Well known as historical figures, both Hitler and Anne Frank long ago began to take on symbolic dimensions—he as the 20th century’s leading personification of evil, and she as girlhood innocence despoiled by unspeakable anguish and condemned to an early death. In novels, stories, poems, plays, films, and other media, their images have evolved in interesting ways over time and in different cultures. This course aims to encourage students to critically examine these changes and, in so doing, to learn how history is penetrated by the shaping powers of imagination and transfigured into something like a modern mythology. Students in this course will learn how to become critically engaged with a range of literary and other artistic genres and to see how complex a phenomenon the representation of the past can be. Finally, given the two figures we will be focusing on—the first, a major perpetrator of genocidal crimes, the second, the most celebrated and cherished of teenage victims—they will be encouraged to think hard about questions of good and evil.

Readings for the course will include:

- Anne Frank, Diary of a Young Girl: Definitive Edition (Bantam)
- Frances Goodrich, The Diary of Anne Frank (Dramatists Play Service)
- Ron Rosenbaum, Explaining Hitler (DeCapo Press, Updated Edition, 2014)
- Alvin H. Rosenfeld, The End of the Holocaust (Indiana University Press)
- Philip Roth, The Ghost Writer (Knopf)
- George Steiner, The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H. (University of Chicago Press)

In addition to the above, there will be some handouts of essays and short stories, and several films will be shown.

Written work for the course will include two medium-length papers (approximately 10-12 pages each) and two in-class examination. These writing assignments are mandatory for all students. The final examination will be optional. You will also be asked to give a brief oral report on some independent research you will be conducting on course themes (instructions for this assignment will be discussed at our first meeting and also will appear on a separate sheet).