



CIEE Warsaw, Poland

Course name:	Jews in Poland and the Holocaust
Course number:	HIST 3001 WRSW
Programs offering course:	Central European Studies
Language of instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	45
Credits:	3
Term:	Fall 2019

Course Description

It is widely believed that up to seventy percent of the world's Jews can trace back their ancestry to Polish Jewry. Whether or not the above statement could be proved true, the history of Jews living on Polish land is of crucial importance to understanding the contribution to culture and politics Jews have made worldwide. Harbingers of economic modernization, kings' and nobility's trusted men, merchants and craftsmen, writers and painters, Hasidim and followers of the Jewish Enlightenment, fighters for their homeland's independence, people of politics and the academy – over the centuries Polish Jews have had a share in shaping not only Poland's legacy but that of a number of other countries as well. The course will introduce students to the history of Polish and East European Jews, with particular focus on their cultural and religious life from the 17th century onwards, on Polish-Jewish relations prior to, during, and after World War II. Analyzing the birth of Polish nationalism and Zionism, Poles denouncing or rescuing will provide students with a new comparative perspective to look from. Due attention will be given to the Holocaust as the genocide was perpetrated on German-occupied Polish territory, before the eyes of the Polish population, which has had a unique effect on both Poles and Jews. The social, cultural, and political reverberations of the Holocaust will cover an important part of the course's material, taking into account various research perspectives. Studies by Polish scholars done over the last 30 years shall be given proper attention.

The course will be composed of a series of sessions, each of them dedicated to a particular subject with students encouraged to interact with the instructor (and with each other). Selected readings will be assigned to each session. To complete the course, students will be required to present a mid-term paper and take a final oral exam.

Learning Objectives

This course will introduce students to the history of Polish Jews as well as the historical meaning of the Holocaust.

After completion of the course students should

- understand the history of Polish Jews from medieval times until the present day;
- understand the various interactions between Poles and Jews.
- locate the Holocaust in its broader historical context;
- understand the ideological and philosophical background of the Holocaust (ideologies of racism, anti-Semitism, theories of euthanasia etc.);
- have acquired in-depth knowledge of the major events of the Holocaust;



- be able to critically analyze the impact of genocidal Nazi policies on perpetrators, victims, witnesses, and rescuers;
- reflect on the legacy of WWII for future generations.
- Have a greater understanding of issues such as xenophobia and antisemitism in contemporary world.

Course Prerequisites

Genuine interest in history and social issues.

Assessment and Final Grade

The final course grade will be determined based on the following distribution:

- Active participation in class (15%)
- Presentation of research paper topic (20%)
- Final paper (30%)
- Field trips (10%)
- Midterm paper (15%)

Course Requirements

Participation in class:

Students are expected to actively contribute to class discussions. You are also expected to attend guest lectures and panel discussions. In terms of class discussions, students are expected to maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect; however, they should feel free to disagree with the instructor and their classmates as long as the discussion is conducted in polite and scholarly manner

Presentation of the research paper topic:

In the second part of the course students will present their chosen topics and discuss them during the class. This presentation will be part of the final grade.

Final Paper:

Each student should write an individual essay (ca. 10–12 pages, circa 20 000 words including footnotes) based on a topic of their choice related to the course. All the papers will be passed through the antiplagiarism system.

Field trips:

Field trips are important part of the course. Participation in them is mandatory in order to get a satisfactory grade in the course



Mid-term paper:

In the middle of the term students will be required to write an essay on one of the topics covered in the first part of the course. All the papers will be passed through the antiplagiarism system.

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1

1.1. Topic of Class: Course Introduction

Description of content: General outline of the course. Introduction to Polish History. The origins of the Jewish presence in Poland. The role of Jews in shaping Polish history and culture.

1.2 Topic of Class: Museum Polin

Description of content: A. First workshop in the Polin Museum. Pre modern galleries. (Nili Amit).

Week 2

2.1 Topic of Class: Museum Polin II

Description of content: Second workshop in the Museum . The partitions of Poland and the long XIX c. (Nili Amit)

2.2 Topic of Class: Jewish Cemetery

Description of content: Emancipation and assimilation. Visit at the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw (prof. Jolanta Żyndul)

Week 3

3.1. Topic of Class: he rise of Zionism.

Description of content: Nation and politics. The rise of modern nationalism. 19th century Europe and antisemitism (France-Prussia-Russia). The rise of Zionism.

3.2 Topic of Class: Muzeum Polin III

Description of content: Third workshop in the Museum. The Second Polish Republic and Jews. Multiethnic reality. The Minorities Treaty. The Polish-Jewish political agreement. Jewish demography in Poland. Social and cultural strategies of Jews living among Poles. Jews and politics: Agudah, Zionists, Folkists, Bundists, Communists.

