



# *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

## *Syllabus*

### *Grey Zones: Moral Dilemmas in the Holocaust - 13601*

*Last update 22-02-2025*

*HU Credits: 2*

*Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)*

*Responsible Department: History of Jewish People & Contemporary Jewry*

*Academic year: 0*

*Semester: 2nd Semester*

*Teaching Languages: Hebrew*

*Campus: Mt. Scopus*

*Course/Module Coordinator: Professor Goldberg and Ayana Sassoon*

*Coordinator Email: [ayana.sassoon@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:ayana.sassoon@mail.huji.ac.il)*

*Coordinator Office Hours:*

*Teaching Staff:*

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Prof. Amos Goldberg,  
Ms. ayana sassoon

Course/Module description:

The Nazi regime in Germany and the occupied territories placed both Jews and non-Jews before heavy moral dilemmas. Should certain Jews be turned in to save others? Should one cooperate with the regime, and to what extent? What is considered cooperation? Is it permissible to endanger an entire village to hide Jews? Should one join the resistance and abandon their family? Should one start an armed uprising and risk the entire ghetto? Is it appropriate to go to a café in the ghetto (for Jews) or outside the ghetto (for non-Jews) when disaster is unfolding all around? How should the meager food be distributed among family members or those in hiding? What is the right thing to do when there are not enough medications for all the sick? In the ghetto, in hiding, in the forest, in camps, and everywhere persecution took place, Jews and non-Jews alike had to make moral decisions. Primo Levi, an Auschwitz camp survivor, described this reality as a "gray zone" where there are no absolute saints and no absolute evildoers. In this course, we will explore some of these dilemmas through textual and visual sources (including films) within their historical context.

Course/Module aims:

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

During the course, students will enrich their historical knowledge of the Holocaust period and become familiar with morally complex situations from various perspectives. Students will engage in the analysis of diverse historical sources (written and recorded testimonies, films, literature, legal documents, and more) and will discuss both historical and contemporary issues as learners and researchers.

Attendance requirements(%):  
100%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction:

Course/Module Content:

Lesson 1 – Introduction  
Lesson 2 – "The Gray Zone" and "Choiceless Choices"  
Lesson 3 – "The Zone of Interest"

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*Lesson 4- How to face Nazi Germany? The Transfer Agreement and the Boycott Movement*  
*Lesson 5 - Who Will Be Allocated Food? Judenrat and the Ghettos*  
*Lesson 6 - Theater in a Graveyard? Culture in the Ghettos*  
*Lesson 7- Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die - Judenrats and the "Final Solution"*  
*Lesson 8 - Could We Have Taken Such Great Responsibility? Endangering the Lives of the Remaining, and the Entire Collective? Uprisings in the Ghettos*  
*Lesson 9 - Israel Kastner: A Hero or a Collaborator?*  
*Lesson 10 - The Righteous Among the Nations Dilemmas: "Ida"*  
*Lesson 11 - The Bystanders and the "Polish Greyzone"*  
*Lesson 12 - Ordinary Men? The Perpetrators*  
*Lesson 13 - The Ethics of Testimony: "Shoah" by Lanzmann*

*Required Reading:*

*Lesson 1 - Tzvetan Todorov, Facing the Extreme, pp. 31-43.*  
*Lesson 2 - Primo Levi, "The Greyzone"*  
*Lesson 3 - "Zone of Interest" (Film)*  
*Lesson 4 - Yfaat Weiss, "The Transfer Agreement and the Boycott Movement: A Jewish Dilemma on the Eve of the Holocaust"*  
*Lesson 5- Anna Hájková, "The Age of Pearl Barley: Food and Hunger", in: "The Last Ghetto", pp. 101-131.*  
*Lesson 6 - Selected primary sources*  
*Lesson 7 - Calel Perechodnik, "Am I a murderer?: testament of a Jewish ghetto policeman", Selected pages.*  
*Lesson 8 - Eichmann Trial Testimony of Abba Kovner*  
*Lesson 9 - "Kastner Trial" (mini-series)*  
*Lesson 10 - "Ida" (Film)*  
*Lesson 11 - Tomasz Frydel, "The Polish Countryside as a Greyzone"*  
*Lesson 12 - Christopher Browning, "Ordinary Men", chapters 7, 8, 18.*  
*Lesson 13 - selected scenes from "Shoah" by Lanzmann (Film)*

*Additional Reading Material:*

*Grading Scheme:*

*Home Exam % 85*

*Active Participation / Team Assignment 15 %*

*Additional information:*