

# STUDENT TESTIMONIES: MORAL INQUIRY IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

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The composition classroom is a moral universe. Teachers continually make decisions about what, how, and why they should teach particular content areas and rhetorical strategies using specific methods. Students research topics of moral consequence, establish evaluative positions, make choices about what to select as evidence and how to cite it, and allow (or not) what they learn to impact their lives. Oddly, many writing teachers don't consider such decisions moral ones, judging from the dearth of dialogue in professional journals about moral choices and ethical considerations in composition.

The moral theorizing that does go on is tentative and unsystematic in nature, which to some extent is excusable considering its postmodern context, which rejects absolutes handed down from the past and insists that there is no universal standard of moral choice or ethical behavior.<sup>1</sup> The counter to such uncertainty is the observation that, ironically, postmodernism itself makes ethics paramount. John S. Nelson identifies ethics as one of the postmodern "rhetorics of inquiry," since the credibility of rhetoric itself depends on "the procedures and standards for relations among all those who are in any way subject to or subjects

within research communities” (428). Only the inquiry of ethics assures that the researcher (we might broaden the application to rhetor and teacher) continually scrutinizes his or her standards and conduct to assure “amoral skills” are not “put to immoral manipulations” (428).

As they dismantle the notion of transcendental or foundational truth, theorists like James Berlin, Susan Jarratt, and Patricia Bizzell argue that moral principles are constructed through consensus, with language as the primary tool of persuasion. As Bizzell observes: “Whatever we believe, we believe only because we have been persuaded” (664). It would be naive to assume that teachers should (and do) refuse to exercise this power of persuasion when they are masters of that power. But Bizzell goes further, arguing that it is irresponsible for writing teachers *not* to exercise this power. She points out the hypocrisy of teachers challenging the narrow or biased attitudes that students might harbor walking into the class, then hesitating to sell their own pluralistic values explicitly. This diffidence calls students

to the service of some higher good which we do not have the courage to name. We exercise authority over them in asking them to give up their foundational beliefs, but we give them nothing to put in the place of these foundational beliefs because we deny the validity of all authority, including, presumably, our own. (670)

Bizzell believes we should instead clearly define the ideologies we ourselves value, then use “collective participation in the rhetorical process” to persuade them of our position and move closer to achieving the kind of world we find commonly beneficial (673).

Sandra Stotsky believes that we should advance the cause of civic virtue, since “citizenship” is a trans-cultural, trans-racial, trans-sexual “good.”<sup>2</sup> Because we all are citizens, we can pursue the common good and civic learning, as well as actively participate in public life, and be unconstrained by “differences in social status, ethnicity, race, religion, and gender” (*Connecting Writing* 73). For Stotsky, civic virtue integrates personal, political, and moral values and so is the desirable fountainhead both for academic principles and course design. Using David Harrington’s technique of incorporating moral thinking in academic writing, Stotsky emphasizes the ethical dimensions of “what the writer owes the reader” in terms of clarity, responsibility to intellectual standards, academic honesty, etc. (*Conceptualizing Writing* 798–99). Students should consider the many sides to a question, weigh the conflicting evidence of their sources and the relative merits of their own position, then stand by the strengths of their conclusions (798).

Bizzell and Stotsky disagree vehemently about the final purpose of ethical inquiry. Whereas Bizzell valorizes multicultural exchange, Stotsky attacks the “highly politicized form of multiculturalism” that she believes dominates many programs (*Holocaust* 55).<sup>3</sup> Yet Bizzell and Stotsky share a faith in the writing teacher who, through his or her own awareness, helps break the bonds of the social forces that still restrict their students. Not only does the teacher help students identify the forces that determine their attitudes and actions, but he or she orchestrates their dialogue and choices so that the act of consensus, the rules of operation that govern how research and conversations within the classroom take place, reflects the moral values of the teacher. The end-state thus entails true moral principles, which will vary according to the individual teacher—being vigilant as to the cultural forces that numb our thinking and perceptions, being open to difference, allowing multicultural perspectives into our

lives, becoming more active as citizens. But one should not forget that those principles reflect the teacher's agenda. Thus, faith in the teacher seems to go hand-in-hand with fundamental doubts about students' abilities to construct their own moral answers and gradually shape a moral universe of their own.

In some cases, such doubts are well-founded. Mark Weisberg and Jacalyn Duffin, who use literature in teaching law, medical, and nursing students, express concern about "the fractured moral communities we live in," communities that do not foster a clear sense of ethics or standards of moral behavior (27). They found their students were "intolerant of the historical contingencies in the older literature and could not forgive those authors for living in a time with different values" (26). They conclude that people often rebel against ambiguity in relationships and cannot tolerate ethical complexity (24). Perhaps that is why teachers elect to spell out moral lessons, or chew over the ambiguities themselves. Christy Friend, however, argues that students are not merely "havers" or consumers; they are doers. Working from Iris Marion Young's non-distributive model of justice, Friend advocates a system whereby students are offered something beyond a fair distribution of time, effort, gender sensitivity, or opportunities to earn an "A." Instead, they should be offered increased authority, power, and rights—attributes that are non-material and therefore non-distributive.

I agree, adding that our students should not be reduced to consumers of our own moral conclusions. As compositionists we valorize the *process* of writing. In the same way, we should value the *process* of moral thinking and moral choice, which, if they are constrained, watered down, and dictated to our students, make teachers part of the social forces that oppress students' moral imagination. My primary assumption is that students are *be*-ers, or moral agents in their own right. The process of defining their moral universe is an ongoing dynamic much like learning itself.

Students enroll in our classrooms *in medias res* and will continue the process long after they leave. They not only are capable, but have the right (despite the concerns of Weisberg and Duffin) to direct their own moral inquiry and shape their own moral responses.

It is an obvious claim that the capacity and skills of students as moral agents are developed when they inquire into subjects that are serious, significant, and complex. It is less obvious, but well-documented, that writing improves when generated by such *inquiry*, defined here as writing that focuses on concrete data of a defined topic involving specific rhetorical strategies (Hillocks 180–81). George Hillocks’ metastudy found such writing “significantly superior” in either “pre-to-post effects, in experimental/control effects, or in both” (186). As a very recent example, Winslow and Mische designed a theme course initially offered to basic writers at Catholic University in a pilot summer course. They incorporated Holocaust material (along with a visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum) as part of a “Hero Quest” theme. At the end of the four-week course, all of the students placed into regular composition. In fact, results were so positive after three summers, the course was expanded to a full semester, six credit-hour course in literature and writing. Overall, the success of students in the “Hero Quest” course exceeded the success of students with comparable application records placed in other courses (this was measured by GPA). In terms of writing, Winslow and Mische found that as early as the first assigned paper,

descriptive powers are enhanced, language becomes more concrete. Students’ ideas are elaborate, often daring. Their papers display, if not a standard academic “thesis statement,” then at least an implicit focus or organizing principle. Perhaps more importantly, students manage to incorporate

and “flesh out” an author’s theory without losing their own voice or subordinating their own interpretations and ideas. (85)

As skills developed over the course of the semester, so too did the students' ability to articulate a clear thesis. "Students have learned very quickly to take an interpretive position and support it with a wealth of textual—verbal and visual—evidence" (85).

