KUMA
HIS 179
The Dr. Marcia Robbins-Wilf Hadassah/Young Judaea Holocaust Studies Program
American Jewish University Campus in Israel
Young Judaea Year Course

Course Summary:
The Kuma Poland Journey is an introduction to the historical development of the
Holocaust with a focus on the Jewish experience in Poland during World War II. Course
study will include an in-depth look at the development of Polish Jewry during the 1,000
years of Jewish residency in Poland, including the rise of Zionism and the Zionist Youth
Movements, as well as its ultimate destruction. In addition we will discuss aspects of
general Polish history in order to understand the changes and shifts in Jewish society.
We will further study the history of Hitler's Nazi Germany, the conquest of Europe
and the ominous ramifications for European Jewry. The class will consider the moral
implications of the Holocaust as well as the lessons for the Jewish People and all of
humanity in the 21st century. Finally we will consider the role of memory and our
responsibility towards the victims of the Holocaust and future generations.

The course will primarily be a field study. We will visit sites during the Journey in
Poland where significant events took place in history and Holocaust memorials have
been erected and museums have been dedicated to educate about Jewish life in Poland
and the demise during the Holocaust. A combination of lectures, discussions, student
presentations, all of which require a high degree of participation and motivation from
the individual student will be used throughout the course. Through primary sources,
secondary sources, personal testimonies, still and moving images, internet sites, and
class discussions, we will struggle to understand the incomprehensible. At the end of
the course the student will have a clearer understanding of Polish Jewish history, the
events of the Shoah, and the historical narrative, but may be left with more questions than
answers.

Course Requirements:
1) Due to the extraordinary nature of the topic and the intensive nature of study each
student will be required to keep a written journal. The journal will be marked pass/fail.
(20%)

2) Class Participation: including attendance, class participation and general motivation is
an important factor in a successful learning experience. (10%)

3) On site oral presentation: Each student will choose a topic to present to the class at
one of the sites to be determined along with the instructor. The presentation will be
between 10-15 minutes on any topic relating to Polish history, Jewish history in Poland,
the Holocaust, or any of the many topics or questions related to the above. Students who
would rather submit an extra writing assignment instead of an oral presentation must have
approval from the instructor prior to the beginning of the course. (35%)

4) Final: Take home essay exam approximately 6-8 pages in length. All finals are due
by Thursday March 31, 2011. Late exams will not be accepted without prior written
permission from the instructor. (35%)

Syllabus:
 Classes 1-2 Warsaw
Overview of the History of Jewish Warsaw, Ideologies of 19th & 20th Century Polish Jewry, Understanding the Jewish Tombstone

Site: Opokowa Street Jewish Cemetery

Readings: If Not Higher I.L. Peretz pp. 38-40
Timeline: “A Thousand Years of Polish Jewish History” David Behrman and Alan Goldman
Time of Stones Monika Kajewska

Nazi Invasion, Ghettoization of Warsaw, Ringlebaum Archives, Liquidation, Deportation, Janusz Korczak’s Final Journey

Sites: Jewish Historical Society Museum Exhibition on Warsaw Ghetto, Janusz Korczak Pre-War Orphanage, Umschlagplatz,

Reading: Brave and Desperate pp. 58-65.
Selected scenes from the film The Pianist

Classes 3-4 Tykocin- Eastern European Shtetl from Birth to Destruction

16th-19th Century: Role of the Synagogue, Market Place, relations with Christians, WWII and Final Solution: Operation Barbarossa, Einsatzgruppen, Killing Pits

Sites: Tykocin Jewish Museum: Great Synagogue and Beit Midrash, Jewish Market Square, Church Courtyard of Tykocin, Mass Graves/Killing Pits Lapuchowo Forest

Readings: Jewish Bialystok pp. 7-33
There Once was a World pp. 63-89
Babylonian Talmud Tractate Brachot pg. 61
Testimony from Eichman Trial- Eyewitness account to the Massacre

Classes 5-6 Treblinka Death Camp

Chelmno Precedes Wannsee Conference, Operation Reinhold, Why Poland?, History of Treblinka, Rebellion at Treblinka, Plowing the Camp, Memorial Ceremony

Site: Treblinka State Memorial

Readings: The Holocaust (Gilbert) pp. 458-462
Map of Treblinka (Gilbert)
A Year in Treblinka Horror Camp Wiernik pp. 178-185
“The Little Station Treblinka” (Hebrew)
“Go to Treblinka” (Hebrew)

Class 7 Review Session- facilitated by educational staff

Writing Exercise- 5 Questions that come to mind- share questions with review group

