***\*I used this paper assignment—scaffolded over the course of the semester—for a senior seminar in Jewish Studies.***

January 16, 2016

Because this is a senior seminar, I want you to develop your skills in research, analysis and writing a step beyond the undergraduate level. I also think that you will benefit from the execution of a project that takes place in stages, reflecting the academic process of *research*, *drafting*, *critique*, *revising*, and *resubmitting*. You will turn in one final paper that unfolds over the course of the semester, 16-20 pages. By the time you finish, I expect a paper that is intellectually robust and well argued, with clear prose and proper citations.

Remember that your final paper is worth 40%. **Don’t panic (!)**, the process is one that will take much of the semester and you will be getting feedback on each step.

***Research Paper: How Our “Memories” Are Constructed: Comparing the Building of Memory by Primo Levi, Claude Lanzmann, and the Fortunoff Archives***

***Background***:

The survivor Charlotte Delbo said after she wrote her memoir: “Today, I am not sure that what I wrote is true. I am certain that it is truthful.” Does that mean she “lied?” Of course not. But does that mean she (re)constructed it? Of course she did.

Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz* is spare, elegant, and brilliant. It is also very carefully constructed. He reflects on how he constructed it in his last work, *The Drowned and the Saved* (which, even if you only have time for selections, I think is an amazing “afterword” to *Survivor in Auschwitz*).

In its own way, testimony is also constructed and reconstructed. The questions of the interviewer shape the interview, its tone, and its intimacy (or lack thereof). We need to take all of the environmental aspects of the testimony into account when we’re looking at it. It’s not unmediated either. The Yale Fortunoff Archive interviews are a perfect example of this. They are highly psychologically inflected, and hence, that is the type of interview they get. The interviews conducted by the Shoah Foundation, now housed at the University of Southern California, are very “Spielbergian” by constrast. Each has a beginning, middle, and end, and often an uplifting end at that. On the other hand, when Joan Ringelheim conducted interviews for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, she paid a lot of attention to gender differences. The list goes on and on.

***Assignment***:

For this paper, I would like you to focus on the narrative “constructedness” of each text or testimony. You will use Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz,* a Fortunoff interview (choose from Isabella L., Philip K., Dori L., Claude L., Bessie K., Jacob K., or Menachem S.), and selected interviews from Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (you can select one or several from the portions of *Shoah* that we watched.)

I want you to step back from the memoir and interviews and analyze how Levi, the Fortunoff interviewer, or Lanzmann “built them,” so to speak.

***Points to consider*:**

* What is the difference between a survivor account in a memoir (which is under the total control of the author) and an account “created” by the interviewer/interviewee in a testimony?
* What does the interviewer want to know, as opposed to what the survivor wants to tell/answer?
* By contrast, what do you as the reader of a memoir want to know that the text isn’t telling you?
* When you look at these three sources together, what do these narratives tell us not only about this particular person’s experience, but also about how we respond as readers/listeners, and what we expect of them?
* Specifically for *Shoah*: what does Lanzmann want us to think about in a particular testimony, as opposed to what the interviewees are telling him?

***Due dates and assignment descriptions:***

*Early Research and Planning Stage:*

Feb. 23: Bibliography and Brief Outline:

* You must turn in a bibliography with academic books and articles (there are many) you want to use as background for your final paper. This stage of the process is provoking you to think early and often about the final paper. Your outline can be flexible. The more detailed, the better. I can help you brainstorm and guide your paper topic if need be.
  + What will be your argument (preliminarily)?
  + What will be your supporting evidence?
  + What will be your approach?
  + What will be your guiding questions?
  + What books and articles will help your paper/argument?

*Draft Stage:*

* You will have three weeks to write at least 10-pages. Use your time wisely. The more effort you put in, the more you get out of the process. Consider how you might best space your writing over the course of three weeks. Use your outline and guiding questions to direct your writing process. I can always be used as a resource.

*Critique Stage:*

March 15: 10-page Draft (minimum number of pages, but you can do more):

* Academic papers are best if developed over time and with feedback. Well-executed analysis involves a process of critique and advice from teachers or colleagues.
* By March 15, I require 10-*readable* pages of thoughtful prose on the paper topic. Your argument does not need to be complete, but I want to see that there has been substantial progress on your argument. The more you do at this stage, the more feedback you will get. The more feedback you get, the better you will do on your final paper (99% of the time). This draft will be graded, though not harshly, depending primarily on the amount of effort observable in the draft writing process.

*Revising Stage (and adding further):*

* You will receive your paper a week after the draft has been turned in (at the latest). Substantial comments will be provided. You will have enough time for revisions and many opportunities to discuss improvements with Professor Lipstadt or with Matthew.

*Optional Draft Submission*

* If you wish, you can turn in a draft for a review by me. You would have to do this a week prior to the final due date.

*Final Submission*

April 18: Final Draft Due (16-20 pages)