The authors found that their focus on a theme “made the teaching of modes, strategies, close reading, research methods, style, and mechanics easier and more complete” (90). They hypothesize that because students built connections between their personal lives and the academic materials of the course, they learned on a “deeper” level, which in turn was responsible for the “growth in voice and style that the writing of students in this course displays” (91). Their success has been so pronounced and so consistent that Catholic University has eliminated its remedial writing course, offering instead to high-risk students additional workshop/tutorials as part of the regular composition course (91).

The findings of Winslow and Mische are particularly appropriate, since the course I am going to describe is also based on researching and writing about the Holocaust. This second-semester, first-year composition course was offered at a branch campus of a major university in southern Texas. We are a four-year teaching institution of over 6,000 students, serving a modest-sized, working-class, urban population. We draw heavily from the local population, which is roughly half Mexican-American, half Caucasian. Many of our students are older, returning students; many hold down one or more jobs while attending school.

Freshmen enroll in a configuration of courses for each semester called the “triad”—my configuration involved English composition, political science, and United States history.

Assignments were investigative in nature, building upon topics in the other triad courses as well as fulfilling the requirements of my course as a research-skills class. With the luxury of a composition classroom in one of the computer labs, students were able to access from their seats both the Internet and the library's computerized card catalogue and electronic databases. Because I took the four paper topics from recent articles in the *New York Times*, students could do much of their work on these current controversies via the Web, which they enjoyed and found to be extremely rich in materials.

Forty-four students (all of them 18–19 year-olds) in two sections completed the course and its four required papers. The assignments progressed in scope from general to detailed (beginning with the meaning of “genocide” and examples in the 20<sup>th</sup> century other than the Holocaust, ending with moral issues raised by the Holocaust); from less complex to more difficult rhetorical components (first summary, then narrative, argument, and finally moral evaluation); and to longer paper and research requirements (two pages/two sources, to five pages/five sources). Most of the topic options revolved around materials that have surfaced only recently: the heroic actions of John Rabe and Chiune Sugihara, the refusal of Swiss banks to release Jewish gold, the ethical controversy over the use of medical data from Nazi experiments, and so on. The assignments can be found in Appendix I.

Moral inquiry and the Holocaust seem to go hand-in-glove, since the Holocaust's primary lessons are obvious to rational human beings. Yet the Holocaust is deceptively complex as an ethical subject, as is clear from the varied experience of teachers who have pursued it.

The ignorance of students can, in some cases, give way to cynical indifference rather than moral outrage.<sup>4</sup> Or, teachers might find that students are unable to generate an appropriate

moral response without guidance.<sup>5</sup> If students do respond empathetically, they may only sweeten the horrors of the Holocaust to suit their own “moral taste buds” (Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* 183).<sup>6</sup> And what about the issue of applicability: should the Holocaust be recast as a parallel from the past to current instances of genocide, hate crimes, and racial prejudice?<sup>7</sup> Finally, should any subject, even a compelling one like the Holocaust, take the front seat to writing instruction in general and the enforcement of correct standards in particular?<sup>8</sup>

Instead of arguing what the process of moral inquiry *should* be and what the resulting writing *might* be, in this present study I have woven together undoctored excerpts from the writing of twenty-six of my students (out of a total of forty-four students in two sections), who demonstrate that *when research, imagination, and empathy come together in the composition classroom, writing improves and human beings shape important moral insights and exercise ethical choices*. In terms of outcome, Elie Wiesel’s words ring true in the voices of these students: “whoever enters this subject [of the Holocaust] is purified by it . . . is humanized by it” (Linenthal 260). Let me illustrate the “humanizing” experience of the course through the responses and reflections of these first-year writers.

## **Voices of Moral Inquiry**

What made our course so fruitful is the convergence of four elements into a critical mass: the study of language in general and rhetoric in particular, the exercise of disciplined and informed academic writing, the frequency of informal/reflective writing for in-class essays and learning logs, and students who were willing to learn and willing to let learning change their lives. The latter is a matter of timing; clearly the second semester of their freshman year marked an opportune moment for these particular students. But the catalyst for such change was the powerful subject matter.



The students' responses come from essays, cover letters, and learning-log entries written over the course of the semester.<sup>9</sup> In the early weeks of the course, I reviewed historical background on Germany in the 1930s and during World War II, taking care to highlight events and dates (such as the Wannsee Protocol of January, 1942) that would prove important in coming assignments. I tried to be sensitive to the students' emotional and psychological health, warning them away from Neo-Nazi hate pages on the Internet (the students found such violence and ignorance deeply offensive) and negotiating optional approaches to assignments for individual students who needed relief from the emotional and psychological burden of the material. In terms of their judgments about heroic figures, controversial interpretations, and moral culpability, the students were their own masters. I helped them understand the significance of the issues, the numerous options for interpretations, the avenues of research, and the rhetorical requirements of the assignments. Their reflections and conclusions, as represented in the following pages, are entirely their own. In a word, my role was one of facilitator, not moral guide. Now, as then, I did not argue with their final judgments or comment on the depth or maturity of their reasoning. Each student dealt with the subject to the best of his or her abilities. While abilities differed from student to student, the course marked a significant scholarly and personal encounter of long-term consequence for everyone, as their continuing commentary reveals.

Ideally, their texts might be constructed as a running commentary—or twenty-six separate narratives—revealing their judgments and responses to the material. However, for the sake of clarity I have divided this discussion into three sections. The first organizes their testimony according to what might be defined as aspects of the humanizing process: how the students responded to the subject, how they discovered the value of multiple

perspective, and how they found applications to their own lives. The second section looks closely at the personal journey of two students, Lori and Adrian, as they morally confront the material of the Holocaust. Last, I advance some general observations about the quality of the writing that the course produced. My claims about moral inquiry in the composition classroom are not offered until the conclusion, so that the students can assume center stage most of the way, as is appropriate. What, then, are some aspects of the humanizing process?

**I. Personal and Emotional Impact:** Sheri speaks for many of her peers when she admits, “The stories I had to read were so horrible I sat there and cried while reading one at the public library . . . it has made my brain and heart hurt when I thought about this stuff or when I worked on a paper.” Shannon puts it this way: “Many times I would have to stop reading for awhile just to keep from bawling. Also, many of the extensive detailed experiments never made it in my paper. Reading them once was enough to push them aside and not want to see them ever again.” John’s reaction is also typical: “Every time I read something about it, I just get really angry. Really, really angry.” For obvious reasons, the subject matter evoked a strong, emotional response that each student had to deal with.

