1957); Allen Ginsberg, "Kaddish" (1959); Cynthia Ozick, "Envy" (1969) Art Spiegelman, Maus II (1986) as well as with two of the following four films: Night and Fog (Alain Resnais, 1955); Judgment at Nuremberg (Stanley Kramer, 1961) or The Pawnbroker (Sidney Lumet, 1964) or Sophie's Choice (Alan Pakula, 1982).

Credit requirements:
Regular attendance, oral presentation, term paper of 15-20 pages length to be handed in no later than 28 March, 2005. Please note: There is no extension of this deadline, I will not accept essays handed in later than that date.

A summary of the oral presentation and guiding questions for the required reading have to be posted on the e-learning platform of the course one week prior to the presentation. Further information on the procedure will be given in class. Please note: All groups have to discuss their presentation with me during my office hours one week ahead of the actual date.

Course material: You can buy the books by Wallant, Epstein and Foer at Buch Express, Unter den Eichen 97, 12203 Berlin, Tel.: 831 40 04. For those who buy all the three books there the Buch Express offers a special price. A reader containing the material by Wiesel, Ginsberg, Mailer, Ozick, and Spiegelman can be obtained at Copy-Repro-Center at Habelschwerder Allee 37 (next to the Rostlaube’s parking lot, vis à vis the Department of Philosophy). You can find further material on the reserve shelf (Handapparat # 22) in the library.

Introductory text:
Syllabus

I. 19.10.04  GENERAL INTRODUCTION

II. 26.10.04  INTRODUCTION OF BACKGROUND AND KEY CONCEPTS
Please read and prepare for today:
Hilene Flanzbaum. "The Americanization of the Holocaust".
Texts in your reader!

III. 02.11.04  THE 1950S – TESTIMONY I:
FILM SCREENING I
Alain Resnais, Night and Fog (1955)

IV. 09.11.04  THE 1950S – TESTIMONY II:
Please read and prepare for today:
Elie Wiesel, Night (1958)

V. 16.11.04  THE LATE 1950S – INDIRECT, YET REBELLIOUS STATEMENTS:
Please read and prepare for today:
Norman Mailer, "The White Negro" (1957)
Allan Ginsberg, "Kaddish" (1959)

VI. 23.11.04  THE EARLY 1960IES – SEARCHING FOR THE VOICE I
Please read and prepare for today:
Edward Lewis Wallant, The Pawnbroker (1961), Chapter 1-13

VII. 30.11.04  THE EARLY 1960IES – SEARCHING FOR THE VOICE II
Please read and prepare for today:
Edward Lewis Wallant, The Pawnbroker (1961), Chapter 14-end
VIII. 07.12.04 **LATE 1960IES – ONE VERY STRICT ONE**
Please read and prepare for today:
Cynthia Ozick, "Envy" (1969)

IX. 14.12.04 **FILM SCREENING II**
To be determined:
*Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961, Stanley Kramer; 178 min.)
*The Pawnbroker* (1964, Sidney Lumet; 116 min.)
or
*Sophie's Choice* (1982, Alan Pakula; 150 min.)

20.12.04 – 02.01.05 **SEMESTER BREAK! ENJOY AND RELAX!**

X. 04.01.05 **THE 1970IES: BLACK HUMOR BEGINNING TO SEEP IN I**
Please read and prepare for today:
Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews* (1979), Chapter 1-5

XI. 11.01.05 **TRIP TO JÜDISCHES MUSEUM BERLIN**
Due to extensive security precautions we have to meet at 11.30 at the group entrance of Jüdisches Museum, Lindenstr. 9-14, 10969 Berlin (U Hallesches Tor, U Kochstraße).
We will first get a tour through the museum to study the architecture and will then meet for a discussion with the artist Joachim Seinfeld.
End of the discussion at 13.30. If you wish, you may stay in the museum to embark on an individual tour.

