

## Exile Under Nazism and Communism

Jewish Studies 01:563:270/History 01:510:263/European Studies 01:360:292

Tuesday/Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> period (4:30-5:50 pm)

### DRAFT SYLLABUS 2018 (subject to change)



**Professor Nancy Sinkoff**

**Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30, or by appointment, Miller Hall, room 103**

**campus phone: 2.8681**

**email: [nsinkoff@rutgers.edu](mailto:nsinkoff@rutgers.edu)**

---

This course will explore the experience of Poles, Ukrainians, and Polish Jews under Nazi and Communist rule in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through history, travel writing, memoir, poetry, and film. Jews lived in Polish lands for a millennium and by the eighteenth century comprised 10% of Poland's urban population. However, the almost total destruction of Polish Jewry in World War II made the Jews a 'phantom limb,' a shadowy non-presence, in the post-war period. Post-war Poles and Ukrainians also experienced devastating dislocations due to the war and to the Communist takeover. All three peoples have produced a wealth of memoir literature that explores the meanings of home, exile, longing, and the human need for connection to place that is shared, in this case study, by Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians. The paradox of this literature is that these nations appear unaware of the similar themes that their memoirs employ and evoke.

In order to understand the experience of belonging and exile, this course will introduce students to the history of Poland, beginning in its “Golden Age,” which saw the expansion of Jewish settlement throughout the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—which included Ukrainian lands—and continuing to the effects of the partitions in the late eighteenth century, in which Poland and its peoples became subjects of the Russian, Habsburg, and Austrian Empires. In the nineteenth century, the “national” principle prevailed in East Central Europe, affecting Polish, Ukrainian, and Jewish national aspirations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The course will investigate the dislocations caused by World War I, the exhilaration of the reestablishment of Polish statehood in the interwar period, and then focus on the catastrophic invasion and occupation of western Poland by the Nazi Third Reich in 1939 (and then of Soviet-occupied eastern Poland in 1941), and the subsuming of Polish sovereignty under Communism in 1946.

Students are required to read the materials in advance of our sessions. We will pay careful attention to the primary sources—all of which are available on Sakai—in class. Additional readings, in the form of articles and book chapters, have been uploaded on Sakai. The secondary sources will allow you to a) deepen your understanding of the history we’re engaging and b) enter into the contemporary scholarly conversation about the meaning of that history. Films, two poetry readings—one by a Polish poet, the other by a Ukrainian poet—and two guest lectures (one on the experience of the Roma under Nazism and one on the persistence of East European Jewish memory culture in contemporary Israel) will enhance students’ understanding of historical exile and its personal artistic expression.

### **Learning Goals:**

Acquire an overview of the major issues related to Nazi and Communist rule in Central Europe—particularly Poland—in the twentieth century, grounded in the history of the region from the sixteenth century forward.

Encounter the interconnected history of Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians: their shared pasts, their dissonant pasts, and their complicated memories of both.

Engage in the craft of history by studying a variety of primary sources, such as autobiographies, legal charters, poetry, and testimonies, and through reading secondary interpretations, including scholarly articles and textbook readings.

Develop skills of communicating orally and in writing through classroom discussion, oral presentations, and writing assignments.