There were also signs that the Holocaust would remain a continuing, intellectual interest. Laura relates, “For the last paper we wrote, I bought a book that would contribute to my paper and my enjoyment. I have become so interested in all that happened during the Holocaust that even though I will not be writing any more papers, my research will continue.” April provides the key to why personal response—emotional or intellectual—is so important:

I think that writing and learning about the Holocaust is what has helped me to try to change as a person. In fact, it scares me to think about what happened during the Holocaust, but it is a relief to know that by each of us changing our ways just a little, we can try and prevent it from happening again.

Jill finds that her attitude toward life has changed: “People these days take life for granted and I think if they would have researched this topic, they would have a different outlook. I know I do after this assignment.”

**II. Heightened Self-knowledge through Issues of Guilt and Justice:** As Shannon reflects on the course, she observes that it “caused me to look into myself.” Many students experienced this impact and found reasons in the material itself, especially as they explored the issue of moral responsibility for the Final Solution. Marie notes, “People think that it just involved Hitler’s killing many people. Students need to be aware of the details and the people responsible.” Aracely agrees:

I really had never thought about who was guilty of all these deaths during the Holocaust. If I was ever questioned on that matter, I would simply answer “Hitler.” I honestly believed that Hitler was guilty of the whole disaster. Even when I started the search for this [third] paper I would blame no one but Adolf Hitler. After reading just a few articles of my research, I noticed that I slowly began to see things differently . . . I could not believe that I blamed only one man when the truth was he couldn’t have done it alone. There was no way that this tragedy could all be caused [only] by this leader.

Ana writes: "I learned that there were some good Germans out there. They risked their lives to help out the Jews. But I also learned the cruelty of the Nazis and some German citizens. The most important thing I learned is that hatred towards other individuals will get you nowhere."

The third paper marked a moral watershed for most of the students as they discovered evidence of extensive participation on the part of the German people and criminal neglect on the part of the Allies. Shannon admits her personal "devastation":

I had allowed myself to believe that the average German citizen and soldier really had only the choice between their own life and that of the Jew or homosexual or other persecuted person . . . Maybe part of it was that I really wanted to believe that. Believing that allowed me to put the entire blame on only a handful of terrible people instead of believing that so many people were capable of acting so inhuman.

If guilt is so pervasive, what form can justice take? What of Nuremberg? Tara argues, "After the Holocaust most countries just wanted to push it [the atrocity] aside and pretend it never happened. In that respect, they probably gave simplistic solutions that people wanted to hear." Marivel sees that "nations deal with guilt by facing what they did but justifying it with information that does not pertain to the issue." John reflects: "Even though the Nuremberg Tribunal sentenced many of the offenders to hang, this does not make up for the numbers of mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters killed by the Nazis. Can we say justice was served at Nuremberg? We cannot. There is no way to bring back the millions." And is there any way to console the survivors? Crystal doesn't believe so. "There is not a single person who can erase the horrific memories, pain, or fear that still lives within

their minds and heart . . . their physical and mental scars cannot be healed.” Laura adds a hopeful note: “Though nothing can make up for what happened to them in the past, we can only try to make things better for them in the future.”

As Irene struggles with what the Allies failed to do for Jews fleeing the Nazis, she reflects: “When you find out that your country did nothing to help innocent people, you feel betrayed. Everything you stand for and believe in is ruined, destroyed.” Tony reflects on Hiroshima, slavery, the genocide of Native Americans, and then concludes:

Although there is no possible way to actually cleanse a nation of its evil, there is still hope to put an end to it. What is done, is done. We can’t change the past. That is why history is so important to us. We must take what we learned from it and make sure that we don’t make the same mistakes over again. We can say we’re sorry a million times, but words don’t speak as loud as actions. We must take full responsibility for our actions by not letting them occur again.

This pronounced tension between the empathy students felt for Holocaust survivors and the hatred that caused the Holocaust in the first place becomes the foundation for the moral lessons that students derived from the course, as I will explain.

**III. Critical Wisdom:** Beyond mere critical thinking skills lies a more mature, developed ability that Rosemary Winslow and Monica Mische characterize as “critical wisdom”: “grounding critical thinking in both human circumstances and transcendent values, in which the individual is located and acts within something larger than the self” (79). Such wisdom is multi-faceted, and I offer here only a few examples. For April, the

course gave her “different ways to look at history rather than just the facts . . . I have learned to understand the choices that were made, and even though I may agree or disagree, I still have knowledge of why and how.” Shannon also views history differently:

History had always been facts, dates, and statistics that I had trouble memorizing for my tests. This course caused me to look into History in a whole new light. The research I was forced to do caused me to look at historical events and think, “What if it happened to me or someone I love?” And in this way, I came to understand, or began to understand, the terror that these events caused.

Jason's perspective of history has also changed, but in a different way. “Until we began writing [paper four], I had trusted that what we learned in history class is fact; it cannot change. This makes sense, after all, you cannot change the past.” But after analyzing contradictory arguments on the ethics of using Nazis' medical data, he now feels distrustful. “Just because you read something doesn't mean it is true . . . now I know that I must question everything.”

Joel also felt betrayed by his own illusions. He used to think that “Genocide was something before my time that only came about because of insane, power-hungry dictators. But the United States, the world police that we are, took care of the problem and would never allow it to happen again.” After researching Rwanda, he knows differently and asks: “How do we deal with an issue like genocide? I don't think anyone knows for sure, otherwise it wouldn't be an issue. All I can say is that it needs to be taught, from every aspect, in the past and in current times. Understanding is the key to solving.”

“Understanding is the key to solving.” How, specifically, might this work? For these students, one of their crucial insights is about perspective. Listen to Brandi:

When there is a war, both sides generally believe they are in the right. One nation’s history book may be different than another nation’s. I have often wondered what British students learn about the American Revolution. We are taught that the English were tyrants and the Americans were just fighting for their freedoms. The English point of view must undoubtedly be different. What are Vietnamese children taught about the Vietnam War? That would be an interesting thing to find out.

Craig reiterates this insight: “If you only look at one side of the story, you are not taking a ‘good’ look at the problem. You must understand how other people felt, too, because there has to be a good reason why they’re opposing the issue.” This kind of respect for different points of view extended even to how these writers related to their audience. “Researching sensitive topics such as this leaves you to find your beliefs,” reflects Melody. “So when I wrote my paper I didn’t want people to just agree with my opinion, but look at my research and come to the same conclusion. I think researching and presenting issues this way leaves a stronger impact because the readers decided on their own.” The desire to present evidence and the equal desire for the reader to be convinced by the truth of that evidence are certainly two aspects of critical wisdom.

