

Lin Lin HITE Application

Please describe briefly your expectations of the institute.

I expect the Institute and the workshop will help me develop knowledge, skills, and attitude to teach the Holocaust and genocide. As far as knowledge is concerned, I would like to be able to have a more comprehensive understanding of the Holocaust. I would like to learn more about the Nazification of Germany in all aspects of the society before WWII and how that situation led to the Holocaust. I would also like to learn what content and pedagogy is developmentally appropriate to use with younger learners at the 6th grade. How early should students be taught about the Holocaust? Is 6th grade too early to learn about the Holocaust?

This question relates directly to the strategies for teaching the Holocaust to pre-service and in-service teachers and the skills of teaching this topic to students in upper elementary, middle and high school grades. How should I approach the topic of the Holocaust by using personal witness accounts, diaries, videos (documentaries and feature movies), music, arts, poetry, photos, museum artifacts, etc. without diminishing the significance of the topic? What kinds of resources are recommended to pedagogic course instructors like me to use to teach about the Holocaust? Attitudes and values of teachers are, perhaps, more important than the knowledge and skills to teach about the Holocaust. The first year I taught at Cortland, I didn't teach about the Holocaust. I realized that it was a sensitive issue for students in my class, who were predominantly white, and who preferred to learn easy and quick "recipes" for teaching social studies. While I did provide hands-on activities in my social studies class to show to them that social studies doesn't have to be boring, I was disappointed that the students stayed away from challenging issues like the Holocaust. Instead, for unit plan topics, they selected "Map of 13 Colonies", "Inventions in 20th century", and other innocuous topics. However, I realized that without actually spending time with my students on the tough and challenging issues like the Holocaust, students will not be able to open up and reach out for such thought-provoking and emotional experiences. In the following semesters, I taught a unit on the Holocaust. Since then, there have been teams and individual students who designed a unit plan on the topic of the Holocaust. My major concern, however, still remains. How old should students be able to learn about such difficult and controversial issues? How could we adapt materials for 6th graders? Is it too early to teach about the Holocaust to six graders? Are there studies and research projects to help us answer such questions?

My expectations of the institute could be summarized in one sentence: I would like to be better equipped with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to teach about the Holocaust. I would like to walk out of the workshop feeling more confident to teach young learners that no nation monopolizes evil; there are genocides in the past and in today world, and that we should be vigilant so that genocides such as the Holocaust will not happen again.

Please describe the methodology courses you have taught that relate to the teaching of the Holocaust and genocide.

New York State Social Studies Learning Standards have three standards out of five that provide the framework of teaching about the Holocaust – Standard I: History of New York State and

History of the United States, Standard 2: World History, and Standard 3: Civics, Citizenship, and Government. To address these standards, in the K-6 Elementary Social Studies Method course, I taught a unit on the Holocaust and genocide using different teaching strategies, but made it clear that the Holocaust topic might not be appropriate for grades lower than 5th. First, I interviewed each of the students in my class with two simple questions, "what is freedom?" and "what is fear?". Based on their responses, the class discussed the topic "what it would be like when freedom was taken away?" Second, as a whole class, we examined the concepts of freedom, fear, prejudice, and discrimination through watching Twilight Zone video clips entitled "Monsters are Due on the Maple Street" and "The Eyes of the Beholders". The clips help students understand how the Nazis used FEAR as the most powerful weapon to control people. The two videos could also be used in fifth and sixth grade classrooms, but I cautioned students not to show the video clips to grades lower than 5th grade. I then led an in-depth discussion over the differences of a democracy and non-democracy, and our discussion rested on the consequences of a non-democracy. Third, I introduced to the class a list of Children's literature. Fiction books includes "Number the Stars" by Lois Lowry, "The Upstairs Room" by Johanna Reiss, "Behind the Bedroom Walls" by Laura Williams, "The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark" by Carmen Deedy. Non-fiction books include "Children We Remember" by Chana Byers Abells, "the Holocaust" by Susan Willoughby, "Hiding to Survive" by Maxine B. Rosenburg, "Bearing Witness: Stories of the Holocaust" Selected by Hazel Rochman and Darlene Z. McCampbell. Fourth, using a constructive approach, students formed into cooperative teams to design and develop a mini Social Studies unit plan" on the topic of the Holocaust. Different teams focused on different subtopics of the Holocaust. Students centered their unit plans upon the following subtopics: Children in the Holocaust, Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and Learning about the Holocaust from Survivors' Accounts. Questions we discussed and reflected upon also included: How could the Holocaust happen? Who is guilty? Could it happen again? Why so few people came to the rescues of the Jews and other victims? Could it have happened to my friend? To me? What would I have done? What do I learn from the Holocaust? No matter how we answer these questions, none of us could stay untouched when we read about how grateful the survivors were after they were liberated. All of us realized the power of evil and the power of humanity at the same time.

