

**Philosophy 239: Figures and Themes in Contemporary Philosophy
The Twentieth Century in Philosophical Perspective: War and Genocide**

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Office Hours T-Th 9:00-10:30, W 11:00-12:30 and by appointment

1. Course Description

This course will explore philosophical reactions to events and ideas surrounding some of the darkest episodes in the twentieth century. War and genocide have been with us forever, and so it is worth asking whether there is anything that sets both the well-known and virtually unknown wars and genocides of the past century apart. Philosophical readings will be interspersed with historical and journalistic treatments of case studies. Historical episodes to be discussed include the First World War, the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and the Rwandan genocide.

2. Readings

The following seven books have been ordered at the University Bookstore:

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*

Albert Camus, *The Plague*

Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret*

Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend*

Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*

Wilfred Owen, *Collected Poems*

Gitta Sereny, *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth*

Additional readings will be placed on reserve at Fairchild/Martindale library.

3. Course requirements

This is an advanced seminar, meeting only once a week, so attendance and active participation are not only mandatory but extremely important. Anyone whose attendance becomes spotty will be dropped from the course. Two papers will be assigned over the course of the semester. The first, worth 20 points, will be a five-to-seven page essay on an assigned topic, due Feb. 23. For the second paper, I will be asking you to select your own topics. These should be cleared with me, and a preliminary outline and bibliography submitted, no later than March 15. Final drafts of these papers, worth 40 points, are due on May 3. You will be asked to keep journals of your reflections on seminar discussions and assigned readings and films. These will be collected every two weeks, and will be worth a combined total of 20 points. Each student will be required to make an oral presentation, on a topic and at a time to be scheduled in advance. Presentations are worth 15 points. Finally, up to an additional 10 points may be awarded for contributions to in-class discussion, for a theoretical maximum of 105. Grades will be assigned on a 100-point scale. All assignments, however late, must be turned in by May 3 for you to receive a passing grade.

4. Schedule of readings

<u>Week of:</u>	<u>Readings</u>
Jan. 19	Selections from Exodus, Numbers, and Thucydides, <i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i>
Jan. 26	Wilfred Owen, <i>Collected Poems</i> . Film: <i>The Grand Illusion</i>
Feb. 2	Albert Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays</i>
Feb. 9	Albert Camus, <i>The Plague</i>
Feb. 16	David Hull, "On Human Nature," Vahakn Dadrian, <i>The History of the Armenian Genocide</i> , pp. 201-247.
Feb. 23	Walter Laqueur, <i>The Terrible Secret</i>
March 1	Laqueur, continued. Film: <i>Shoah</i> .
March 8	J.-F. Lyotard, <i>Heidegger and "the jews"</i>
March 15	Gitta Sereny, <i>Albert Speer</i>
March 22	Spring Break
March 29	Excerpts, Philip Gourevitch, <i>We Wish to Inform You...</i> , African Rights, <i>Rwanda: Not so Innocent</i> . Film: <i>Frontline: The Triumph of Evil</i>
April 5	Excerpts, African Rights, <i>Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance</i> , Klinghoffer, <i>The International Dimension of Genocide in Rwanda</i> .
April 12	Rwanda readings, continued.
April 19	J.-F. Lyotard, <i>The Differend</i>
April 26	<i>The Differend</i> , continued.
May 3	TBA.