**IV. Lasting Lessons:** Students struggled toward achieving some degree of equilibrium. They needed to discern what this event meant for their lives, to carry the weight of this material as they moved forward, to distill a meaning out of the pain and

cruelty and loss. For some it was straightforward. After researching the Nuremberg medical trials, Ana reflects on her own ambition to be a physician: “I know that I will follow the medical ethics that I swear to uphold.” Her research on the Holocaust allows April “to sit down with my grandfather who is a practicing Jew and discuss it with him, which is really cool.” Jeremiah admits that “my self-confidence is raised by the fact that since Jews can deal with the Holocaust, then I can deal with the problems in my life.” Rebekah ponders the deadly impact of hatred: “I wonder if Hitler was brought up to hate and is that why people were just as hateful as he was. You may be mad at the world sometimes but it does not give you any right to change it since you are not the only one who has to live in this world.” April is also aware of the evil of being close-minded: “Learning about the Holocaust has really made me see that it only takes a small bit of somebody’s ignorance to destroy a whole lifetime of somebody’s heritage. I will try to be less critical and judgmental of others and their beliefs . . . I will not judge them as a person based on how they might believe or feel about something.” For Melody, the lesson is simpler still: “Forgive.”

Ultimately, the students’ experiences had more to do with disillusionment and empathy than anything else. These emotions are what Rachel Baum calls “pedagogical emotions,” or emotions of “cognitive force . . . through which we make judgements about ourselves, others, and the culture around us” (Baum). To demonstrate the teaching power of pedagogical emotions, I turn now to the reflections of two students, Lori and Adrian, who both reveal and articulate the process of moral development that is rooted in this curriculum.

As students enlarged their understanding of guilt and moral responsibility (i.e., Adolf Hitler didn’t kill six million Jews by himself), they were forced to examine their own framework that defined right and wrong. Adrian calls this framework his “moral



ruler.” Witness what happens to Lori’s moral ruler while writing about the Allies’ knowledge of the Final Solution in the early years of the war:

We are taught from a very early age what a wonderful country this is, and how lucky we are, but this new information certainly does not make me proud of the way we handled the situation. It really upset me that America and other countries did nothing to help the Jews in the beginning, and ultimately let them perish.

Her degree of shame is compounded by two factors, first her narration in a previous paper of the courage of Raoul Wallenberg. For Lori, “Wallenberg was by far the highlight because in a time of murder & bloodshed he came through & saved 100,000 Jews from death. So, it makes me feel very confident that there probably are good honest heroes out there who will selflessly sacrifice themselves for justice. It is very heartwarming to know that.” The second factor in her disillusionment is her own family background: “Both of my grandparents, my Dad, my three uncles & my cousin have all fought in wars to protect our land. I feel pride when we win gold medals at the Olympics & ‘win’ battles with other countries. But after doing research on what the Allies knew, my heart and pride faltered.”

This is not a simple case of naive patriotism shattered by historical fact. Nor is it Lori’s starry-eyed wish that Americans could all be Wallenbergs, or an implicit assumption that at least *she* would have acted honorably had she been there (“As much as I hate to admit it, I’d probably sit back & hide”). Lori is refashioning her own moral ruler, based on what she has researched, weighed, and learned about the Holocaust, with the result we sometimes call “intellectual development,” but what I am referring to here as humanization, a lifelong process like “development” and

“learning.” The result is not a neat and clean, new Lori. Like intellectual development, moral growth is a messy process. Where does it leave her at the end of the semester? Again we hear the voice of critical wisdom. Again it is not simple. Here are Lori’s closing comments at the end of her final paper about Switzerland’s lack of true neutrality during the war:

For years we have learned about how wonderful and strong they were for not getting involved in the war, but like every other tale you are told as a child, when you grow up, you learn to sift out the lies from the truth. You learn that entire countries as well as politicians say one thing, but turn around and do the complete opposite. You learn that the line between fact and fiction often becomes blurred and the line between moral and unethical doesn’t even seem to exist. It seems lately that we must learn to live with constantly uncovering evidence that proves time and time again that the truths we are told to believe in are only going to be ripped to pieces in front of us sooner or later.

Rather than throwing away the moral ruler in her life, as this passage might indicate, her reflections extend beyond this single topic as she continues to internalize the material of the course even after the semester. Like April who began conversing with her Jewish grandfather, Lori found herself drawn to her German neighbor, Walter, who had immigrated to the United States as a child in the 1930s. Walter himself abhorred Hitler, but members of his family who remained in Germany had been loyal followers. Using Walter as a touchstone, Lori has been able to navigate the complexities not only of the Holocaust, but of the changes within herself. Racial stereotypes do not serve the truth, whether they be fashioned about the Jews by the Nazis, or about the German people by students of the Holocaust. A term like “collective guilt”

rings hollow for Lori, who acknowledges Walter's own faultlessness. Yet Walter himself takes on the shame he believes his own people should feel about what happened in the same way that Lori feels shame for the atrocities committed by her country against Native Americans and African Americans.

Despite the complexities, the disillusionment, even the distance between herself and Holocaust events ("I am not Jewish, and I am two generations away from World War II"), Lori's life has been enlarged and humanized because of her experience in the course. She understands that study and research must instill what she terms a "more precise perspective" that incorporates context as well as events. The memories she retains of the Holocaust inspire her to live her own life to the fullest, to broaden her mind, to respect survivors and their strength of will, and to decry labels of inferiority imposed by one race upon another. This subject "makes us more human," Lori believes. "It frees us from our own little worlds once we take it to heart." Which is to say, Lori has moved from disillusionment by itself to empathy. Here (following Lori's advice about precision) Rachel Baum's use of the term will prove useful: "By empathy, I mean the ability to enter imaginatively into another's experience, without giving up the boundaries between self and other . . . it is empathy that most appears to provide the bridge between 'Remember' and 'Never Again'" (Baum).

How does empathy serve as such a bridge for Lori? By prompting her to fashion a moral ruler etched differently than the ruler she started with at the beginning of the semester. This new moral measurement is tailored to maintain personal, intellectual, and emotional equilibrium. But it also reflects empathy for victims and a clearer knowledge of the causes behind their suffering.

Let me illustrate exactly how empathy, morality, and learning come together for one last student. The roots and nature of Adrian's own empathetic response is so tailored to his own

experience of studying the Holocaust, as well as to his own life, that it borders on being idiosyncratic. But I would argue that probably this is more or less true for any person who honestly encounters this subject and reflects not only on the material but on his/her own responses to it. First, this is how Adrian defines empathy in his learning log:

After the research and the surprisingly hard sensation of having to digest the numerous accounts of humans being dehumanized, I found, on a personal level, that it was more important to see and recognize—to feel and imagine—that person’s pain. If I myself were the victim of some sort of atrocity, I would want posterity to appreciate my sufferings as a testimony to the brutality of man’s hatred. I would rather a brave soul take it in and sympathize and understand, and therefore be more passionate about what happened to me and what could happen to anyone else. I would not want the faint of heart to turn a blind eye to it and insult my suffering with arrogance. I would have suffered in vain and my story would be another brick in the house of man’s apathy.

