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JEWS in Central Europe: the Holocaust and its Aftermath

General overview & Krakow – as an example
(from late 1930s – till today)

Goals and description of the course

The course presents the history of Central European Jews during the Holocaust and post-Holocaust period. Showing various aspects of Holocaust, its history but also sociological and psychological aspects (human behaviour in different situations and various countries) will be the background to understand the postwar history of the Jews. Topics of the post-Holocaust history include migrations, political issues, Jewish cultural and religious life, social life of the Jewish communities in Central Europe, antisemitism, Holocaust memory and revival of Jewish culture. The contemporary history of Jews in most of Central European countries is included, but special attention is given to Jews of Krakow - by visiting the local places important for Jewish history and meeting with the people involved in the contemporary Jewish life there.

Time

Spring semester 2008/2009:
Tuesdays 15.30-17.00
Thursday 15.30-17.00

Grading

Grading will be based on the following:

- **Exam (50%)** In class. It will test your basic knowledge of events, individuals, chronology. The knowledge of the most important material from the lectures and readings will be required.
- **Presentation in Class OR Take-Home Essay (40%)** – presentation or the essay – both based on the recommended reading and the literature chosen by the student. The aim is to provide to the group the main facts and ideas for the discussion and show individual understanding of the material read. You will be given a list of topics in advance. You may write on one of the suggested topics, or choose your own (with the approval of Dr Edyta Gawron). The presentation should take 20-30 min., the papers should be 2.500-3.000 words.
- **Participation (10%)** Regular presence and activity in the meetings/lectures. Active participation of the student at every seminar is expected, including reading all assigned literature

Course Outline

1. (Thu 26.02.2009) Jewish population of Central Europe before 1939 – Centers of Jewish life – Zionism

Reading: Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, Indiana University Press Bloomington 1987, chapter 1: *Poland*, pp.11-84

Film: *Po-lan-yah. Here Dwelled God. One Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Poland*, a series by Amnon Teitelbaum, Episode 7: *Between World Wars*. [Film screening in class]

2. (Tue 03.03.2009) Nazi Germany: National Socialism and Beginning of War and Nazi Racial Policies in occupied countries of Central Europe.

Reading: *Excluding 'racially inferior', War and the Beginning of Genocide, 1939-1941* (Historical Overview), [in:] *The Columbia Guide to The Holocaust*, Columbia University Press 2000, pp.3-23

3. (Thu 05.03.2009) Concentration in the ghettos. Everyday life in the ghetto.

Reading: Michal Unger, *Religion and Religious Institutions in the Lodz Ghetto* [in:] *Remembering for the Future. The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, Volume 1: History, Palgrave 2001, pp.335-351

Film: *'Schindler's List'*, Steven Spielberg

- 4-5. (date and time to be decided) From the ghetto to work camps, concentration or death camps (example: expulsion from the ghetto in Krakow/Podgorze to Plaszow Camp, Auschwitz and Belzec) – visit to the area of the former ghetto in Krakow/Podgorze and to Schindler's factory (3 hours)

Reading: Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History*, A Meridian Book USA, 1989; chapter: *Victims*, pp.108-132

Film: *'Schindler's List'* Steven Spielberg

6. (...) Perpetrators, victims and bystanders in the countries of Central Europe. Jewish Resistance and Gentiles' help in Central Europe.

Reading: W. Bartoszewski, *Polish-Jewish relations in occupied Poland, 1939-1945*, [in:] *The Jews in Poland*, ed. By Ch. Abramsky, M. Jachimczyk & A. Polonsky, Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford 1986, pp.147-160;

Arieh L. Bauminger, *The Fighters of the Cracow Ghetto*, Jerusalem 1986, pp.22-29;

- 7-8. (exact date to be decided – Friday/Sunday) Visit to the site of the former Concentration Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. (The structure of work-, concentration- and death- camp. Life and death in the concentration camps. Extermination of European Jews there)

Reading: T. Iwaszko, *The daily life of prisoners*, [in:] *Auschwitz.Nazi Death Camp*, The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oswiecim 1996, pp. 70-87.

9. (...) The liberation time and 'long ways home' - Jewish post-Holocaust migrations in Central Europe.

Reading: Heda Margolius Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star. A life in Prague 1941-1968* [fragment published in :] *The Holocaust. Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*, edited by Omer Bartov, London – New York 2000, pp.219-231

10. (...) Displaced Persons camps in Germany and Italy – temporary shelter for Central European Jews.

Reading: B. Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora. The Jews in Europe since 1945*, Harvard University Press 1996, chapter: *Displaced Persons*, pp.1-35

Fragments of the documentary *"Displaced Persons"* by the Israeli Film Service [screening in class]

11. (...) Struggle to survive – the lasting effects of the Holocaust. Memories from/of the Holocaust. Physical and mental healthcare.

