



Small TLEF Project – Final Report

Report Completion Date: (YYYY/MM/DD)

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

1.1. General Information

Project Title:	CENS 303A – Representations of the Holocaust – online course		
Principal Investigator:	Bozena Karwowska		
Report Submitted By:	Bozena Karwowska		
Project Initiation Date:	2015/16	Project Completion Date:	September 2018

1.2. Project Summary

One of the most pressing issues in Holocaust studies is the question how to educate students about Nazi crimes when there are no survivors left. Following the model of multidisciplinary inquiry, developed by UBC and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, we transformed CENS 303A into an online course (for UBC and non-UBC students), in which we addressed the generational change in an innovative outcome-based teaching and learning environment. The idea stems from the international seminar Witnessing Auschwitz (May-June 2014) which generated an international interest in a model of Holocaust education that involves undergraduate research. UBC is currently the only North American university offering such a program and there is considerable interest in developing a long-term strategy to offer the seminar on a regular basis; therefore there is a significant interest, both at and outside of UBC, in the online course based on the most important concepts in Holocaust Studies.

1.3. Team Members – (Please fill in the following table and include students, undergraduate or graduate, who participated in your project).

Name	Title/Affiliation	Responsibilities/Roles
Bozena Karwowska	Dr/CENES	Principal investigator
Anja Nowak	Graduate student/CENES	Course designer
Carolina Franzen	Graduate Student/CENES	Graduate assistant
Meredith Shaw	Undergraduate student/History	Undergraduate assistant, course designer
Robert Duckworth	Undergrad/PoliSci	Undergraduate assistant
Jae Hyun Kim	Undergraduate/History	Undergraduate assistant
Ellyn Hill	Undergraduate/MEST	Undergraduate assistant
Rosalie Hirst	Undergraduate/PoliSci	Undergraduate assistant
Joud Almoud	Undergraduate/IR	Undergraduate assistant



1.4. Courses Reached – Please fill in the following table with **past**, **current**, and **future** courses and sections (e.g. HIST 101, 002, 2017/2018, Sep) that have been/will be reached by your project, including courses not included in your original proposal (you may adapt this section to the context of your project as necessary).

Course	Section	Academic Year	Term (Summer/Fall/Winter)
CENS303A	C	2015	W
CENS303A	A	2016	W
CENS303A	C	2016	W
CENS303A	A	2017	W
CENS303A	C	2017	W
CENS303A	A	2018	W
CENS303A	C	2018	W
CENS303B	C	2018	W

2. OUTPUTS AND/OR PRODUCTS

2.1. Please **list** project outputs and/or products (e.g. resources, infrastructure, new courses/programs). Indicate the current location of such products and provide a URL if applicable.

Product(s)/Achievement(s):	Location:
CENS 303A	http://blogs.ubc.ca/cens303ghetto/
CENS 303B	http://blogs.ubc.ca/cens303camp/
Collection of over 30 peer and expert video lectures	https://applications.arts.ubc.ca/secure/clas/index.php
Publication: <i>The More I Know, The Less I Understand: Young Researchers' Essays on Witnessing Auschwitz</i> . Edited by Bozena Karwowska and Anja Nowak. Oświęcim: The Auschwitz Birkenau Museum, 2017.	http://auschwitz.org/en/bookstoreproducts/product/the-more-i-know-the-less-i-understand,308.html#2
Consecutive <i>Witnessing Auschwitz</i> Conferences by former students of CENS 303	See for example: https://cenes.ubc.ca/witnessing-auschwitz-student-conference-2015/ http://blogs.ubc.ca/polishatubc/files/2016/09/WA16Program-1.pdf https://cenes.ubc.ca/events/event/ziegler-lecture-series-witnessing-auschwitz-undergraduate-conference/

2.2. Item(s) Not Met – Please list intended project outputs and/or products that were not attained and the reason(s) for this.

Item(s) Not Met:	Reason:
n/a	



3. PROJECT IMPACT

3.1. What were you hoping to change or where were you hoping to see an impact with this project? – Please list the intended *benefits of the project* for students, TAs, instructors and/or community members.

