

The Centre for Holocaust Education & Scholarship
Universe of Obligation
Teaching Strategy #3



Universe of Obligation

The Universe of Obligation refers to the circle of individuals and groups toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends. Helen Fein coined this term.

The Universe of Obligation is about the hierarchy of caring. This is a very important for the study of the Holocaust because it is about choices and about choices of who people will help and who they won't help.

Activity:

This activity requires you to create your own Universe of Obligation. While completing the activity, think about who is in your Universe of Obligation and what would keep you from reaching outside your inner circle. Are there dangers in not making your inner circle broader?

In **Circle 1**, write your name.

In **Circle 2**, write the name of people to whom you feel the greatest obligation. For example, people for whom you'd be willing to take a great risk or for whom you would put yourself in peril.

In **Circle 3**, who are the people on the next level? These are people to whom you have some obligation, but not as great as in Circle 2.

In **Circle 4**, who are the people on the next level? These are people to whom you have some obligation, but not as great as in Circle 3.

When you have completed your Universe of Obligation turn to a partner and discuss who is in your circle and why.

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