Just as he empathized with the victims, he wanted to understand the Germans. In his paper on Germans as “willing executioners” (Goldhagen’s term), Adrian wrote:

I feel the average German acted as most other human beings would have, being driven by a seasoned hate and the institutionalization of that hate. Having said this, I feel it compelling to clarify the simple fact that even though I attempt to understand the pressures and different moral avenues the German people may have had the opportunity

to travel, I do not, in any way, accept the actions of the Germans.

In this learning-log entry, he looks back on his argument: “It would seem to the impatient reader that I was condoning and making excuses for the Germans’ persecution of the Jews, but that is simply not true. I sought to *understand* . . . It is our duty to really figure out *why* it happened and *how* it happened.” Adrian concludes that it isn’t enough for students or teachers only to “offer a solution that puts *their* minds to rest.”

Adrian has unfolded his moral ruler, an action that leads him to seek not only an understanding of the behavior of the German people, but also an understanding of that very ruler.

I think in passing judgment you must question yourself and put yourself in the position of the accused so that you might be completely fair. My argument is that you cannot measure these Germans on *your* moral ruler without questioning where you yourself derived that ruler. What makes it right? What did it take to convince you of its righteousness? Then you take the Germans’ moral ruler and compare. The research [on this third paper] was my tool to seek out the origins of their ruler.

Using some of Goldhagen’s ideas, Adrian constructs his understanding of the moral ruler in Germany during the 1930s. Anti-semitism was institutionalized into a social norm, according to Goldhagen. Even Christian churches had a hand in this. Adrian associates this notion of social norm with Freud’s Super Ego—culture’s way of allowing “man to be more man than animal.” He continues: “If this very force [the norm/Super Ego] is one of the institutionalized sources of hate, then what chance did the

Germans have of stepping out of the identity-concealing masses and saying, ‘this is wrong?’”

At this point empathy, morality, and learning converge for Adrian. While he has not been the victim of “some sort of atrocity,” though he imaginatively places himself in that position in the first entry I quoted, he has experienced “the brutality of man’s hatred.” As a Mexican-American, he has learned that “hate is inexplicable,” meaning there is nothing he can say or do to dispel it once he encounters it. Hatred is as illogical as atrocity, yet studying the Holocaust paradoxically has granted Adrian a “form of moral continuity.”

At semester’s end, Adrian fit all the pieces of this puzzle together in a way that clearly does “promote life.” As a social norm, hatred forms a comfort zone for its peddlers. People are united by it, nurture it, express and perpetuate it through violence, fester with it to dominate and crush their “inferiors.” What can battle hatred? “Empathy,” Adrian insists, not so much because empathy allows him to imagine a victim’s pain or foresee the dehumanizing catastrophe of brutality. Rather, for Adrian “empathy is the force behind being critical.” His empathy for Jewish victims instills a need to be critical, to understand how and why, because hatred (in any form) can be institutionalized anywhere. Being critical helps Adrian “know the signs”: the racial stereotypes that saturate the media, social norms of what is “ideal” or “beautiful,” the tension that surrounds him when he is “nobody” five hundred miles away from home.

Adrian’s new moral ruler has at least two new notches. The first says, never battle hatred with hatred—this can only destroy you. The second says, affect people we relate to, inform those around us, so that we are vigilant and critical. This is also Lawrence Langer’s hope:

I think the challenge facing future Holocaust specialists is to reverse history and progress and find a way of restoring to the imagination of coming generations the depth and scope of the catastrophe. . . . lest we grow complacent and embrace final answers when we should still be pursuing elusive questions. (*Admitting the Holocaust* 180–81)

## The Practical Applications

Moral inquiry transforms writing—it cannot help but do so, since it transforms writers. Following are specific areas that showed significant levels of achievement:

**I. Research Skills:** In the early days of each paper assignment, we would have workshop time when we searched for relevant sources. Because retrieval and access were so easy, students could print off articles rather than take tedious notes, thereby getting a great deal accomplished in a short amount of time. They also were comfortable in sharing information about where to look and which web sites were the most helpful, even printing off extra copies for other students. Even after collecting a stack of hard copy inches high, students would wade in eagerly, although they might have begrudged the time reading equal amounts of information in traditional print sources. The disadvantages were twofold: first, the confrontation with more confusing and complicated documentation rules covering citation of print versus electronic sources, and second, the ease with which they could download articles into their essays. By the second paper I was more watchful; by the third, more comfortable that students were being responsible about their use of sources and more practiced (and therefore more accurate) in their citations.

**II. Fluency:** In minimalist terms, only five of forty-four students had difficulty in reaching the minimum requirement length, and then for only one of their four papers. For each

assignment, more than half the students doubled their papers in terms of required length and required number of sources. Certainly the wealth of information played a part, but students were both interested in their topics and eager to “complete” their analysis, not so much in terms of the assignment, but to achieve a sense of closure or resolution to the issues they addressed. As students prepared one of their papers for our class publication at the end of the semester, they not only corrected errors and clarified their theses, but added material that they had found while researching later papers or conclusions they had reached after the paper was handed in. To illustrate the point: one group of twenty-one students submitted 118 pages for their publication, or 5.7 pages per essay in twelve-point type; the other group of twenty-three students submitted 120 pages for theirs, or 5.2 pages per essay in twelve-point type. Many students selected their papers from early in the semester, which required a much shorter length.

**III. Critical Thinking Skills:** With each assignment, students encountered new, disturbing, and often contradictory information that they weighed, measured against their own values and judgments, and ultimately allowed to impact their lives. Not only did they digest a lot of historical information, they analyzed historical evidence and scholarly interpretations, and then developed their own arguments. Sometimes they faced what in hindsight are disturbing historical puzzles, like the disbelief Jan Karski encountered when he reported his first-hand experience of the death camps to the Allies, or the United States’ refusal to allow more Jewish immigrants into the country in the 1930s. Often students found their existing moral and historical frames, even their own vocabulary, inadequate tools in dealing with what they were reading (testimony at the medical trial at Nuremberg is a good case in point). Deepened understanding, heightened engagement with the topic, disturbing emotions, and shattered



faith in the “good guys” of the war—what Winslow and Mische call “critical wisdom”—is a direct result of the course that generated a great deal of discomfort as well as reward.

**IV. Rhetorical Skills:** Because of the kind of issues we were considering, I was able to integrate complex rhetorical strategies into the paper assignments. First, in a summary of genocidal conflict, students used what we called a unifying frame, wherein their conclusion reflected their introduction. The next paper asked them to develop a thesis in a narrative about the life and actions of one of the many heroes of the Holocaust: how this person helped the writer understand or redefine heroism. Next, students employed formal argumentation—a claim based on acknowledgment, accommodation, and refutation—addressing either: (1) to what extent were ordinary German soldiers involved in the Final Solution, and did they participate willingly, or (2) when did the Allies know about the Final Solution, and what did they do about it. This second subject demanded that students consider two separate timelines: the history of code-breaking by the Poles and British and the formation of a unified effort rather than isolated atrocities by the Nazis. Finally, for the last paper students used the same argumentative framework from the third paper and added the component of moral evaluation to their claim as they studied the Nuremberg trials, the efforts of Nazi hunters, the disappearance of Nazi gold, or the hoax of Swiss neutrality.