Reading: Polin. 1000 Year History of Polish Jews



Week 4

4.1 Topic of Class: Polish-Jewish relations in the second Polish Republic

Description of content: Polish-Jewish relations in the second Polish Republic. Jewish sport and the history of Cracovia football club. Political radicalization of the 1930s and the drift to the right.

Reading: Antony Polonsky, The Jews in Poland and Russia. A Short History

4.2. Topic of Class: Polish Jewry

Description of content: Documentary films about Polish Jewry

Week 5

5.1 Topic of Class: The road to Holocaust.

Description of content: Socio-political situation in pre-1939 Europe (specifically the Third Reich). Adolf Hitler and rise to power of NSDAP. Nazi ideology. The role of antisemitism. Third Reich's anti-Jewish laws. Program T

5.2. Topic of Class: Ghettos

Description of content: World War 2. The fate of Poland: invasion, occupation, ghettos

Week 6

6.1. Topic of Class: Majdanek

Description of content: Visit to Lublin and Majdanek: Life and death.

6.2. Topic of Class: The Final Solution

Description of content: The different Nazis concepts of solving the Jewish Question. Operation Barbarossa and the Einsatzgruppen

Midterm paper due on this day

Week 7



7.1. Topic of Class: Operation Reinhardt

Description of content: Wannsee Conference of 1942. Operation Reinhardt.

7.2. Topic of Class: Ringelblum Archive

Description of content: Warsaw Ghetto. Visit to the Jewish Historical Institute (Ringelblum Archive). Walking tour of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Reading: Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City

Week 8

8.1. Topic of Class: Holocaust Gallery

Description of content: Workshop in the Museum. Holocaust Gallery

Reading: Jan Tomasz Gross, The Neighbors

8.2. Topic of Class: Schindler's List

Description of content: Film screening "Schindler's List". Discussion

Presentation due on this day

Week 9

9.1. Topic of Class: Auschwitz

Description of content: Visit to Auschwitz and Cracow. Auschwitz Birkenau memorial Museum and Schindler's Factory museum

Reading: Martin Gilbert, The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War

9.2. Topic of Class: Żegota

Description of content: The role of non-Germans: Attitudes of Poles, the role Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Dutch, French, Flemish, Walloons, and others. Social attitudes towards victims. Blackmailers, bystanders, and rescuers. The case of Jedwabne. Reactions of the Polish underground and the Polish government-in-exile. Żegota (Screening of short documentary films).

Reading: Kazimierz Moczarski, Conversations with an Executioner



Week 10

10.1 Topic of Class: The story of Jan Karski.

Description of content: The West facing the annihilation of Europe's Jews. What did they know? British and American governments. American press. Vatican and other neutral states. The story of Jan Karski.

10.2 Topic of Class: Kastner trial and Adolf Eichmann trial.

Description of content: How a historical fact turns into a salient element of collective memory. Israel and the Holocaust: Kastner trial and Adolf Eichmann trial. (Nili Amit)

Reading: S. Rejak. E. Frister, Inferno of Choices: Poland and the Holocaust

Week 11

11.1 Topic of Class: The Kielce pogrom 1946.

Description of content: Poland after the war: The plight of the Jews. Return, animosity, violence. The Kielce pogrom 1946. March 1968.

11.2 Topic of Class: Jews and the "Solidarity"

Description of content: From silence to rebirth. Jewish community in Poland at the end of the 20th century. Jews and the "Solidarity" movement. Flourishing Jewish culture in a Poland (almost) without Jews. New Jewish institutions, new Jewish identities.

Final Paper due on this day

Week 12

12.1. Topic of Class: Final Class

Description of content: Summary, conclusion, time for "difficult questions".

The course may include meetings with a Holocaust survivor and a Righteous Among the Nations. **PLUS: study tour to Auschwitz-Birkenau preceding the course.**

Course Materials

Readings

- Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia. A Short History*, Littman, 2014.



- *Polin. 1000 Year History of Polish Jews*, ed. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, Antony Polonsky, Warsaw, 2014. (selected chapters)
- Saul Friedlander, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews 1939-1045*, New York, 1977.
- Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, London, 2009.
- Jan Tomasz Gross, *The Neighbours*, New York, 2001.
- Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War*, London, 1989.
- Raul Hilberg: *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945*, New York, 1993.
- S. Rejak. E. Frister, *Inferno of Choices: Poland and the Holocaust (selected documents)*
- Kazimierz Moczarski, *Conversations with an Executioner*, New York, 1981.