

The Holocaust in the Soviet Union

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Research in archives across the Former Soviet Union in the past two decades has transformed our understanding of the Holocaust in the USSR. This course will introduce students to this cutting-edge scholarship. We will examine topics such as deportation and evacuation, the development of murder techniques, the treatment of Roma people, the expansion of the Holocaust into the Caucasus, interethnic and national conflicts, postwar trials and Soviet responses to genocide. All of these will of course need to be contextualized within the unfolding of the war in Soviet territory.

In addition to trying to make sense of the evolution of the war and the Holocaust in the USSR, students will be encouraged to think about how this knowledge impacts on our comprehension of the Holocaust more broadly. Courses and textbooks on the Holocaust typically begin in Germany with the origins of the Nazi Party and move to Poland as the iconic site of the genocide. Integrating the history of the Holocaust in the USSR requires rethinking this paradigm.

Course Requirements

The lectures for this course are meant to provide historical and geographic context. Some of you will have encountered some of the material previously. For others it will be largely new. I have endeavored to write the lectures to provide a clear introduction while also challenging earlier scholarly conventions.

This course is divided into fourteen units. Each of these in turn is divided into between three and four brief lectures of ten to twenty minutes. The lectures are each accompanied by an outline and several illustrations.

Students should proceed through the lectures in order according to the outline below. There are no readings assigned for the introductory and concluding lectures (units 0 and 13). Instead, you have each been asked to upload a brief video responding to some of the ideas. This is not a graded assignment, and there is no need to worry about production quality. However, it is an important aspect of our study together and required to be submitted on time for course credit.

There are two articles assigned to go with each of the content units. After listening to the lectures and completing the readings, students should log onto the discussion forum. Fifty percent of the grade for this course will be based on regular and informed participation in the online forum. This will allow us to interact with one another and the assigned readings. Each student will choose ten of the twelve content units (excluding the introduction and conclusion)

and respond to one of the posted questions (at least 200 words) and one of the other students' posts (at least 100 words).

Although one of the advantages of an online course is the flexibility of hours, I have found that we all learn more when we engage with one another. I therefore ask you to complete all of your responses to units 0-7 by 8 July and all of your responses to units 8-13 by 4 September.

The remaining fifty percent of the grade will depend on which option you are taking for this course. However, each student will watch a complete video testimony of a Holocaust victim who survived in the USSR. The testimony will be subject of the second response paper for those taking that option. It will be a source for the *referat* or the research paper.

Full written guidelines are available for each of these assignments. Students must inform me of their choice by 24 July. All written work for this class should be double-spaced with regular margins and Chicago Manual footnotes. The two response papers (~4-5 pages) are due on 31 July and 28 August. A (~1-2 page) proposal for the *referat* or research paper is due by 7 August with the final papers due 30 September and seminar papers must be turned in by March 2021.

Grading

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|---|-----|
| Participation (5% for each of 10 units) | 50% |
| Writing/Research (one of the following) | 50% |
| a. Response Papers (25% each) | |
| b. <i>Referat</i> | |
| c. Research Paper | |

Course Outline

Unit 0. Themes of the course

- a. Context
- b. Choice
- c. Historiography

Watch a video testimony of a survivor of the Holocaust in the USSR and upload a brief (max. 5 minute) video of yourself discussing the main ideas of the testimony, anything you found surprising, and how these relate to the themes of the course (due 17 July).

Unit 1. Jewish Life in the USSR before the war

- a. Jews in Revolutionary Movements
- b. Revolutions and Wars
- c. NEP and Nationality Policies in the Early Years
- d. The Stalin Years

Joshua Meyers, "A Portrait of Transition: From the Bund to Bolshevism in the Russian Revolution," *Jewish Social Studies* 24:2 (Winter 2019): 107-134.

Jonathan Dekel-Chen, "'New' Jews of the Agricultural Kind: A Case of Soviet Interwar Propaganda," *The Russian Review* 66 (July 2007): 424-450.

Unit 2. 1939

- a. Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Agression Pact
- b. Invasion of Poland
- c. Annexation, Sovietization and Refugees
- d. The Baltic States, Bessarabia and Bukovina

Joanna B. Michlic, "Anti-Polish and Pro-Soviet? 1939-1941 and the Stereotyping of the Jews in Polish Historiography," Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth A. Cole and Kai Struve, eds., *Shared History - Divided Memory: Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939-1941* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag GmbH, 2007), 67-101.

Gennady Estraiikh, "The Missing Years: Yiddish Writers in Soviet Bialystok, 1939-41," *East European Jewish Affairs* 46:2 (2016): 176-191.

Unit 3. 1941

- a. Blitzkrieg
- b. Evacuation
- c. Leningrad and Moscow
- d. Stalingrad

Daina S. Eglitis and Didzis Bērziņš, "Mortal Threat: Latvian Jews at the Dawn of Nazi Occupation," *Nationalities Papers* 46:6 (2018): 1063-1080.

Anna Shternshis, "Between Life and Death: Why Some Soviet Jews Decided to Leave and Others to Stay in 1941," *Kritika* 14:3 (Summer 2014): 477-504.

