

Lecturer's name: Dr. Miriam Offer & Prof. Thomas Pegelow-Kaplan

Course name: Medicine Nazism & Holocaust

Type of course: Lecture

Academic year: 2022

Course Rationale and Aims

The history of medicine during the Holocaust period is a broad, multidisciplinary field, which arouses the keen interest of many researchers worldwide. During the National Socialist period, thousands of physicians and scientists in Germany and Austria committed medical crimes that were unprecedented in their scope and severity. Individual physicians and the institutionalized medical system cooperated with the Nazi regime to an extent that was far greater than any other profession. Their scientific support served to strengthen the Nazis' anti-Semitic biologically racist ideology. They initiated and committed inhumane medical crimes, while crudely trampling the noble principles of the medical profession until they became murderers in white coats. Research that has developed over recent decades sheds light on the actions of the German physicians ("the study of the perpetrators") as well as on the coping of thousands of Jewish physicians who, under their own steam, as persecuted victims, established medical systems in the ghettos and in other areas under Nazi oppression ("the study of the victims").

The physicians' and health systems' decline to rock bottom, on one hand, and the Jewish medical staff's heroic struggle under genocide conditions, on the other, give rise to a multitude of questions about the riddle of human nature and society under extreme circumstances and about the warning signals to be heeded by the medical profession regarding the power and the ability for its wondrous achievements while simultaneously wreaking devastation and destruction.

Throughout the course, we will learn about the historical and social processes that were the background and an influence on these developments, while addressing contemporarily relevant questions, especially for medical and health care practitioners. Research literature, film excerpts, documentation and testimonies from the Holocaust period will all be included, encouraging discussion and thinking about the significant of this subject for present-day medical students.

Course Topics

- **Physicians and scientists in service of Nazi ideology:** The development of science and medicine in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century and under the Nazi regime; racial theory; eugenics, racial hygiene; National Socialist legislation for "racial improvement" and the sterilization of hundreds of thousands of "useless" patients; persecution of Jewish physicians and dismissal from their positions; "euthanasia" of hundreds of thousands of "Aryan" mental health patients and people with disabilities including killing by gas poisoning; segregation of the Jews in enclosed ghettos on the recommendation of German physicians based on the racist, anti-Semitic precaution against the spread of epidemics; the physicians' role in the extermination camps—selections, medical experiments; the physicians' decisive impact in implementation of Nazi ideology and in accelerating the racist, anti-Semitic policy and the development of the "Final Solution," which led to the Jewish Holocaust
- **Jewish medicine on the eve of the Holocaust and its challenges in the ghettos and camps under the Nazi regime:** The characteristics of the medical system in Jewish society in Poland during the interwar period; the coping of Jewish medical systems with unprecedented conditions during the Holocaust, in different areas of occupation—organizational and medical aspects; ethical dilemmas in the work of the medical staff in the ghettos and camps; the contribution of Jewish women physicians and nurses to the medical system during the interwar period and during the Holocaust; medical research carried out by Jewish physicians in the ghettos and camps; the underground study of medicine and professional in-service training; the uniqueness of the Jewish medical system during the Holocaust in broad historical context
- **Challenges facing the medical system and "the patients" after the Holocaust:** central medical and ethical aspects from international and Jewish perspectives: The Nuremberg Doctors' Trial; the Nuremberg Code and the Declaration of Helsinki following the Nuremberg trials; medical issues among Holocaust survivors after their release in their countries of origin and in the DP camps; challenges and warning signals in the era of accelerated development of science and technology and modern medicine

	Dates [subject to change according to guest lecturers]	Lecture Topic Assignments are included in the learning units on the course's Moodle site
		A. Physicians and scientists in the service of Nazi ideology
1	10.1.2022 synchronous	Welcome: introduction, course objectives, study methods, materials, and assignments
2	12.1.2022 synchronous	Medicine, Nazism and Holocaust - Introduction: Medicine and physicians in Nazi Germany: How did physicians turn into murderers? The biologically racist vision of Nazism and the central role of German physicians in its realization, racial theory, "racial hygiene" and the system of eugenics in Western countries and in Nazi Germany.
3	17.1.2022 synchronous	Forced sterilization in Germany - Nazi legislation for "racial improvement," forced sterilization for the "useless" in Germany.
4	19.1.2022 asynchronous	Doctors with white coats become killers - watch a movie: "Healing by Killing"
5	24.1.2022 synchronous	Forced "euthanasia" in Germany: Operation T4—"Euthanasia" of mental health patients, people with disabilities, alcoholism, and other "shortcomings"
6	26.1.2022 asynchronous	Proper Medicine in Nazi Germany
7	31.1.2022 synchronous	The German Health Policy in Occupied Poland
8	2.2.2022 synchronous	Medicine, Doctors, and Antisemitism in Germany Before and During the Holocaust
9	7.2.2022 synchronous	From medical murder to the Holocaust: Nazi doctors in the camps - Medicine in Auschwitz and the criminal medical experiments
10	9.2.2022 asynchronous	The Nuremberg Trials and the Nazi Doctors Trial: the trial proceedings and the claims of the criminal physicians, sentencing, the Nuremberg Code. Attempts at concealment and repression. The inclusion of physicians, who were active under the Nazi regime in Germany and Austria, in key positions in the health care field and in academic teaching after the war. Exploitation of body parts of victims of medical crimes, after the Holocaust and up to the present day
11	16.2.2022 synchronous	Nazi Medicine – Summary and Implications for after the Holocaust
		B. White Coats in the Ghetto – Jewish Medicine in the Ghettos
12	23.2.2022 synchronous	Jewish medicine during the interwar period
13	28.2.2022 synchronous	The Jewish Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto for Preserving Health and Saving Lives: How did the Jews establish medical services under genocide conditions, under their own steam? An underground medical faculty in the ghetto? Academic research on hunger disease? The unrecognized contribution of women at the frontline of the medical services. Director of the Warsaw Ghetto Health Department, Dr. Israel Milejkowski, his writings, and his fate
14	2.3.2022 synchronous	Underground studies and medical research in the Warsaw ghetto
15	14.3.2022 synchronous	Documentary film - Hunger: The Ghetto Doctors' Underground
16	16.3.2022 asynchronous	The end of the medical organization in the Warsaw ghetto
17	21.3.2022 synchronous	Ethical dilemmas in the work of medical teams: – tragic dilemmas in extreme circumstances following dilemmas recognized as such and documented by medical and health service practitioners during the Holocaust