**V. Links to Triad Courses:** Many of the goals in the History/Political Science legs of the triad naturally connected to the content of our papers. Obviously, students knew a great deal about the Holocaust and World War II by the time the topic was covered in their other courses. But they also had a good sense of the context of historical events and of the power and consequences of ideology. For instance, as they researched the

question of who participated in the Holocaust and why, students analyzed what Daniel Goldhagen calls “eliminationist anti-Semitism,” which didn’t begin with the Final Solution, but reaches back into the Nazi rise to power in the 1930s (and further still). Thus, material that I had summarized in a timeline and lecture at the beginning of the course—the Nuremberg Race Laws, for example—had to be reexamined, weighed, and connected to results that followed years later. When considering the moral ramifications of being a “bystander” or trying to understand the support Hitler enjoyed, we viewed Nazi propaganda films—riveted not only by the ranting of the Führer himself, but also by the hysteria of the crowds and the cold discipline of the soldiers.

**VI. Interest Level:** At mid-semester, when my students were interviewed by another professor about how the course was going for them, none of them objected to the subject of their research or the topics of their paper assignments. By the end of the course, up to one-quarter of the students felt weighed down or “depressed” by their research. Two negotiated a different topic for their final paper. The rest of the students felt compelled to pursue the final assignment (the moral evaluation designed as a kind of capstone study) and insisted on their continued interest and the importance of the topic.

**VII. Content for Group Discussions:** As final drafts for each assignment came in, students took turns explaining the topic of their papers, summarizing their research, and defining their claims. In this way, the class as a whole benefited from their collective effort. Those students who researched the story of Raoul Wallenberg, for instance, also learned about Chiune Sugihara and John Rabe. The mystery of Wallenberg’s fate, of Oskar Schindler’s character, or of the method of Rabe’s resistance could be described in detail by the two or three students who

shared that topic, while the rest asked questions or applied that new knowledge to what they had researched. The final paper accommodated the widest range of subject matter, so that discussion included biographies of Simon Wiesenthal and Klaus Barbie, details of Nazi medical experiments, applications of Karl Jaspers's theory of guilt to the war trials, the scandal of the Swiss banks, and the ongoing hunt for Nazi war criminals.

## Conclusion

It is ironic and oddly satisfying to use language to achieve critical wisdom, since it is that tool the Nazis manipulated so adroitly for their own ends. Words that seem to fit the situation, like *guilt* in the context of the Nazis, become less serviceable when applied to the Wehrmacht or to German citizens who watched their Jewish neighbors be “evacuated” to ghettos. Faced with defining degrees of guilt, students can then consider a theory such as Karl Jaspers's four levels of guilt (see Craig) and find such difficult but important distinctions necessary and appropriate in their writing. Words become at once useless (what does *pain* mean when applied to a survivor? what does *death* mean multiplied by six million?) but at the same time packed with potential. When “heroism” is exercised by a Japanese consulate (Chiune Sugihara) or by a card-carrying Nazi (John Rabe), what then? Aren't Nazis evil? Aren't Japanese the enemy in 1942? Precision, accuracy, even helpless silence, but finally students face the material, grapple with it, and become invested in it by writing themselves into a reflective position. Unless students write about the subject, write critically, write to become engaged in the issues, to deliberate on the moral ramifications, and to assent to applications in their own lives, the lessons latent in the subject—racism, power, intention, hatred, moral choice—remain merely academic and abstract.

It is easy to recognize the quality of writing generated by this subject. It is more difficult to explain. But the students have a clear sense of their progress in the course. "I have never enjoyed or looked forward to actually doing research before. The other topics from past classes have never grabbed my attention and proved useful," Crystal comments. Tara agrees. "Before taking this course I had never completed a research paper with such interest and curiosity." Amy echoes the experience. "I never enjoyed doing research papers, but I enjoyed doing these because I found the assignments interesting." John remarks: "Many English writing courses just make you write, which to me is pointless. I would rather learn as I write." His words are reiterated by Imelda: "In other English classes, all we ever did was read and then analyze. I particularly like this course because of the research. It provides more options to the student as to what she wishes to research." Shannon reflects that "the connection between writing and learning about history allowed us to learn about something rather than spend the semester writing about nonsense simply to improve our writing." Veronica Gr. analyzes the basis for her own recommendation to continue to offer the course:

First of all, it catches the 'students' attention. Many students, like myself, enjoy finding out new things. Second, because it helps the students think more about what happened and actually helps them to make a judgment, without holding back. In other words, students are able to give their opinion about the Holocaust, especially their thoughts.

The depth and nature of the material makes it impossible to remain detached or lukewarm. The subsequent emotional and intellectual engagement allows a more demanding kind of assignment: students work toward a judgment, a claim, an

evaluation of their own on their own, so that they have something to say, a position to own that is not simply asserted but explained and supported. The result is clear: mature “voices” typical of writing in upper-division courses emerge, no matter what the level of writing skills. The empathetic, humanizing imagination unleashes a voice far superior to disengaged writing, to perfunctory writing, to writing that meets only standardized norms indifferent to content.

Important, too, is the students’ deepened level of understanding, which prompts them to speak out. As Aracely puts it, “I would not participate in history class discussions or join in conversations dealing with this subject because I felt insecure about the little facts I knew! Now if no one is saying anything I am angered, I want people to discuss so that I may join in.” Or consider Adrian’s reflection:

It has allowed me to really see history, government, my fellow man, myself . . . all on the very realistic—some might say harshly realistic—level that we as students are either sheltered from or ignorant of throughout most of our education.

Adrian then makes the connection to voice: “It will provide for the majority of the students something moving enough and consequential enough to fashion something from their own writing—something other than a grade.”

In my experience, students choose to face the moral issues of the Holocaust directly. They do so with dignity and courage. They want and need to address them—these issues are the *meat* of the experience for them. They may need clarification of issues and guidance to sources, but they are fully capable of examining the demands and responsibilities of moral agency. They can refashion their own moral rulers or assumptions about human beings, and

along the way will be purified and humanized by the subject of their writing. But to reduce their experience to a formula would ring false. We can make only general observations: students first invested their effort and time into inquiry. Then they became engaged with the material, responding personally, intellectually, and emotionally to the issues and events of the Holocaust. This engagement led to empathy, and empathy to moral insight as they exercised more precise, critical judgments and examined and reshaped their own moral frames. All this makes for mature writing—writing with a developed point of view, with carefully considered evidence, with sophisticated rhetorical strategies, with complex issues evaluated in thoughtful and insightful ways.

