Ethical Struggles in Catastrophic Times:  
Quakers’ Responses to the Holocaust  
Haverford College Spring 2019  
KINSC Link 205  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30am-1pm  
David Harrington Watt

About the Course. In the 1930s and 1940s, Quakers engaged in a number of remarkable—and controversial—activities that were intended to provide assistance to people who were being persecuted by the Nazis. Those actions were criticized by some US citizens (who thought that Quakers were giving unwitting aid to the Nazis) and also derided by Nazis such as Joseph Goebbels (who thought that Quakers were demonstrating a complete lack of awareness about how the world really works.) Nevertheless, Quakers’ actions did end up saving some lives. Students in this course will examine what Quakers accomplished—and failed to accomplish—in the 1930s and 1940s. The course is not designed as a venue in which to decide, once and for all, which of the Quakers’ actions were wise and which were foolish. The course is meant, rather, to offer students an opportunity to reflect on the ethical questions with which Quakers wrestled and an invitation to compare those questions with the ones they face themselves. Special attention will be paid the connections between Quakers’ responses to the Holocaust and Quakers’ religious beliefs and practices.

Talking to the Instructor Outside of Class. My office is located in 315 Founders Hall. My office hours are Wednesdays from 11:15-12:30 and Thursdays from 2:00-3:00. If you need me outside of those hours, please let me know. I will do my best to arrange an appointment with you. My email address is dhwatt@haverford.edu.

Evaluation. The final grade will be based on: participation in seminar discussions (20% of the total grade) and three papers (80%). Students may revise one paper for a higher grade. Your grade will only reflect the second grade. That paper is due on Friday, May 3. Should you need an extension on a paper, please email me.

Deadlines. Meeting deadlines is part of being a good writer. Please make sure you hand your papers in on time. Should you need an extension, please contact me. Please try to get those requests to me earlier rather than later.

Papers. Students will write two four-page papers and one paper that is six pages long. As a course requirement, students will travel to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to visit the “Americans and the Holocaust” exhibit. Funds have been specifically designated for this purpose. The final paper will require this visit. I will travel to the exhibit on April 16. Students are encouraged to travel with me, but if they cannot, they should still visit the museum.
Names, Pronouns, and Forms of Address. If you have a chance, please send me a brief note before our first class meeting that gives me a hint as to how to pronounce your name. The note could also tell me which pronouns you use when referring to yourself and what you would like me to call you during class meetings. The note need not be long. Something like the following would be more than sufficient. “My last name doesn’t have an ‘s’ at the end of it. It rhymes with ‘cot.’ The pronouns I use are ‘he,’ ‘him,’ and ‘his.’ Please call me ‘David’ rather than ‘Dave,’ ‘Professor,’ or ‘Doctor.’”

How Class Meetings Will Work. During most of our meetings, a few minutes will be set aside for students to do some writing. As a general rule, we are going to make an effort to keep me from doing much lecturing, and we are going to try to arrange things so that no student speaks twice until all students have had a chance to speak once. Having read the assigned texts for the day will be viewed as the (metaphorical) price of admission to the meeting.

Phones, Tablets, and Laptops. With a few important exceptions (each of which will be discussed early in the semester), you and I won’t be using our phones, tablets, or laptops during our class meetings.

Collegial Support for Your Work. Haverford College is committed to supporting the learning process for all students. Please contact me as soon as possible if you are having difficulties in the course. There are also many resources on campus available to you as a student, including the Office of Academic Resources (https://www.haverford.edu/oar/) and the Office of Access and Disabilities Services (https://www.haverford.edu/ads/). If you think you may need accommodations because of a disability, please contact Sherrie Borowsky, Coordinator of Accommodations, Office of Access and Disability Services at hc-ads@haverford.edu. If you have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and would like to request accommodations in this course because of a disability, please meet with me privately at the beginning of the semester (within the first two weeks if possible) with your verification letter.

Mistakes. If this course proceeds as it should, you and I are both going to make some mistakes. When I blunder, please feel free to come by my office and talk over what happened.

Plagiarism. During my thirty years of teaching, I’ve encountered very few examples of deliberate plagiarism. But, it is entirely possible to plagiarize without meaning to and alas, from time to time that does happen. We’ll discuss this issue during some of our class meetings. If you have any doubt whatsoever about what does and does not constitute plagiarism in this course, please see me during my office hours.

Religious Holidays. If attending one of the meetings of this class would prevent you from observing a religious holiday that is important to you, please let me know.
I’ll do my very best to keep this course from interfering with your religious practices.

Obtaining the required texts. Students should strongly consider purchasing a copy of *Human Smoke*. Nearly all of the other required readings for the course have been placed on reserve in the library or posted on Moodle. Please bring printed versions of the assigned readings to class.

Revisions of the Syllabus. This version of the syllabus was drafted on March 24, 2019. From time to time, new versions of the syllabus will be posted on Moodle.
CLASS SCHEDULE

UNIT I: Introduction to the Central Themes of the Course


January 24: Entries on “Introduction to the Holocaust” and “Quakers” in *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (Online).

UNIT II: The Past, History, and Historiography


UNIT III: Berlin, 1938


February 7: Jones and Walton, “Germany through Quaker Eyes;” Rufus Jones to Clarence Pickett, Dec. 13, 1938.


February 28: No assigned readings.

UNIT IV: Quakers, War, Violence, and Peace
March 5: “Declaration from the Harmless & Innocent People of God Called Quakers;” Germantown Friends, “Protest against Slavery” (1688), entire.

March 6: FIRST PAPER DUE. (This is a Wednesday.)


March 12: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

March 15: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)


March 28: There are no assigned readings for this class meeting.

April 2: There are no assigned readings for this class meeting.

UNIT V: Overviews

April 4: “Americans and the Holocaust,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum online exhibit.

April 7: Trip to United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (This is a Sunday).

April 9: There are no assigned readings for this class meeting.

April 11: Schmitt, Quakers and Nazis, 103-122.

April 12: SECOND PAPER DUE


April 23: There are no assigned readings for this class meeting.

April 25: There are no assigned readings for this class meeting.
UNIT VI: Final Reflections

April 30: Mosse, *Confronting History*, 113-128.

May 2: Entries on “Introduction to the Holocaust” and “Quakers” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*.

May 3: Revised Papers Due

May 3: Extra Credit Papers Due

May 11 (5:00 PM): FINAL PAPER DUE (Seniors only)

May 17 (Noon): FINAL PAPER DUE
Bibliography

I have divided the bibliography into two sections: required readings and suggested readings. First, I have listed citations for the required readings. Afterwards, I have listed suggestions for further reading.

Required Readings


“The Declaration from the Harmless & Innocent People of God Called Quakers.” November 21, 1660.

Fell, Margaret. A Declaration and an Information from Us the People of God Called Quakers, to the Present Governors, the Kings, and Both Houses of Parliament, and All whom It May Concern. London: Thomas Simmons and Robert Wilson, 1660.


Walton, George A. Papers. Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.


Suggestions for Further Reading


American Friends Service Committee Refugee Assistance Case Files. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.


Fox, George. *A Declaration from the Harmless & Innocent People of God, called Quakers Against All Sedition Plotters & Fighters in the World: For the removing of the Ground of Jealousie and Suspicion from both Magistrates and People in the Kingdome, concerning Wars and Fightings.* N.p: [1680?].