	Dates [subject to change according to guest lecturers]	Lecture Topic Assignments are included in the learning units on the course's Moodle site
18	23.3.2022 synchronous	Medicine in the Shavli Ghetto: "Notes from the Valley of Slaughter:" Medicine in the Shavli Ghetto and births in the Lithuanian ghettos based on the diary of Dr. Aaron Pik. Decrees against the unborn, coping with the impossible
19	28.3.2022 synchronous	The medical system in the Lodz ghetto: Medicine in the Lodz Ghetto – research based on photographs and the album of the health department in the Lodz Ghetto
20	30.3.2022 asynchronous	The physician Dr. Elhanan Elkes and medicine in the Kaunas (Kovno) ghetto
21	4.4.2022 synchronous	Morbidity and medicine in the Theresienstadt ghetto - Hermann Strauss: Medicine in the Theresienstadt Ghetto and Dr. Hermann Strauss's writings, which survived the ghetto
22	6.4.2022 synchronous	The Jewish hospital in Berlin during the Holocaust -its activities until the end of the war: – the final remnant of Germany Jewry during the Third Reich. The unique fate of the Berlin Jewish Hospital
23	11.4.2022 asynchronous	The Jewish Hospital in Kalish during the Holocaust
24	13.4.2022 asynchronous	Film "Out of the Ashes" – documentary film on Dr. Gisella Perl + Assignment
25	20.4.2022 asynchronous	Jewish doctors in the extermination camps: conditions, dilemmas, and testimonies
26	25.4.2022 synchronous	Dr. Mark Meir Dworzecki - Holocaust survivor physician from the Vilnius (Vilna) ghetto - a pioneer researcher on medicine during the Holocaust Insights from life in the ghettos
		C. Jewish medical activity – Summary and implications for after the Holocaust
27	27.4.2022	The fate of physicians and nurses who survived and Morbidity among Holocaust survivors and their descendants Summary: Symposium: Challenges and warning signals in the era of accelerated development of modern medical science and technology

Compulsory requirements

- Active participation in the course including preparation of reading material for lectures and participation in class discussion
- End-of-course examination on the required reading material and lecture content

Final grade components

- Class attendance and participation and required preparatory reading – 20%
- Short written assignments – all assignments together – 40%
- Mid-semester examination on Part A – 20%
- Short research assignment on medicine in the ghettos on Part B – 20%

Compulsory reading:

Nadav, Daniel S. *Medicine and Nazism*. Jerusalem, 2009

Offer, M. (2021). Jewish Medical Activity in the Ghettos under the Nazi Regime: Characteristics and Broad Historical Context. *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, 33.

Offer, M. (2012). Ethical Dilemmas in the Work of Doctors and Nurses in the Warsaw Ghetto. *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, 25, 467-49

Lensky, M., *A Physician Inside the Warsaw Ghetto*. New York, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2009.

Extended bibliography:

Part I

Kater Michael H., *Doctors Under Hitler*, Chapel Hill, 1989.

Lifton Robert J., *The Nazi doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. New York, 1986.
Müller-Hill, Benno. *Murderous Selection: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Gypsies, and Others in Germany, 1933-1945*. New York, 1988.
Weinreich M., *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crime Against the Jewish People*. New Haven, 1999.
Weindling Paul, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe 1890-1945*. New York, 2000.

Part II

Beinfeld Solon, Health Care in the Vilna Ghetto. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 12: 66-98, 1998.
Ludwik Hirszfeld, *The Story of One Life*, (translated and edited by Marta A. Balinska, edited by William Schneider), New York, 2010.
Offer, M. (2020). *White Coats In the Ghetto: Jewish Medicine in Poland during the Holocaust*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem. 704 pages.
Roland Charles G., *Courage Under Siege: Starvation, Disease and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto*. New York, 1992.
Winick Myron (Ed.), *Hunger Disease: Studies by the Jewish Physicians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, Translated from the Polish by Martha Osnos, New York, 1979.

Part III

Michalczyk, John J. (Ed.) *Medicine, Ethics and the Third Reich*, Historical Contemporary Issues, Kansas City, 1994.
Volker Roelcke, Sascha Topp, and Etienne Lepicard, eds., *Silence, Scapegoats, Self-Reflection: The Shadow of Nazi Medical Crimes on Medicine and Bioethics* (Gottingen: V&R Unipress, 2014).