



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:	Spring 2020

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 (20%)
- Presentation of research paper topic (15%)
- Final paper (40%)
- Field trips (10%)
- Quiz (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 (max. 5-6 pages) 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



Quiz

More or less in the middle of the course there will be on 15 minute long quiz with multiple choice questions checking to what extent students have familiarized themselves with the program.

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1

1.1. Topic of Class: The Early Days.

Description of content: The origins of Jewish presence in Poland. The role of Jews in shaping Polish history and culture.

Reading: Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, A History of the Jewish People

1.2 Topic of Class: Privileges and autonomy.

Description of content: Jews as "property" of kings and nobility. Legal protection. The Council of Four Lands.

Reading: Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, A History of the Jewish People

Andrzej Żbikowski, Jews [in:] Under a Common Sky: Ethnic Groups of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania

Week 2

2.1 Topic of Class: Jews and the Urban Population

Description of content: Jews in royal and private towns; the arenda system; de non tolerandis Joudaeis

Reading: Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, A History of the Jewish People

2.2 Topic of Class: The Rabbi

Description of content: the rabbi and his role in education, Jewish community councils, Jewish courts, the training process, irregularities.

Reading: Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, A History of the Jewish People

Week 3

3.1. Topic of Class: Heterodox Streams within Judaism in Eastern Europe.

Description of content: The Sabbateans, the Frankists, the birth of hasidism and haskala (Jewish enlightenmet)

Reading: Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, A History of the Jewish People

3.2 Topic of Class: In the Pale of Settlement



Description of content: The partitions of Poland; the fate of Jews under the tzars; anti-Jewish "reforms," the Pale of Settlement and its role
Reading: Haim
Reading: Antony Polonsky, The Jews in Poland and Russia

Week 4

4.1 Topic of Class: The Rise of Political Antisemitism

Description of content: French and German thinkers and their role in forming political antisemitism; the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Reading: Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, A History of the Jewish People

4.2. Topic of Class: Between Emigration and Integration

Description of content: With rising antisemitism in Eastern Europe the choice to either integrate (and assimilate) or emigrate became a vital one; analysis how it affected Polish Jewry

Reading: The Polish Jewish Sourcebook

Week 5

5.1 Topic of Class: Jews in Eastern Europe after 1919.

Description of content: Socio-political situation in Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine; pogroms, attempts at including Jews in building the new states; boycotts; legal challenges

Reading: Ezra Mendelsohn, The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars

5.2. Topic of Class: Polish Jews in the Interwar Period I

Description of content: Despite antisemitism and economic challenges, the Jewish community in Poland thrived: Jewish political parties.

Reading: Ezra Mendelsohn, The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars

Bernard Wasserstein, On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War



Week 6

6.1. Topic of Class: Polish Jews in the Interwar Period II

Description of content: Despite antisemitism and economic challenges, the Jewish community in Poland thrived: Jewish press, literature, theater

Reading: Bernard Wasserstein, On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War

6.2. Topic of Class: Polin: Slivers of Memory (documentary)

Description of content: Film screening, discussion.

Week 7

7.1. Topic of Class: The Final Solution I

Description of content: The early Nazi concepts of "solving the Jewish Question"

*Reading: Laurence Rees, The Holocaust: A New History
Y. Arad, I. Gutman, A. Margalit, Documents on the Holocaust
(Hans Frank Regulation of July 24, 1940)*

7.2. Topic of Class: The Final Solution II

Description of content: The decision-making process, the Wannsee Conference

Reading: Laurence Rees, The Holocaust: A New History

Quiz due on this day

Week 8

8.1. Topic of Class: Poles and the Holocaust

Description of content: How did the Poles react to the Holocaust: the social, legal context, the Polish Underground State, individual choices

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

8.2. The Pianist

Description of content: Film screening "The Pianist", dir. R. Polanski. Discussion

Presentation due on this day



Week 9

9.1. Topic of Class: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Description of content: watching a documentary movie

9.2. Topic of Class: The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Description of content: A tour of the museum

Week 10

10.1 Topic of Class: 1945: Coming Back?

Description of content: postwar migrations; how many Jews survived the war and where, pogroms

Reading: Irena Hurwic-Nowakowska, A social analysis of postwar Polish Jewry

10.2 Topic of Class: Jews and Communism?

Description of content: Deconstructing the myth of "Jewish Communism"

Reading: Stanisław Krajewski, Poland and the Jews: Reflections of a Polish Polish Jew

Week 11

11.1 Topic of Class: Communist Poland: Stay or Leave?

Description of content: Emigration waves, postwar antisemitism (including state sponsored); Jewish life under communism.

Reading: Stanisław Krajewski, Poland and the Jews: Reflections of a Polish Polish Jew

Final Paper due on this day

11.2 Topic of Class: Jewish Revival

Description of content: revival of Jewish life after 1989; the different forms of expressing Jewishness; the "new Jews," Jewish "Disneyland" in Poland
Watching short videos

Week 12



12.1. Topic of Class: Final Class

Description of content: Summary, conclusion, more 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

- Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*, Harvard Univ. Press, 1976
 - Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia. A Short History*, Littman, 2014.
 - *The Polish Jewish Sourcebook*, Centropa, Vienna, 2015
 - Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, Indiana Univ. Press, 1983
 - Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War*, Simon and Schuster, 2012
 - Laurence Rees, *The Holocaust: A New History*, Penguin Books, 2017
 - Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman, Avraham Margalit, *Documents on the Holocaust*, Univ. of Nebraska Press, Yad Vashem, 1999
 - Irena Hurwic-Nowakowska, *A social analysis of postwar Polish Jewry*, Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1986
 - S. Rejak. E. Frister, *Inferno of Choices: Poland and the Holocaust*, Warsaw 2012
 - Stanisław Krajewski, *Poland and the Jews: Reflections of a Polish Jew*, Cracow 2005
 - Andrzej Żbikowski, *Jews [in:] Under a Common Sky: Ethnic Groups of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania*, Warsaw - New York, 2017
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