

Testimony, Tensions, and Tikkun: Teaching the Holocaust in Colleges and Universities (Pastora Goldner Series)

Myrna Goldenberg, Rochelle Millen

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The Holocaust was a cataclysmic upheaval in politics, culture, society, ethics, and theology. The very fact of its occurrence has been forcing scholars for more than sixty years to assess its impact on their disciplines. Educators whose work is represented in this volume ask their students to grapple with one of the grand horrors of the twentieth century and to accept the responsibility of building a more just, peaceful world (tikkun olam). They acknowledge that their task as teachers of the Holocaust is both imperative and impossible; they must "teach something that cannot be taught," as one contributor puts it, and they recognize the formidable limits of language, thought, imagination, and comprehension that thwart and obscure the story they seek to tell. Yet they are united in their keen sense of pursuing an effort that is pivotal to our understanding of the past-and to whatever prospects we may have for a more decent and humane future.

A "Holocaust course" refers to an instructional offering that may focus entirely on the Holocaust; may serve as a touchstone in a larger program devoted to genocide studies; or may constitute a unit within a wider curriculum, including art, literature, ethics, history, religious studies, jurisprudence, philosophy, theology, film studies, Jewish studies, German studies, composition, urban studies, or architecture. It may also constitute a main thread that runs through an interdisciplinary course.

The first section of *Testimony, Tensions, and Tikkun* can be read as an injunction to teach and act in a manner consistent with a profound cautionary message: that there can be no tolerance for moral neutrality about the Holocaust, and that there is no subject in the humanities or social sciences where its shadow has not reached. The second section is devoted to the process and nature of students' learning. These chapters describe efforts to guide students through terrain that hides cognitive and emotional land mines. The authors examine their responsibility to foster students' personal connection with the events of the Holocaust, but in such a way that they not instill hopelessness about the future. The third and final section moves the subject of the Holocaust out of the classroom and into broader institutional settings-universities and community colleges and their surrounding communities, along with museums and memorial sites.

For the educators represented here, teaching itself is testimony. The story of the Holocaust is one that the world will fail to master at its own peril.

The editors of this volume, and many of its contributors, are members of the Pastora Goldner Holocaust Symposium. Led since its founding in 1996 by Leonard Grob and Henry F. Knight, the symposium's scholars--a group that is interfaith, international, interdisciplinary, and intergenerational--meet biennially in Oxfordshire, England.



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