In my other courses, I collaborated with other teachers for our students to watch "*Paperclips*", a powerful project-based documentary of how students could learn about the Holocaust by integrating subject areas of math, social studies, language arts, and many more areas of learning. Students were encouraged to develop unit plans to explore similar genocides beyond just the Nazi Holocaust. We compared other genocides in the 20th century and the on-going genocide in today's world : the genocide of Armenians in Turkey that took place between 1915-1918 and killed 1,500,000 people, the genocide of 300,000 people, also known as the Rape of Nanking, by the Japanese soldiers during the WWII, the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the years of 1992-1995 that led to 200,000 deaths, the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 that caused 800,000 deaths, and the Darfur genocide that is still ongoing now.

Applicant Statement *Please provide a statement of why you wish to participate in HITE 2008.* My interests in Jewish literature and Jewish people started at Beijing Foreign Studies University when I was a junior as an English language major in 1987 reading Bernard Malamud's "The Assistant". The plot got me so interested in the unique cultural features of the Jewish people. I

ended up writing my undergraduate thesis on the topic of Jewish immigrants in New York City after WWII. As I continued to pursue graduate study in American Studies of the same university, I focused on the historical, sociological and cultural perspectives of Jewish immigrants coming to the United States in post WWII era. Dr. Arthur Rosenbaum, a Fulbright scholar visiting at my university that year became my master thesis advisor. As a Jewish professor, he provided me with literature in studies of Jewish immigrants in the United States and taught me how to conduct quantitative and qualitative research in the study of immigration. My professional life as a university professor continued to be intertwined with my personal life that has been punctuated with marriage and child-rearing. Moving to the United States in 2000 for my Ph.D degree in Social Science of Education rekindled my interests in learning about the Jewish history.

My late father, who passed away on April 6, 2007, had been a high school science teacher all his life in China, but he loved to read history related to the World War II and the Holocaust. He always said that teaching students to be smart is not as important as teaching them to be wise. Wisdom, not smartness, should be highest on our list of academic outcomes. By wisdom, he meant that students will learn to make right decisions for the public good before they make decisions for self-interest. What he said reminded me of what Haim Ginott said. He was an educator, psychologist, author, and a survivor of a concentration camp during WWII. Based on his personal experience, Ginott was suspicious of education. He requested that we help students become sensitive to the human kind. "Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, and educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane," said Ginott. While I'm still a firm believer in the power of education, I want to participate in the HITE 2008 workshop to learn to teach undergraduate and graduate pre-service and in-service teachers the right way so that these teachers could teach their children in classrooms the right way about the Holocaust. SUNY Cortland has secondary social studies teacher education programs in the Department of History. I would share what I learned from the HITE workshop with faculty members working with secondary pre-service and in-service teachers through team-teaching, collaborative teaching, and seminars on campus.

How did you hear about the institute?

I have visited the United States Museum of the Holocaust in Washington DC twice in the past. I noticed from my visits that there is an institute for teacher educators, but at that time I was still working in a Chinese university teaching English and never thought that I could be teaching about the Holocaust in my own courses. It was from my colleagues in SUNY at Cortland that I heard about the workshop. Those colleagues shared with me great literature and other resources about the Holocaust in the past semesters.