

Human Rights: History Above the Fold (USHMM)

Primary Source Analysis and Archival Submission

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DESIGNED FOR: “Human Rights and Crimes against Humanity”
Course Type: Upper-division seminar
Course Enrollment/Size: 30-40 students
Student Composition: Humanities/Social Science graduate students

ASSIGNMENT BACKGROUND, GOALS, AND DESIGN:

“History Above the Fold: US Newspapers and the Holocaust” is an interactive educational study that explores what Americans knew about events in Europe between 1933 and 1945. Specifically, it asks participants to examine local newspapers for information, reports, and opinions about 39 different Holocaust-era events, and then submit articles they find to a national database at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (USHMM).

As a means to expand Wyoming’s participation in this vital educational study, I assigned students in my upper-division seminar, “Human Rights and Crimes Against Humanity” to visit the Laramie County Library and investigate newspaper collections for articles, headlines, and stories on human rights violations in Nazi-occupied Europe. Since the conclusion of the 2019 academic year, my students contributed 87 articles to the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (CAHS), a figure that more than doubles Wyoming’s January 2019 total.

While formal class discussions are indispensable, “History Unfolded” empowered my students to take what they have learned in lecture and then dive deeper into specific topics that interest them. A majority of people, even those from the Mountain West, have probably never considered Wyoming in the context of the Holocaust. “History Unfolded,” therefore, reoriented our traditional understandings of this history and shifts attention to what citizens in Wyoming—from Cheyenne and Cody, to Jackson and Lusk—actually knew about Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1945. One student, for instance, discovered an article, entitled ‘Extermination of All Jews in Nazi Territory Cited as Hitler’s Aim,’ that *The Casper Tribune-Herald* published on 25 November 1942. While much of the world focused on the Battle of Stalingrad, *The Casper Tribune-Herald* provided

Wyoming residents with a clear picture of Hitler's genocidal war aims and emphasized the Nazis' mass murder of Europe's Jewish population.

THE ACTUAL ASSIGNMENT:

20% *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum "History Unfolded"*

While this course explores the development of human rights and crimes against humanity on an international level, this assignment requires students to work in close consultation with the USHMM in Washington, D.C. The Mandel Center at USHMM recently launched a new project entitled "History Unfolded: US Newspapers and the Holocaust," which traces what Americans knew about Nazi persecution of Jews and other peoples between 1933 and 1945.

Before the conclusion of the spring semester, students must visit the Albany County Public Library and investigate the repository's newspaper collections for articles, headlines, and stories on human rights violations in Nazi Germany. Students are required to upload a **minimum of three** sources to our course page on the USHMM's website (<https://newspapers.ushmm.org>) In the "Create and Account" tab, fill out the required information, and then join the group "University of Wyoming, Human Rights and Crimes Against Humanity." The USHMM will publish these materials and acknowledge you as an author when the site launches this spring!

SOURCES AND RESOURCES:

<https://newspapers.ushmm.org/>

About History Unfolded

History Unfolded is a project of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. It asks students, teachers, and history buffs throughout the United States what was possible for Americans to have known about the Holocaust as it was happening and how Americans responded. Participants look in local newspapers for news and opinion about [39 different Holocaust-era events](#) that took place in the United States and Europe, and submit articles they find to a national database, as well as information about newspapers that did not cover events. History Unfolded raises questions for scholars and will inform the Museum's initiative on Americans and the Holocaust.

Your Role

Participants search in newspaper archives online and at libraries for articles about the Nazi threat in the 1930s and 1940s. As of July 2, 2020, 4,299 participants from across the country had submitted more than 35,600 articles from their local newspapers. The articles were published in newspapers located in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and represent news articles, editorials, letters to the editor, political cartoons, and advertisements. Through their work, these “citizen historians” have learned about Holocaust history, used primary sources in historical research, and challenged assumptions about American knowledge of and responses to the Holocaust. Their findings prompt us to reflect on America’s role in the world today.