Basic objectives of the project were: making the course available to a greater number of students, allowing for more flexibility in terms of schedule, fostering instruction aligned with the trans- and multidisciplinary character of Holocaust studies, allowing students to follow their own personal interest and to personalize their learning experience by using a mix of basic and optional material, strengthening students' participation and their role as peer teachers, thereby preparing students for their roles as future researchers and educators. Additionally, the objective was also to encourage and implement students' ideas and suggestions how to teach them (or their peers), and to include lectures by leading experts talking about their own areas of research to expose students to variety of critical approaches and teaching methods.

The development of CENS 303A online was intended to broaden the reach of the initial in-class course, "Representations of the Holocaust" (CENS 303A). Due to the flexibility of the format, the course was set out to accommodate students' schedules better and allow for a larger number of students to take the course. Additionally, with a large number of students able to register for this highly desirable course (which had filled quickly in previous years), more of them would get the opportunity to continue their education on the subject in the *Witnessing Auschwitz* study abroad program (for which CENS 303A is a requirement). Several graduates of the seminar were involved as undergraduate assistants in peer discussions with students from consecutive classes, contributed to the course material, and were actively involved in editing/enriching the course.

The new course was designed to better accommodate different learning styles, abilities and interests. The online format gave us the opportunity to include a variety of teaching material and didactic approaches (lectures from international experts in the field, guest lectures and educational projects by previous students, participatory assignments – on a much larger scale –, more complex assessment strategies etc.), by which we made the course more versatile, trans- and multi-disciplinary, academically challenging and appealing to students. Additionally, the online course allows for more personalized instruction and evaluation, creating a much more effective and relatable learning environment, catering to students' individual needs.

The inclusion of a broad spectrum of additional material and additional readings was to open individual learning pathways for the students, who could follow up on their own interests beyond the course requirements and develop individual research questions. Through these measures, we intended to strengthen their independence and intensify their engagement with the topic. Fostering their own research interest and their autonomy, we hoped to see them develop autonomous learning habits and pursue the issues discussed in this course further, leading to a prolonged learning process and increased student output both in the academic context and in their communities.

The creation and maintenance of the course was a very fulfilling experience for students. It involved both graduate and undergraduate TAs as well as undergraduate students from the previous cohorts of the course, giving them an opportunity to learn, acquire new skills, take over responsibilities and actively impact the learning of their fellow students. This way, the participatory component of the course was taken one step further. Not only were students to learn the contents of the course in an active and comparably independent way, they were also to become assistant-experts and teachers for their peers and show us, how to improve and further develop the course.

The inclusion of student-created material (in the form of educational projects, guest lectures, student-created activities, publications and TA feedback), as well as the constant revisions based on student feedback were

meant to serve the same purpose, following the idea that we should “let students teach us how to teach them”. Through this, the course was to be constantly adapted to students’ needs. At the same time, this structure better prepares both TAs and other actively involved students for their professional and academic future, providing them with the opportunity to learn new tools, to responsibly manage components of the project and to apply what they had learned in the course on a different level as teachers and academic contributors.

In addition to becoming a part of the learning experience of future CENS 303 cohorts, broadening student involvement and fostering independent learning also leads to a stronger impact on the community level. Students who have developed an independent research interest and practice, take these to their communities and use their newly acquired skills to share their knowledge and to teach others. In the context of Holocaust studies, this seemed particularly important, because there are less and less first-hand witnesses to the events. Therefore, well-educated proxy-witnesses are an integral component to ensuring that future generations will still learn about the events and relate to them.

To meet the above objectives, we had to come with a technical design of the course using educational platforms and tools provided by the Arts Informational Technology team. This provided students with an invaluable experience in familiarizing themselves with Word Press and Connect and Canvas.

3.2. Were these changes/impacts achieved? How do you know they occurred? – *To what extent were intended benefits achieved or not achieved? What evaluation strategies were used? How was data collected and analyzed? You are encouraged to include copies of data collection tools (e.g. surveys and interview protocols) as well as graphical representations of data and/or scenarios or quotes to represent and illustrate key themes.*

When in the testing phase the course was opened for large number of students, we learned that the complex participatory learning we aimed for, as well as the individualized feedback and instruction, needed rethinking and reworking, especially in view of the TA distribution in the Department of CENES. To be able to fulfill the high standards of learning brought by our teaching approach, student numbers had to be temporarily reduced so we could direct the efforts of students-assistants to trying new ideas, searching for new learning tools, and bringing new solutions. As a result, for instance, we limited number of individual reading responses and introduced activities aiming at enhancing students’ ability to read critically before we asked them to write. Also, we designed more group work and peer activities with prompted questions, and coordinated them closer with quizzes and exams. These changes will allow for opening more seats in the course in the future.