To allow students the freedom to carve out their own lessons from a serious and compelling subject, a subject complex enough to lend itself to strenuous inquiry, assumes they are moral agents and not just “subject positions.” We should not just demand that they consider moral issues and make moral judgments. We must do so believing in our students’ capacities as moral agents and respecting their own moral imaginations. As Robert Coles remarks, “All in all, not a bad start for someone trying to find a good way to live this life: a person’s moral conduct responding to the moral imagination of writers and the moral imperative of fellow human beings in need” (205).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Most compositionists assert that we must not become hostages to “self-contained situational ethics,” which David Rothgery calls “idiocy” (246) and Patricia Bizzell sees as the root of skepticism, meaninglessness, and “political quietism” (667, 671). Rothgery argues, for instance, that we can place behavior on an imaginary but historically-based continuum stretching between acts that are “more valid” and acts that are “less valid.” The direction toward “more valid” should be taken when the act in question convinces the agent that “we-can-no-longer-go-back-to-that” (244). This resolution, while not foundational in the pre-postmodern sense, still involves “unqualified moral conviction” and therefore “necessary directionality” since it is based on what Rothgery calls one of the fundamental truths of human experience: we must make choices that take us “away from cruelty” (244). In the same vein, Bruch and Marback advocate their own directionality, which they call prophetic pragmatism (269). Writing teachers would foster language skills that can be judged as competent based on students’ “capacity to use their abilities for the benefit of all, to dignify others” (279).

<sup>2</sup> For the limitations on the value of citizenship, see Patrick Bruch’s and Richard Marback’s warning that citizenship can be defined in such a way as to emphasize “cultural homogeneity” (268). Andrew Bolton argues that civic virtue does not easily detach from national identity and consciousness and thus may lead to heightened ethnocentrism (197).

<sup>3</sup> Stotsky attacks the kind of multiculturalism that “focuses on those groups that can be considered victims of racism and other forms of intolerance” (“Holocaust” 55). She warns against ideological imbalance that occurs when multiculturalists are interested “only in what they call *people of color* and in what they perceive to be their unbroken history of oppression by whites” (emphasis hers) (56).

<sup>4</sup> Twenty years ago, William Alexander reflected on two very different degrees of success in teaching the event: Richard Hunt of Harvard (16 February 1976) found his students willing to excuse those who perpetrated the atrocities and suggests that a present cynicism in them allows this. On the other hand, Terrence Des Pres of Colgate (April 27) reports that all his students gained “a sharpening of moral discernment, a release of ethical energies, a keener sense of prejudice and injustice,” and many of them, “a small fierce joy” at being alive (548). Rather than concluding that students are inherently incapable or morally backward, Alexander concludes that “these differing results must come from what Hunt and Des Pres did or did not reinforce in their students, from what they were prepared to perceive in them, from the texts assigned, and from the structures they gave their courses” (548). As for his own course, Alexander states:

I intended the course to help my students and myself overcome our distance from such occurrences and intended it to help us find values and models, could we integrate them deeply enough, which would permit us at least some moderate resistance in the face of comparable events (548).

<sup>5</sup> Rachel Baum doubts whether the moral situations depicted, for instance, at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum can be understood without “didacticism”: “students may find that empathy and moral judgement do not easily follow one another” (Baum). Deborah Lipstadt, however, finds that “Students must draw their own comparisons. I teach the particulars. I let the students apply them to their own universe. They never fail to do so” (Lipstadt). Speaking as the director of the Museum, Jeshajahu Weinberg believes:

to educate its visitors, the museum does not have to indoctrinate moral conclusions. They are inherent in the historical story which the museum relates. The emotional impact of Holocaust history forces the museum’s open-minded visitors to ponder how they would have acted had they found themselves in the position of a Jew in the Warsaw ghetto or in the Auschwitz concentration camp or conversely, in the position of a German soldier ordered to kill innocent women and children, or how they would have behaved in the position of a witnessing bystander. (Berenbaum xv)

<sup>6</sup> According to Lawrence Langer, who has studied both written remembrances and oral testimonies of survivors for two decades, we cannot truly “enter imaginatively” into a survivor’s experience. The survivor works within the constraints of what Langer defines as the memories of survivors (deep memory, anguished memory, humiliated memory, tainted memory, unheroic memory), all of which only widen the imaginative space between survivors and academicians or students (*Holocaust Memories* 19).

<sup>7</sup> Sandra Stotsky regards such approaches as exploitive: “universalizing the Holocaust cannot help but trivialize it” (“Holocaust” 58). Stotsky also has doubts about what the Holocaust as a specific and unique historical event offers to students: “I do not find it at all inappropriate for the literature about the Holocaust to be taught in the schools if it is taught in an appropriate literary context, with appropriate moral lessons derived from it (if lessons are to be derived)” (58). Faced with “a spurious cultural monolith” that lumps all whites together, Stotsky would prefer using (for example) Anne Frank’s story not in tandem with other stories of oppression written by minorities, but “as an example of autobiography” (55). Her advice is to read Holocaust testimonies as literature and not as politics.



On some of the most respected Web sites, however, we find the following pedagogical goals:

- <sup>A</sup> As students confront this history, they discover how unexamined prejudices encourage racism and anti-Semitism by turning neighbor against neighbor. Students make important connections between history and the moral choices they face *in their own lives*. And they come to understand that acts like those described in the documentary [Spielberg's *Survivors of the Holocaust*] did not just happen randomly. They were the result of choices. ("Survivors of the Holocaust, The Study Guide")
- <sup>B</sup> The Holocaust is an historical event that provides unique teaching opportunities and challenges. It can serve as a lens for students to understand the complex interplay of human intention, political and military power, and racial and ethnic hatred. ("Holocaust Resources Unit")
- <sup>C</sup> The history of the Holocaust represents one of the most effective, and most extensively documented, subjects for a pedagogical examination of basic moral issues. A structured inquiry into Holocaust history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behavior. A study of the Holocaust also addresses one of the central tenets of education in the United States which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen. ("Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust")

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Langer recalls a situation wherein a woman who had cheated the death camps at the age of fourteen—now a woman of forty enrolled in a composition class—finally wrote about her parents for a paper called "People I have Forgotten." Her mother and father had disappeared ("their fate we can imagine," Langer comments) and she had managed to set their memory aside until this point in her life, when she took a tremendous personal risk and broke her own silence. She wrote:

Until now, I was not able to face up to the loss of my parents, much less talk about them. The smallest reminder of them would set off a chain reaction of results that I could anticipate but never direct. The destructive force of sadness, horror, fright would then become my master. And it was this subconscious knowledge that kept me paralyzed with silence, not a conscious desire to forget my parents. . . . I needed time to forget the tragic loss of my loved ones, time to heal my emotional wound so that there shall come a time when I can again remember the people I have forgotten. (Langer, *The Human Use of Language* 32)

The instructor, herself walled behind what Langer calls "the tired, tired, language of the professional theme-corrector," complained that the writer's theme was not clear,

her subject undeveloped. "You talk around your subject." The fruit of this writer's efforts to break out of her wall of silence was a D-minus. According to Langer, the grade reflects the instructor's insulation from "honest prose" (32), and perhaps as well the transcendent and precarious nature of such profound suffering.

