

The University of Alabama

CS 122 Critical Decision Making

3 Credit Hours

Fall 2003

Tuesday and Thursday 9:30-10:45 Room: 346 Reese Phifer Hall
Tuesday and Thursday 12:30-1:45 Room: 346 Reese Phifer Hall

INSTRUCTOR'S INFORMATION

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 8:30 – 9:30

COURSE PHILOSOPHY

Sonderkommandos was the name given to concentration camp prisoners whose job was to service the assembly lines of death. They did not participate directly in the killing, that pleasure was reserved for the Nazi guards. The Sonderkommado's primary responsibilities entailed accompanying victims to the gas chambers and disposing of the corpses. As able-bodied assistants, they had decent food, slept on straw mattresses and could wear normal clothing. Yosef Sackar, a Greek Jewish Sonderkommando recalls, "Relatively speaking we lacked nothing, we had access to reasonable food, clothing and accommodations." However, the benefits only lasted a few months for most. After their term, each group of Sonderkommandos was killed the very same chamber they once served as escorts for.

Much has been written about the Sonderkommandos and their ethical responsibility to the millions of people they accompanied to gas chambers at Sobibor, Treblinka, Dachau and Auschwitz. What are we to think of these cogs in the wheel of Nazi death and destruction? How are we to judge the decisions they made at this most "critical" juncture of their lives?

Some have argued that each of us have and will serve as Sonderkommandos at some point in our lives. Each of us will serve as assistants to an institution of death and destruction that will one day turn against us. Often our assistance comes in the form of complacency and indifference to injustices that have been rendered natural and inevitable. This course operates from the premise that an understanding of our relationship to "authority" and myriad of Others are critical to developing a decision-making process that facilitates the attaining liberty, equality and justice for all.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Loewen, James W., Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong, New York, New York: Simon Schuster Inc (1995.) ISBN: 0-684-81886-8. Subsequently referred to as "Lies"

Patterson, Charles, Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust, Lantern Books; (2002) ISBN: 1930051999. Subsequently referred to as "Eternal"

Voltaire, Candide, Penguin USA (Paper); ISBN: 0140440046. Subsequently referred to as "Candide"

Selected Readings in Reese-Phifer's Winter Reading Room

POLICIES ON CONDUCT, ATTENDANCE, & ACCOMODATION

1. Classroom Conduct and Climate

This class will be dialogic in nature. This means that there will be deep differences in the experiences of students and instructors and that voicing these differences is essential to learning the subject matter of this course. This also means that as differences emerge, they will be listened to and given the respect of critical interrogation.

It is further assumed that students come to this class with the commitment to learning the subject matter and supporting the learning of their colleagues. This means it is both the instructor's and the student's responsibility to seek these ends in all class-related activities. Class discussions can easily be environments that are unfair to some students. Many studies have established that on average men tend to speak more in class discussions. Similar studies have shown that European-Americans, heterosexuals, people whose primary language is English, people with middle class backgrounds, people without disabilities, and people with certain religious or non-religious beliefs tend to monopolize classroom discussions. Structures will be occasionally used to disrupt these patterns. A conscious effort of students to both seek their own voice and support the voice of others is expected.

The Code of Student Conduct requires that students behave in a manner that is conducive to a teaching/learning environment. Students who engage in behavior that is disruptive or obstructive to the teaching/learning environment will be subject to disciplinary sanctions outlined by the Code of Student Conduct. Disruptive/obstructive behavior is not limited to but may include the following: verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, harassment, reading of material other than that designated for the course, and being tardy.

2. Attendance Policy

Attendance at all meetings is mandatory due to the large amount of material we have to cover in a short period of time. Attendance will be taken at all class meetings. Anyone not present during the taking of attendance will be counted as absent even if they arrive later in the class period. If you miss more than 3 classes it will cost you a letter grade. Leaving class before the entire class is dismissed counts as missing class. If this is a problem for anyone, please speak to me immediately.

3. Reasonable Accommodation Policy

It is the policy of The University of Alabama to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with UA Office of Disability Services, 348-4285. Once you are registered, you are invited to schedule an appointment to see the course instructor during office hours to discuss accommodations and other special needs.

4. Code of Academic Conduct

All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student.

The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

GRADING POLICY

All assignments will be graded on the following scale:

A+ = 99-100%	B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	D+ = 67-69%	F = 59-0%
A = 93-96%	B = 83-86%	C = 73-76%	D = 63-66%	
A- = 90-92%	B- = 80-82%	C- = 70-72%	D- = 60-62%	

Final grades will be based on the final average of graded assignments:

Class Discussion	= 15%	Paper One	= 20 %
Journal Responses	= 20 %	Paper Two	= 20 %
		Group Project	= 20 %

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade in the course will be based upon the following:

Journal Notebook (20 %)

The Journal is a daily assignment that registers your thoughts and personal reactions to the material of the class and its application in the world. You must respond to each reading as well as the films that are watched in class. Entries should demonstrate that a) you read the material and b) you are attempting to synthesize the material with your lived experiences and/or other class readings. Each entry should easily identify the essay you are responding to. These entries must not be summaries of the readings. The best grades will be received by those who actively participate in making the Journal a productive avenue for sustaining their engagement with the course material. Journal Entries should be 200-250 words.

You must bring your Journal Notebook to class daily. BE AWARE that the Journals may be requested for grading at any point in the semester. You should expect to submit the Notebook for grading between 2-4 during the semester.