The extension of the TLEF fund, allowed us to create a second section of the course, CENS 303B, focusing on a different aspect of the Holocaust. While we initially created just once section of the CENS 303 course based on the material and issues of the German Nazi camps, the second section is devoted to the Jewish Ghetto on German occupied territories. Because we had already built the entire course structure and both the instructor and the TAs had largely improved their skills and expertise in the process, we were able to build the new section much quicker and more efficiently. Thanks to this, there are now two sections, CENS 303 A&B, reaching at this phase about 40-50 students each. The creation of CENS 303B shows the huge potential the initial grant unlocked in regard to broadening the reach of the course. New sections and courses can now be created much more competently and efficiently, creating new teaching and learning opportunities way beyond the scope of the initial project.

Both the undergraduate and graduate TAs have gained a lot of additional skills and knowledge applicable to different contexts. Having been trained and actively participating in the technical components of course development and maintenance, they are able to technically master all dimensions of an online course setting. This includes the recording and editing of film and audio material, the creation and maintenance of



WORDPRESS content, the setting up of assignments on different teaching platforms such as CONNECT and CANVAS and the creation of different teaching material (using PowerPoint, Adobe, Camtasia, CLAS etc.).

On the level of teaching skills, TAs have gained in competence regarding their interaction with students, providing feedback, formulating assignment descriptions, weekly posts and announcements, creating new activities, quiz questions and exemplary answers. Having significantly improved her teaching skills during the development of the course and her subsequent TA-ships, the course's co-developer, Anja Nowak (who has by now received her PhD), is currently teaching CENS 303A independently as a sessional instructor.

Students of CENS 303 have produced significant academic output. Many of them have participated in the *Witnessing Auschwitz* study abroad program and expanded their research in this context working with international experts in the field. They have presented their work at conferences (both international and student-organized at UBC), in their communities (such as for example in schools, organizations or at public events) and in peer-lectures for the course. They have published papers (both in the volume of student essays published in a collaboration between UBC and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and Memorial – *The More I Know, the Less I Understand* – and in other international publications), and are now pursuing related graduate studies (in both Canadian and international PhD and Masters programs).

This academic output has three important dimensions:

- 1) It reflects the students strong individual interest and shows the success of the course's strategies to foster independent research and learning. Pursuing their personal research interests, the students have shown great dedication, ingenuity and academic potential.
- 2) It shows that students are reaching out to both other academics and their communities. The conference and communal presentations of their work, the publications, the teaching and community involvement shows to what degree they are eager to share their knowledge, and also well prepared for this task.
- 3) It highlights how much the students benefitted from their academic and educational training, both as students of and TAs for the course, and how they were able to turn these qualifications into academic success and the basis for future studies and employment.
- 4) It contributed significantly to the establishment of a new model of education based on undergraduate research and on the dissemination of results in the context of teaching younger peers / learning from colleagues who took the same class in previous years.

Both sections of the course are still very popular amongst students, filling up quickly. Student emails indicate that the courses are frequently recommended by previous students of the course and that the online format does in fact help those who would otherwise be hindered by timetable conflicts and other personal or academic circumstances.

The feedback was provided by surveys conducted by the IT and through the course evaluations. To enhance the participation (currently at over 60%) we asked students to fill the evaluations at the time of submitting their self-evaluations. We treat students' opinions seriously and try to address them in a variety of ways. The evaluations were always discussed with students-assistants so they could help find solutions to issues brought to our attention.



3.3. Dissemination – Please provide a list of **past** and **upcoming** scholarly activities (e.g. publications, presentations, invited talks, etc.) in which you or anyone from your team have shared information regarding this project.

