

Carleton University  
**Fall 2024 Preliminary Course Outline**  
Department of English

**ENGL 4950A: Topics in Postcolonial & Diaspora Literature and Theory**  
*The Holocaust and Literary Form: Multidirectional and Decolonial Approaches*

***Prerequisite: fourth year standing or permission of the department.***

**Instructor: Professor Sarah Phillips Casteel**  
**Email: sarah.casteel@carleton.ca**

**\*\*\* This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.  
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. \*\*\***

**Course description:**

This class will introduce students to central issues and debates surrounding the literary representation of the Holocaust. Over the course of the term, we will encounter key canonical works of Holocaust memoir, poetry, and fiction. Alongside and in tension with these canonical works, we will read literature that addresses less recognized victims of the Nazis such as the Roma and Sinti and people of African descent. Pushing the boundaries of established definitions of Holocaust literature still further, our syllabus will also feature Indigenous, Black and postcolonial writing that brings the Holocaust into dialogue with the memories of other atrocities. Our focus on the role of different literary genres in shaping the collective memory of atrocity will facilitate this comparative and multidirectional approach to the study of Holocaust literature and representation.

Among the themes we will explore are:

- the relationship between trauma, witnessing, and literary narrative
- the appropriateness of aestheticizing atrocity (poetry after Auschwitz)
- tensions between writers' responsibility to history and their poetic license
- gender, sexuality and the Holocaust
- second and third generation descendants of survivors (postmemory)
- the role of literature in drawing attention to the experiences of neglected victims of Nazism

**Tentative List of Texts:**

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

Elie Wiesel, *Night*

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale*

Aomar Boum and Nadjib Berber, *Undesirables: A Holocaust Journey to North Africa*

Natascha Appanah, *The Last Brother*

Esi Edugyan, *Half-Blood Blues*  
Hannah Moscovitch, *East of Berlin*

+ poetry and short stories by such authors as Paul Celan, Ceija Stojka, Cynthia Ozick, Sherman Alexie, and Michelle Cliff

**Evaluation:**

Attendance (20%)

Weekly responses (10%)

Oral presentation (25%)

Video testimony presentation (5%)

Final paper (40%)