University of Haifa
Weiss-Livnat International MA Program in Holocaust Studies

Online course: The Extermination of Polish Jews, 1939-1945

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In 1939, there were 3.3 million Jews in Poland, or about 10% of the total population of the Polish Republic. Polish Jews formed the largest Jewish community in Europe. In 1945, six years later, no more than 50,000 Jews remained alive in Poland. Almost 98.5% of Polish Jewry (excluding the 300.000 who fled the Germans and survived in the Soviet Union) perished in the Holocaust. A nation rich in history, with its own traditions and language ceased to exist.

On September 1st, 1939, the German forces invaded Poland and – before the end of the month – completed the conquest of the country. The course will focus on the initial German policies directed against the Jews and, at the same time, it shall follow the reactions of the Jewish community in the face of new existential threats. The lectures will shed light on the creation of the ghettos, on the strategy of the Jewish leadership and on the plight of the Jewish masses. The course will explore the growing German terror and the implementation of the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question"- as Germans referred to the policies of mass extermination. The students will become familiar with the planning and the execution of the so-called "*Aktion Reinhard*", as well as with the survival strategies pursued later by the Jews who avoided the 1942-43 deportations to the extermination camps. While learning about German perpetrators and Jewish victims, the students will also explore the attitudes of the Polish society and the Polish Catholic Church to the persecuted Jews. Although the course is geographically centered on Poland, it will place the discussed events in a broader, European, context.

Course Requirements:

• Weekly reading assignments: Each lecture will required the reading of one or more short articles or book chapters. Please complete each lesson's reading before viewing the video lecture. Student assessment will be based on written work commensurate with the level you choose to take the class.

• Response papers: Students will have to submit twice a short response paper of approximately 1000 words (3-4 pages long) addressing an issue based on selected pieces of the course assigned reading.

First response paper is due by April 26th, 2020.
Second response paper is due by June 24th, 2020.

• Final "short" paper, for those who opt for it: Length – approximately 3000 words (8-12 pages long). Students should **submit a proposal of 1-2 pages for final papers by the end of April 2020**. A proposal should include research question, a brief explanation about the literature on the topic, methodological considerations, table of contents and bibliography. Final papers should follow standard academic practice.
Submission deadline for final short papers: One month after the end of the semester, on **July 26th 2020**.

• Seminar paper, for those who opt for it: Length – approximately 8-9,000 words (25-30 pages long). Students should submit proposal of approximately 3 pages along the same lines as required for the short final paper, **by the end of April 2020**.
Submission deadline for seminar papers: The start of **the following semester, October, 18th 2020.**

Final Grade:

2 response papers – 50% -Final short paper 50%

2 response papers – 40% -Final seminar paper 60%

Or a grade based on the 2 response papers.

Lectures & Readings:

Lecture 1: Polish Jews during the interwar period, 1918-1939. Polish-Jewish Relations during the 1930s. The *Machtübernahme* in Germany and the growth of anti-Semitism in pre-war Europe.

Readings: *William W. Hagen, Before the "Final Solution": Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Anti-Semitism in Interwar Germany and Poland, in: The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Jun., 1996), pp. 351-381*

Dariusz Libionka, "Alien, Hostile, Dangerous": The Image of the Jews and the "Jewish Question" in the Polish Catholic Press in the 1930s.

Lecture 2: *Blitzkrieg* in Poland; Polish Jews under the German Occupation in the *Generalgouvernement*. Initial anti-Jewish measures and the creation of the ghettos.

Readings: Emmanuel Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, Dec. 10, 1940 – April 14, 1941. (please, read p. 97-147). New York, Schocken, 1974.

The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow

Lecture 3 : Inciting Hate: Anti-Jewish Propaganda: Films, Posters, Books and the Press.

Readings: Jan Grabowski, "German Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Generalgouvernement, 1939–1945: Inciting Hate through Posters, Films, and Exhibitions", Holocaust and Genocide Studies 23, no. 3 (Winter 2009): 381–412

Lecture 4: Jewish life and death in the ghettos: *Judenräte*; Jewish Police, Jewish Self-Help, German administrators and local enablers. Living conditions: rations, smuggling, work details - ghettos as "working units".

Readings: *Christopher Browning, The Path to Genocide, chapter 2: "Nazi Ghettoization Policy, 1939-1941", p. 28-56.*

B. Engelking, J. Leociak, The Warsaw Ghetto. A Guide to the Perished City, Yale University Press, 2008, p. Chapter: The establishment of the Judenrat and its first period in office; p. 139-167.

Excerpts from the diary of Abraham Lewin. A Cup of Tears : a diary of the Warsaw Ghetto, Oxford, 1988.

Lecture 5: The fate of the Polish Jews in the East: Holocaust by bullets: the invasion of the Soviet Union, *Einsatzgruppen*, Ponary. The "communal" genocides: Jedwabne, Radziłów, Wąsocz and the rest. Preparing ground for the "Final Solution" - German Special Courts [*Sondergerichte*] and the Jews.

Readings*: Jan T. Gross – selected parts from "Neighbors".*

Lecture 6: The Wannsee conference. Planning and construction of the extermination camps. Holocaust in Poland as a self-financing policy of the German state. "Aktion Reinhardt" begins: The "*Aktionen*" - the liquidation of the ghettos in *Generalgouvernement*.

Readings: *Abraham Lewin – The Diary of the Great Deportation (chosen fragments)*

Calel Perechodnik, Am I A Murderer? Testament of a Jewish ghetto policeman, Boulder, Co, 1996, Chapter: 'The Aktion" [in Otwock ghetto]

Lecture 7: A Case Study: The Liquidation of the Węgrow Ghetto, September 22-23, 1942.

Readings*: Shraga Feivel Bielawski: The Last Jew from Wegrow. The Memoirs of a Survivor of the Step-by-Step Genocide in Poland, Praeger, 1991, chapters to be indicated.*

Lecture 8: Judenjagd- hunting down the Jewish survivors. The "Blue" police, village guards, firefighters and the German police.

Readings: Jan Grabowski: "Rural Society and the Jews in Hiding: Elders, Night Watches, Firefighters, Hostages and Manhunts", Yad Vashem Studies, 40 (1), 2012, p. 49-74

Lecture 9: Resistance: uprisings in the ghettos and in the camps.

Readings: Czeslaw Milosz "Campo dei fiori" (poem)

Israel Gutman, The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943. Ghetto, Underground, Revolt, Indiana University Press, Chapter 14: "Days of Battle".

Parts of Stroop's Report, Parts of Katzmann's Report

Lecture 10: In Hiding: The "Shmaltzovniki" - blackmailers of the Jews. Surviving on the "Aryan side" among the gentiles.

Readings: *Michał Głowiński: "The Black Seasons". Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 2005, Chapters: "The Black Hour" and "A Quarter Hour Passes in a Pastry Shop", p. 59-96.*

Zuzanna Ginczanka "Non omnis moriar" English and Hebrew (poem)

Lecture 11: The Final phase: Aktion Ernetfest, the last ghettos. The last days of Emanuel Ringelblum. Jewish survivors after the war, commemoration of the Holocaust in Poland today.

Readings: Emanuel Ringelblum, Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War, Evanston, 1974, Chapters: 11-12 (pp. 190-245).

Jan Gross, Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: Random House, 2006, Chapter 3: The Kielce pogrom.