EHRI conference – Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, presentation "Between Witnessing and Remembering the Shoah. Ringelblum Archive and a perspective of the victim in the Holocaust Education". December 2018

CTLT Poster Presentation in the spring of 2018.

Presentation of the project at the panel of Best Practices in Holocaust Education, National Policy Conference on Holocaust Education, Friends of Wiesenthal Center, Toronto 2018.

Auschwitz – place, space, teaching. Presentation at the University of Toronto, 2018

Teaching through Research – experience of the authentic place as an educational method. Witnessing Auschwitz Seminar and concepts of space in education about Auschwitz and Holocaust." Consciousness – Responsibility- future" International Conference, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2017

"Teaching about Holocaust in multicultural setting – Canada and the USA." JHI Summer School for Teachers, Jewish Historical Institute, 2016.

"Auschwitz and its Space(s)". Center for the Holocaust Research. Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland. April 12 2016.

"Outside of the Common Memory. Holocaust Education on the Shores of Pacific Ocean: Issues and Challenges." Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, Poland, 2016.

ARA Donor's events 2015-1017.

Book launch at UBC, September 2017. *The More I Know, The Less I Understand: Young Researchers' Essays on Witnessing Auschwitz*. Edited by Bozena Karwowska and Anja Nowak. Oświęcim: The Auschwitz Birkenau Museum, 2017.

Dani Belo, Auschwitz. Why this location? Paper at international conference "Post-Borders Identities", Szczecin 2015.

<http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/the-more-i-know-the-less-i-understand-a-publication-of-the-iceah-and-the-university-of-british-columbia,1267.html>

<http://auschwitz.org/muzeum/aktualnosci/autentyzm-doswiadczenie-pamiec-seminarium-badawcze-studentow-university-of-british-columbia-,1734.html>

<http://news.ubc.ca/2014/10/16/learning-from-the-horrors-of-the-past/>

http://www.vhec.org/images/pdfs/Zachor_Fall2014.pdf

4. TEACHING PRACTICES – Please indicate if **your** teaching practices or those of **others** have changed as a result of your project. If so, in what ways? Do you see these changes as sustainable over time? Why or why not?

Our teaching practices (that of the Instructor and the Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant) have shifted significantly towards a more participatory approach. The online setting made it necessary to create activities and assignments that would make up for the missing personal contact of an in-class setting. This led to an increased focus on both personal interaction with the students as well as interaction between students themselves. Group work became an essential part of the course and turned out to be very efficient (especially when compared to teacher centered components of the course). It turned out that communication was in fact intensified in the online



setting and student involvement was much easier to coordinate (especially in between cohorts). All these elements proved to be highly beneficial and will be carried forward to other teaching scenarios.

The transfer of the course format to a second section (on the ghettos) led to a rethinking of certain strategies developed in the initial course (on the camp). It became clear, for example, that before teaching students how to write about a topic, we would have to focus on teaching them to read critically. Thus, the new course was designed to reflect this, shifting attention to preparing students more extensively for their written assignments. This approach will now be transferred back to the initial course (on the camp). In general, both the constant student feedback and the possibility to closely monitor student activity gave us a much clearer idea of the effectiveness of our teaching methods. This led to several adjustments, because it turned out that not everything we thought was an effective approach was indeed accepted by students. At the same time, it was easy to see the success of certain changes and thus to follow and expand the improved strategies. The constant feedback loop significantly helped to improve our teaching and will impact future course projects.

Both, International Center of Education about Auschwitz and Holocaust (Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum) and Jewish Historical Institute expressed interest in building their own courses, in cooperation with UBC, based on our teaching model and our experience with online classes. The project has already been initiated and should be ready for a test group in the spring of 2019.

5. PROJECT SUSTAINMENT – *Please describe the sustainment strategy for the project components. How will this be sustained and potentially expanded (e.g. over the next five years). What challenges do you foresee for achieving the expected long-term impacts listed above?*

With the unprecedented interest of students, CENS 303 (sections A and B) are to be offered as online classes in the foreseeable future by the Department of CENES. Additionally, UBC is working on a course to be offered jointly with the ICEAH at the Auschwitz Birkenau Museum, and the proposed class will draw from the experiences of online CENS 303. The online component of the proposed joint educational initiative will include material developed for the current project.