<sup>9</sup> All quotations are used with my students' permission.

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## APPENDIX I

### Paper Assignment #1

#### General topic for research: genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

With this paper, you will use the terms you have defined during the first week of class (genocide, ethnic cleansing, pogrom, atrocity) and illustrate them with an historical example other than the Holocaust of World War II. Your basic purpose is to inform your reader about the particular example you have researched in order to demonstrate that genocide is not an isolated incident peculiar to the Nazi regime. You can choose to write about one of the following events:

- ♦ Bosnia and the conflict between Serbs and Muslims (1992–present)
- ♦ Rwanda and the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi peoples (1995–present)
- ♦ Iraq and its suppression of the Kurds (Gulf War– present)
- ♦ Pol Pot regime in Cambodia (1975–1978)
- ♦ Russians in Afghanistan (1970s)
- ♦ Japan's atrocities in China (World War II)
- ♦ Turkey and its extermination of Armenians (1915)

Or, you may write on another example, with previous approval. In your paper, include the following information:

- ♦ Who are the ethnic groups involved in the conflict?
- ♦ Where and when does the conflict occur? What are the historical factors that helped create the situation?
- ♦ Does the evidence indicate who the perpetrators were? Who the victims? What is the nature of the atrocity?
- ♦ If the event is over, what are its results? What are its consequences? Who was held accountable? How? Why? By whom?
- ♦ If the event is ongoing, what measures have been taken to stop the atrocity? What factors make it difficult to end the conflict?

Include **two** sources in your bibliography. The final paper should be at least two pages long (typed, double-spaced). Leave a one-inch margin on both sides for comments. Include a one-page cover letter explaining your topic, the purpose of your essay, and your intended audience. Also reflect on what you see as the strengths of the

paper, if you accomplished the requirements of the assignment and/or your own personal goals, and in what ways the assignment proved valuable to you.

## **Paper Assignment #2**

### **General research issue: heroes who resisted Nazi atrocities**

In this paper, you will research a person of integrity and courage who helped Jews (and other victims) escape from persecution. Your purpose will be to emphasize what are often hidden events in an otherwise nightmarish saga of cruelty and immorality (the Holocaust). You can choose to write about one of the following people:

- ♦ Raoul Wallenberg (Swedish diplomat)
- ♦ Oskar Schindler (German industrialist)
- ♦ Cardinal Roncalli (Pope John XXIII)
- ♦ Chiune Sugihara (Japanese consul in Lithuania)
- ♦ John Rabe (Nazi in Nanjing)
- ♦ Hans and Sophie Scholl (The White Rose)

Or, you may write on another example, with previous approval. In your paper, include the details of the person's life, his or her beliefs and reasons for resistance, the efficacy of his/her efforts, and his/her ultimate fate. In your conclusion, reflect on what this type of heroism reveals about what it requires to defy the evil of "ethnic cleansing." What does such heroism demand of us? reveal about history?

Include **three** sources in your bibliography. The final paper should be at least three pages long (typed, double-spaced). Leave a one-inch margin on both sides for comments. Include a one-page cover letter explaining your topic, the purpose of your essay, and your intended audience. Also reflect on what you see as the strengths of the paper, if you accomplished the requirements of the assignment and/or your own personal goals, and in what ways the assignment proved valuable to you.

## **Paper Assignment #3**

### **General research issue: Who is responsible for the Holocaust?**

Immediately after World War II, key leaders of the Nazi party were tried for war crimes at Nuremberg. Some of those leaders fled Europe and escaped from justice, at least for a time. Even today we hear about Germans expelled from this country or extradited to Israel because of their involvement in concentration camps. The purpose of this paper is to consider the new evidence that not just leaders of the Nazi party knew about or supported the "final solution." You may focus on one of the following possibilities:

- ♦ The average German soldier and other citizens are responsible for the Holocaust (the core of this topic is found in the controversy articulated by Daniel Goldhagen and Christopher Browning).
- ♦ The Allies (particularly the British) were aware of systematic atrocities against the Jews well before the liberation of the camps (the core of this topic is found in

Richard Breitman's study of declassified military documents, and in the story of the Polish patriot Jan Karski).

- ♦ You will draw a conclusion from your research, and in doing so, speculate on the reasons why this information was hidden for so long, and how history might be "rewritten" in light of these new facts.

Include **four** sources in your bibliography. The final paper should be at least four pages long (typed, double-spaced). Leave a one-inch margin on both sides for comments. Include a one-page cover letter explaining your topic, the purpose of your essay, and your intended audience. Also reflect on what you see as the strengths of the paper, if you accomplished the requirements of the assignment and/or your own personal goals, and in what ways the assignment proved valuable to you.

#### **Paper Assignment #4**

##### **General research issue: the "justice" of post-war events**

With this final paper, you will articulate a moral judgment or evaluation based on research about the aftermath of World War II. Specifically, you will study an issue of your choice from the following possibilities: the Nuremberg War Trials, and the on-going man-hunt for Nazi war criminals, or the scandal of Holocaust booty held by Swiss banks. Certainly your argument from paper three will also be a factor in your discussion. Your conclusion should explicitly articulate your position about the moral dimensions of the Holocaust and its aftermath, based on a clear moral standard, philosophic principle, or religious value.

Include **five** sources in your bibliography. The final paper should be at least five pages long (typed, double-spaced). Leave a one-inch margin on both sides for comments. Include a one-page cover letter explaining your topic, the purpose of your essay, and your intended audience. Also reflect on what you see as the strengths of the paper, if you accomplished the requirements of the assignment and/or your own personal goals, and in what ways the assignment proved valuable to you.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **WEBSITES ON THE HOLOCAUST (A RECOMMENDED LIST)**

- ♦ U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: <<http://www.ushmm.edu/>>
- ♦ Cybrary of the Holocaust (Michael Dunn): <<http://remember.org/>>
- ♦ The Nizkor Project (Ken McVay): <<http://www.nizkor.org/>>
- ♦ Simon Wiesenthal Center: <<http://www.wiesenthal.org/>>
- ♦ Yad Vashem: <[http://www.yad-vashem.org.il/AA\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.yad-vashem.org.il/AA_INDEX.HTM)>
- ♦ Remembering the Holocaust:  
<<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~aragorn/holocaust.htm>>
- ♦ L'Chaim: A Holocaust Web Project (Robert Bennett):  
<<http://www.charm.net/rbennett/l'chaim.html>>
- ♦ Survivors of the Shoah, Visual History Foundation (Steven Spielberg):  
<<http://www.vhf.org/>>

- ♦ The Holocaust\Shoah Page (Ben Austin):  
<<http://www.mtsu.edu/~baustin/holo.html>>
- ♦ Literature of the Holocaust (Al Filreis):  
<<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/holhome.html>>
- ♦ Women and the Holocaust (Judy Cohen):  
<<http://www.interlog.com/~mighty/>>

