This class meets with HON-H 234.

Among the most compelling literatures of our day is that which records and seeks to interpret the Nazi war of genocide against the Jews. This course will introduce students to this literature and encourage them to reflect upon many of the profound questions it raises. Some of these questions will focus on literature’s role in the shaping of historical memory. How the past is represented and comes to acquire a future in collective memory will be a preoccupying concern. Other questions will focus on issues of the most serious cultural, intellectual, moral, ethical, and religious kind. For instance, if it is true, as Elie Wiesel claims, that at Auschwitz not only man died but also the idea of man, how do we now conceive of the human? What does a person become when nothing is any longer forbidden him? Why did law, art, intellect, and religion not defend against political barbarism? Is idealism of any kind still possible after Auschwitz? Is forgiveness possible? These and related questions will preoccupy us over the course of the semester.

The list of required readings includes the following
Elie Wiesel, Night
Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz
Primo Levi, The Drowned and the Saved
Tadeusz Borowski, This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen
Simon Wiesenthal, The Sunflower
Bernard Schlink, The Reader
Rolf Hochhuth, The Deputy

In addition to the above, there will be some handouts of historical material, maps, essays and poetry; and two or three films will be shown.

Written work for this course probably will include two medium-length papers (approximately 10-12 pages each) and one or two in-class examinations. You will also be asked to give one brief oral report on some material that we will be studying in the latter part of the semester. Strong writing skills will be a decided asset for students taking this course. Please see me in advance if you have any serious reservations about your ability to meet the challenges of these writing assignments.

Given the nature of the subject matter, this will be a demanding course. Students will be expected to do the assigned readings on time, attend all class meetings, and participate actively
in class discussion. If you must miss a class session, please be sure to let me know. Repeated unexcused absences (more than 3) will lower your grade for the course.

Students are encouraged to see me during office hours, TR 3:50 - 4:30 p.m. (BH453 or Goodbody Hall 306) to discuss any aspect of their work in the course. If these times are not convenient, please call me (855-2325) or contact me through e-mail (Rosenfel@indiana.edu) for a special appointment.