Film: *Fighter* (2001) by Amir Bar-Lev (in class)

12. (...) Post-Holocaust status of the Jews in the Central European countries (1945-1950)

Reading: M.C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead. Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*, Syracuse University Press 1997; Chapter: *Memory's Wounds 1944- 1948*, pp. 43-61

Yehoshua R. Buchler, *Reconstruction Efforts in Hostile Surroundings – Slovaks and Jews after World War II* [in:] *The Jews Are Coming Back. The Return of the Jews to their Countries of Origin after WWII*, ed. by D. Bankier, Jerusalem 2005, pp.257-276

13. (...) Postwar antisemitism – why ? Case of Krakow and Kielce pogroms.

Reading: S. Meducki, The Pogrom in Kielce on 4 July 1946, [in] POLIN. Studies in Polish Jewry, Volume Nine, Jews Poles, Socialists. The Failure of an Ideal, Oxford Center for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996, pp. 158-169.

A. Cichopek, *Pogrom in Cracow, August 11, 1945*, [in]: *Contested memories. Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, ed. by J. D. Zimmerman, Rutgers University Press 2003, pp.221-238

14. (...) Where to live? Jewish dilemmas after proclamation of the State of Israel. Emigration (to Israel and America) or rebuilding the Jewish life in Central European countries

Reading: B. Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora. The Jews in Europe since 1945*, Harvard University Press 1996, chapter: *The Impact of Israel*, pp.85-102

Andras Kovacs, *Changes in Jewish Identity in Modern Hungary* [in] *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*, edited by Jonathan Webber, Oxford Center for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization 1994, pp. 150-160

15. (...) States' antisemitism – antisemitic law and policy – the Trial of Rudolf Slansky in Czechoslovakia, March 1968 in Poland

Reading: Lukasz Hirszowicz, *The Jewish issue in post-war communist politics*, [in:] *The Jews in Poland*, ed. by Ch. Abramsky, M. Jachimczyk & A. Polonsky, Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford 1986, pp. 199-208.

Heda Margolius Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star. A life in Prague 1941-1968*, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1986

16. (...) Witness of the Holocaust and postwar history – testimonies and the documentaries.

Reading: Konstanty Gebert, *Jewish Identities in Poland: New, Old, and Imaginary*, [in] *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*, ed. by Jonathan Webber, Oxford Center for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization 1994, pp. 161-167

17. (...) Jewish religious and cultural life in postwar Central Europe: Krakow, Prague, Budapest and Vienna.

Reading: B. Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora. The Jews in Europe since 1945*, Harvard University Press 1996, chapter: *East European Shadows, 1953-89*, pp.206-226

At the Crossroads: Jewish life in Eastern Europe today (1989), by Yale Strom – fragments of documentary film - screening in class

18. (...) Various aspects of contemporary Jewish life (Krakow, Warsaw, Prague, Vilnius, Budapest, Kiev). Revival of Jewish culture in Central Europe.

Reading: 'A Virtual Jewish World' [in] Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish. Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, The S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies, University of California Press 2002, pp.25-71

19. (...) Contemporary Jewish life in Poland. Visit to the contemporary Jewish institutions in Krakow.

Reading: M. Niezabitowska, T. Tomaszewski, *Remnants. The last Jews of Poland*, Friendly Press, Inc. New York 1986, Chapter Five - *The Community*, pp. 155-199.

20. (...) Central Europe and the memory of Jewish history and the Holocaust in the region. Contemporary discussions.

Reading: M.C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead. Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*, Syracuse University Press 1997; Chapters: *Memory Repressed: 1948-1968*, pp. 62-74, *Memory Reconstructed: 1970-1989*, pp. 89-121

J. Blonski, *The Poor Poles look at the ghetto* [in] Polonsky, Antony, ed. *My Brother's Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*. London: Routledge, 1990, pp. 34-52

Recommended further reading:

- Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora. The Jews in Europe since 1945*, Harvard University Press 1996
- *Contested memories. Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, ed. J. D. Zimmerman, Rutgers University Press 2003
- Eva Hoffman, *Lost in translation. A Life in a New Language*, London 1998
- Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, Indiana University Press Bloomington 1987
- Heda Margolius Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star. A life in Prague 1941-1968*, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1986
- Jan T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, Princeton University Press 2006
- Jan T. Gross, *Neighbours, The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*
- *Kielce - July 4, 1946: Background, Context and Events*, a Collective Work. Toronto and Chicago: Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1996
- Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl. The life and death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews*
- Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead. Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*, Syracuse University Press, 1997
- *My Brother's Keeper? Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, ed. by A. Polonsky, London: Routledge, 1990
- Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, An S. Mark Taper Foundation Book in Jewish Studies, January 2002
- *The Neighbors Respond. The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland*, ed. by A. Polonsky & J.B. Michlic, Princeton University Press 2004.

Recommended websites:

www.ipn.gov.pl - The Institute of National Remembrance

www.jewish.org.pl - Jewish Community in Poland

www.ushmm.org - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum , Washington DC

www.yadvashem.org - Yad Vashem , Jerusalem

www.centropa.org - Centropa – The Central Europe Center for Research and Documentation