Unit 4. Neighbors

- a. German Advance and Soviet Retreat
- b. Lvov
- c. Jedwabne
- d. Romania and Transnistria

Jeffrey S. Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, "Beyond Jedwabne," *Intimate Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 57-83.

Diana Dumitru, "Attitudes towards Jews in Odessa: From Soviet Rule through Romanian Occupation, 1921-1944," *Cahiers du monde russe* 52 (2011): 133-162.

Unit 5. Genocide

- a. Commissar Order
- b. Einsatzgruppen
- c. Ordinary Men
- d. Local Participation

David W. Wildermuth, "Who Killed Lida's Jewish Intelligentsia? A Case Study of Wehrmacht Involvement in the Holocaust's 'First Hour'," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27:1 (Spring 2013): 1-29.

Hannah Pollin-Galay, "Naming the Criminal: Lithuanian Jews Remember Perpetrators," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 30:3 (Winter 2016): 506-531.

Unit 6. Holocaust by Bullets

- a. Vilna
- b. Ukraine
- c. Kiev
- d. Gender

Karel C. Berkhoff, "The Holocaust of the Jews and Roma," *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 59-88.

Anatoly Podolsky, "The Tragic Fate of Ukrainian Jewish Women under Nazi Occupation, 1941-1944," Sonia M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, eds., *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2010), 94-107.

Unit 7. Roma Holocaust

- a. Overview
- b. Soviet Setting
- c. Genocide
- d. Scholarship and Memory

Piotr Wawrzeniuk, "'Lwów Saved Us': Roma Survival in Lemberg 1941-44," *Journal of Genocide Research* 20:3 (2018): 327-350.

Michelle Kelso and Daina S. Eglitis, "Holocaust Commemoration in Romania: Roma and the Contested Politics of Memory and Memorialization," *Journal of Genocide Research* 16:4 (2014): 487-511.

Unit 8. Ghettoization and Resistance

- a. Ghettoization
- b. Ghettos and Leadership

- c. Partisans
- d. Hiding

Natalia Aleksion, "Food, Money and Barter in the Lvov Ghetto, Eastern Galicia," Tatjana Tönsmezer, Peter Haslinger, and Agnes Laba, eds., *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 223-247.

Alexander Gogun, "Indifference, Suspicion, and Exploitation: Soviet Units Behind the Front Lines of the Wehrmacht and Holocaust in Ukraine, 1941-44," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 28 (2015): 379-400.

Unit 9. The Holocaust in Crimea and the Caucasus

- a. The Karaite Question
- b. Crimean Holocaust
- c. Caucasian Holocaust
- d. Non-Ashkenazi Jews in the USSR

Mikhail Tyaglyy, "Were the 'Chingené' Victims of the Holocaust? Nazi Policy toward the Crimean Roma, 1941-1944," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 23:1 (Spring 2009): 26-53.

Kiril Feferman, "The Food Factor as a Possible Catalyst for Holocaust-Related Decisions: The Crimea and North Caucasus," *War in History* 15:1 (2008): 72-91.

Unit 10. Jews in the Soviet Interior

- a. Soviet Jews
- b. Polish, Baltic and Bessarabian Jews
- c. Local Jews
- d. Rising Antisemitism

Natalie Belsky, "Fraught Friendships: Soviet Jews and Polish Jews on the Soviet Home Front," Mark Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossmann, eds., *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 161-184.

Markus Nesselrodt, "'I bled like you, brother, although I was a thousand miles away': Postwar Yiddish Sources on the Experiences of Polish Jews in Soviet Exile during World War II," *East European Jewish Affairs* 46:1 (2016): 47-67.

Unit 11. Liberation and Trials

- a. Liberation
- b. Nationalist Forces
- c. Extraordinary Commission
- d. Trials

John-Paul Himka, "Former Ukrainian Policemen in the Ukrainian National Insurgency: Continuing the Holocaust outside German Service," Wendy Lower and Lauren Faulkner Rossi, eds., *Lessons and Legacies* XII (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017): 141-163.

Oleksandr Melnyk, "Stalinist Justice as a Site of Memory: Anti-Jewish Violence in Kyiv's Podil District in September 1941 through the Prism of Soviet Investigative Documents," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 61:2 (2013): 223-248.

Unit 12. Soviet and Jewish Responses to the Holocaust during and after the War

- a. Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee
- b. Jews in the Red Army
- c. Soviet News Outlets
- d. Return (demographics)

Arkadi Zeltser, "Jewish Response to the Non-Jewish Question: 'Where were Jews during the fighting?' 1941-5," *East European Jewish Affairs* 46:1 (2016): 4-25.

Anika Walke, "Split Memory: The Geography of Holocaust Memory and Amnesia in Belarus," *Slavic Review* 77:1 (Spring 2018): 174-197.

Unit 13. Integrating the Soviet Holocaust Experience

- a. Why do we know so little about it?
- b. How does it change our paradigms?
- c. What's Next?

Upload a brief (max. 5 minute) video of yourself discussing one or all of the questions above (due 31 August).