Please use the following to identify each entry:

Line 1: Your Name

Line 2: Chapter/Article Name

Line 3: Date of the Reading

Class Discussion (10%)

This class is based on a lecture/discussion format. Consequently, your committed and continued participation is an essential part of the class. An important element of such participation is active involvement in critical class discussions. In order to participate effectively you must come to class having completed your assigned reading as well as any other work due. Your class discussion grade will be based on the quality of your contribution to the discussion. You should strive to engage the responses of the other members of the class and critically advance the discussion. Class discussion grades will be based on a bell curve distribution model. An equal number of people will receive grades in the “A-B” range as those receiving grades in the “D-F” range. The majority of people will make a “C.”

Paper One (20 %)

Computer-generated 5 page paper in Times New Roman 11 point font. The movie The Last Castle will function as the text for exploration. The exact assignment will be distributed at a later date.

Paper Two (20 %)

Computer-generated 5 page paper in Times New Roman 11 point font. The movie Monster’s Inc will function as the text for exploration. The exact assignment will be distributed at a later date.

Group Project (20 %)

5-6 students will develop “just” and “fair” political and economic systems. The exact assignment will be distributed at a later date.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR ESSAYS

All papers must be typed, double-spaced and follow either APA or MLA guidelines. Each paper should exhibit coherent, logical, and carefully edited prose

Formal Essays are always written to address a specific audience on a specific problem or concern. Accordingly, in evaluating formal essays I place a very high premium on the clarity and economy of your expression. You must write only in complete sentences and with careful attention to grammar and spelling. Always be aware that communication is your job. Each essay will be an experience in adapting to your audience. I will function as your audience. If I do not understand your argument, it is your fault. We will outline my expectations for each writing assignment at the appropriate time. Generally, however, your essays will be graded in accord with the following 4 sets of questions:

1. Does the essay show evidence of careful preparation? Is its organization (introduction, body, and conclusion) evident? Does it seem to have been written from an outline? Does it seem to have gone through more than one draft? (25%)

2. Does the essay have a clear thesis statement? Is evidence drawn from the particular text being analyzed clear and succinct, or would the reader have to study the text itself to understand the writer's main point? Does the author explain how evidence functions to demonstrate analysis and investigation, or must the reader supply large inferential leaps. (30%)

3. Does the essay respond to the particular assignment? Does it pose or respond to a significant question or issue? Does it communicate the significance of the point made? Does it demonstrate a depth of understanding of the rhetorical dimensions of the artifact being studied as an instance of public communication? (20%)

4. Is the essay written in accord with the standard rules of English grammar as recommended in handbooks such as *Harbrace College Handbook* or William B. Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*? (Common grammatical mistakes that I look for are: sentence fragments, noun-verb disagreement, misspelled words, and typographical errors. Students who have difficulty with the rules and conventions of English grammar should use one of the above handbooks as a guide and/or make an appointment with the English Writing Center located in 125 Morgan Hall.) Is an appropriate style sheet being used for referencing materials. I recommend using the MLA Handbook, but whatever style sheet you use be sure that you use it correctly. (20%)

Late essays will not be accepted. An essay is considered late if it is submitted for grading after the beginning of class on the due date.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The History of Authority or the Authority of History

WEEK 1

August 21

Distribute Syllabus and Readings for August 25: Chapters 1 and 4 of Howard Zinn's Declarations of Independence: Cross-Examining American Ideology (1990)

WEEK 2

August 26

Discuss Chapters 1 and 4 of Howard Zinn's Declarations of Independence: Cross-Examining American Ideology (1990)

August 28

Discuss The Introduction and Chapter 1 of "Lies"

WEEK 3

September 2

Chapter 2 and 3 of "Lies"

September 4

Chapter 5 & 6 of "Lies"

WEEK 4

September 9

Chapter 7 & 8 of "Lies"

September 11

Chapter 10, 11, 12 of "Lies"

WEEK 5

September 16

Watch The Last Castle, DreamWorks, 2 hr 13 min

September 18

Watch The Last Castle, DreamWorks, 2 hr 13 min

I, The Genocider

WEEK 6

September 23

Chapter 21 “Genocide” of Robert Jay Lifton’s The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide (1986)

September 25

Chapter 6 “Ethics of Obedience (Reading Milgram)” of Zygamunt Bauman’s Modernity and the Holocaust, (1989)

Assignment: Paper One

WEEK 7

September 30

Mark Twain’s “The Damned Human Race”

October 2

Chapter 1 of Charles Patterson’s Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust

WEEK 8

October 7

Chapter 2 of “Eternal”

October 9

Chapter 3 of “Eternal”

WEEK 9

October 14

Chapter 4 of “Eternal”

October 16

Chapter 5 of “Eternal”

WEEK 10

October 21

Chapter 6 of “Eternal”

October 23

Chapter 7 of “Eternal”

WEEK 11

October 28

Watch Monsters, Inc., Pixar, 1hr 33 min

October 30

Watch Monsters, Inc., Pixar, 1hr 33 min

Discuss movie

Where Do We Go From Here

WEEK 12

November 4

Read Chapter 4 “The Uniqueness and Normality of the Holocaust” of Zygamunt Bauman’s Modernity and the Holocaust, (1989)

November 6

Continue discussion of Chapter 4

Assignment: Paper Two

WEEK 13

November 11

Chapter 1-16 of Candide

November 13

Chapter 17-32 of Candide

WEEK 14

November 18

Watch **Rabbit Proof Fence**, Miramax Films, 1hr 33 min

November 20

Watch **Rabbit Proof Fence**, Miramax Films, 1hr 33 min

Discuss movie

WEEK 15 (NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break)

November 25

November 27

WEEK 16

December 2

Group Project Presentations

December 4

Group Project Presentations