

UNH Announces New Fund for Holocaust Education

April 3 lecture features German scholar from Northwestern University

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DURHAM, N.H. - The newly established Endowed Fund for Holocaust Education at the University of New Hampshire will host the first Hans Heilbronner Lecture on the Holocaust Thursday, April 3, 2003. Peter Hayes, Theodore Z. Weiss-Holocaust Educational Foundation Chair in Holocaust Studies at Northwestern University, will speak at 4:30 p.m. in the 1925 Room of the Elliott Alumni Center. His lecture is free and open to the public.

A professor of history and German, Hayes will present "Popular Complicity in the Holocaust: What Corporate Histories Show." He specializes in the history of Germany in the 20th century, particularly the Nazi period, and is the author or editor of five books, including a prize-winning study of the IG Farben corporation in the Nazi era.

The Hans Heilbronner Lecture on the Holocaust is sponsored by the Endowed Fund for Holocaust Education. It is named in honor of Hans Heilbronner, a retired professor of Russian history who taught at UNH for more than 30 years. He was one of the first Jewish faculty members at the university, and his family escaped Nazi Germany after his veteran father was released from a concentration camp.

The fund, which was established through the efforts of Jeffrey Diefendorf, professor of German history at UNH, and Leslie Schwartz, a UNH graduate student and president of Temple Israel in Portsmouth, was designed to support initiatives related to educating students, as well as the wider community, about the Nazi Holocaust. The money from the endowment will be used for faculty development, to purchase films and books, and to bring scholars to campus.

"I thought the subject was so important that it should have a place in the curriculum," Diefendorf says of why he began work to establish

the fund. "It's not fair to say that all German history is the Holocaust, just like it isn't fair to say all U.S. history is slavery, but the Holocaust deserves a special place in 20th century western civilization. Since the middle of the 18th century, western civilization has had at its core a set of beliefs, things like equality, progress, and democracy, but in the middle of the 20th century, one of the most advanced countries launched one of the most barbaric exercises that we know of. I think it's really important for people to understand how that could happen. For that reason, the Holocaust is not just Jewish or German history."

Thanks to the fund, an undergraduate course on the Holocaust will be offered at UNH this fall for the first time, and Dimond Library has a subscription to the journal "Holocaust and Genocide Studies."

Schwartz says she helped organize the fund because "education is the most effective means by which history and memory are perpetuated, and that Holocaust studies, while seemingly specific in nature, actually engender academic possibilities well beyond the scope of genocide."

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