XII. 18.01.05 **THE 1970IES: BLACK HUMOR BEGINNING TO SEEP IN II**
Please read and prepare for today:
Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews* (1979), Chapter 6-end
XIII. 25.01.05  **THE 1980IES: THE HOLOCAUST AS COMIC STRIP**

Guest lecture by Dr. Annette Jael Lehmann on Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.
Please read and prepare for today:

XIV. 01.02.05  **THE NEW MILLENNIUM – MORE HUMOR SEEPING IN I**
Please read and prepare for today:

XV. 08.02.05  **THE NEW MILLENNIUM – MORE HUMOR SEEPING IN II**
Please read and prepare for today:

XVI. 15.02.05  **THE NEW MILLENNIUM – WHAT ABOUT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS, THOUGH?**
The Holocaust in the Visual Arts.
Bibliography


Please sign up and give name, telephone number and e-mail address!

IV. 09.11.04  **The 1950s – Testimony II:**
Elie Wiesel, *Night* (1958)

**Material:**

V. 16.11.04  **The Late 1950s – Indirect, Yet Rebellious Statements:**
Norman Mailer, "The White Negro" (1957)
Allan Ginsberg, "Kaddish" (1959)

**Material:**
Please develop questions to pre-structure the discussion.

VI. 23.11.04  **The Early 1960ies – Searching for the Voice I**

**Material:**
VII. 30.11.04  THE EARLY 1960IES – SEARCHING FOR THE VOICE II
Edward Lewis Wallant, *The Pawnbroker* (1961), Chapter 14-end

**Material:**

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VIII. 07.12.04  LATE 1960IES – ONE VERY STRICT ONE
Cynthia Ozick, "Envy" (1969)

**Material:**

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X. 04.01.05  THE 1970IES: BLACK HUMOR BEGINNING TO SEEP IN I
Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews* (1979), Chapter 1-5

**Material:**

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XII. 18.01.05  **THE 1970IES: BLACK HUMOR BEGINNING TO SEEP IN II**
Leslie Epstein, *King of the Jews* (1979), Chapter 6-end

**Material:**

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XIV. 01.02.05  **WRITING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM – MORE HUMOR SEEPING IN I**

**Material:**
Slavoj Zizek. "Camp Comedy."  

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XV. 08.02.05  **THE NEW MILLENNIUM – MORE HUMOR SEEPING IN II**

**Material:**
XVI. 15.02.05 THE NEW MILLENNIUM – WHAT ABOUT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS, THOUGH?
The Holocaust in the Visual Arts.

Material:
More like this. American Holocaust. 2. 45. It's ironic considering Anti-Choicers caused the Holocaust. Adolf Hitlers mom was considering an abortion until her Anti-Choice doctor talked her out of it...and looked how well that turned out. On another note, Abortion is nothing like the Holocaust. Killing, Abusing, and Exploiting masses of people with families and lives based on ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, etc is nothing like terminating a pregnancy and removing the fetus from a womb. Reply, Jan 5, 2012. KotegoHobbyist. Oh, and Holocaust? Give me a break. Every time a woman goes through her cycle, she deposits an egg. There is a wide range of ways in which people have represented the Holocaust in popular culture. The subject of the Holocaust has been dealt with in modern dance. In 1961, Anna Sokolow, a Jewish-American choreographer, created her piece Dreams, an attempt to deal with her night terrors; eventually it became an aide-mémoire to the horrors of the Holocaust. Rami Be' er tries to illustrate the feeling of being trapped in Aide Memoire (Hebrew title: Zichron Dvarim). The dancers move ecstatically, trapped â€œAmerican Holocaustâ€™. David E. Stannard, reply by J.H. Elliott. October 21, 1993 Issue. Regarding the first of these terms, I use the phenomenon of racism in American Holocaust not as a casual insult against Euro-American thought and behavior, as Professor Elliott suggests, but rather as one of several essential componentsâ€”each one taken apart and examined in some detailâ€”of an analysis of the cultural, political, and economic forces that, interacting upon one another, produced.