Class 8 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Sites: Remnant of the Ghetto Wall, Ghetto Heroes Walk including Mila 18 and Rappaport Memorial

Readings: Brave and Desperate pp. 60-200 (selections)

Class 9-10 Majdanek Death Camp
The Structure of a Death Camp, Where was the world?, Memorial Ceremony

Site: Majdanek State Memorial

Readings: Map of Majdanek, Gilbert, Martin 1997
The Holocaust Kingdom, Donat, Alexander

Class 11 Review Session- facilitated by educational staff
Compare your impressions of the Majdanek Memorial to that of the Treblinka Memorial

Class 12 Lezajsk- World of the Hasidic Masters
Galicia, The Birth of the Tzaddik in Hasidic tradition

Site: Grave and Mikve of Rebbe Elimelech of Lezajsk

Readings: The Road to the Shtetl
Chassidic Masters
Elimelech of Lyzhansk (EJ)
Where the Poet Was a Tailor pp. 246-249
View the Film Fiddler on the Roof

Class 13 Tarnow- Remnants of the Past
Galicia, A Bimah Stands Alone

Site: The Tarnow Great Synagogue

Readings: Where the Poet Was a Tailor pp. 222-228

Class 14 Zblitowska Gora- Jews and non-Jews Lay side by Side
The Massacre of Jewish children and Adults and Polish Non-Jews

Site: Mass Graves/Killing Pits Zblitowska Gora

Readings: The Holocaust (Gilbert)

Class 15-16 Krakow-

Sites: Kazimierz District- Alte-Shul, Rema Shul, Isaak’s Shul, Kupa Shul, Tall Shul, The Temple, Vavel Hill and Castle, Cathedral, Sukiniza Market Square

Readings: A Journey Between Worlds: East European Jewish Culture from the Partitions of Poland to the Holocaust (Excerpts)
Shulhan Aruch Yoreh De’ah Chapter 157
Where the Poet Was a Tailor pp. 196-212

Class 17 Faith After the Holocaust- facilitated by educational staff
Discussion of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks’ article

**Reading:** *On G-d and Auschwitz*

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**Classes 18-21 Auschwitz The Nazi Killing Machine**

Final Solution: Structural or Intentional from the lens of the Extermination of Hungarian Jewry, Life in Hell, Memorial Ceremony

**Site:** Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and Memorial

**Readings:** *Auschwitz Album* (selected pictures)
- Film: *The Liberation of Auschwitz*
- Map of Auschwitz, Auschwitz National Museum Guide
- Map of Auschwitz II-Birkenau, Auschwitz National Museum Guide
- *Man’s Search for Meaning* pp. 96-97
- *Night* pp. 40-45
- *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps.* pp. 53-71
- *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity* pp. 17-19

**Class 22 Review Session- facilitated by educational staff**

Discussion: Was the final Solution “intentional” or “structural”?

**Class 23 Slawkow**

Eastern Europe Zionism before the Shoah

**Site:** Slawkow Zionist Training Farm

**Reading:** Slawkow- Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland
- Chajka Grossman

**Classes 24-26 Memory and Meaning**

Cemetery is a tribute to life, Responsibility to the Past and the Future, Hollywood and the Holocaust, Memorial Ceremony

**Sites:** Rema Cemetery, Schindler’s Factory, Plaszow Concentration Camp,

**Readings:** The Holocaust and Collective Memory pp. 208-220
- *Krakow-Plaszow Camp Remembered* pp. 1-8
- Selected Scenes from the Film *Schindler’s List*

**Site:** Clean Up Project Wieliczka Cemetery

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**Bibliography:**

Babylonian Talmud Tractate Brachot pg. 61b Soncino.


Birnbaum, Helena (lyrics and music). “Go to Treblinka” (Hebrew) by 1986.


Eldar, Meir. *Krakow-Plaszow Camp Remembered*. (Unpublished) An account of the camp by Eldar, a survivor, given to Alan Goldman by Eldar.


*Elimelech of Lyzhansk*, Encyclopedia of Judaica.


Mishne Torah Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah. Chapter 5 Laws 1-4. (Hebrew)

Sacks, Rabbi Jonathan. “On G-d and Auschwitz” from *Faith in the Future*
Shulhan Aruch Yoreh De’ah Chapter 157 Traditional Hebrew
Testimony from Eichman Trial, Eyewitness account to the Massacre
Wiernik, Yankel. “A Year in Treblinka Horror Camp”
Slawkow. Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland, Volume VII. Translation of Pinkas Hakehillot Polin, Jerusalem, Israel, Yad Vashem.
Slengel, Vladislav (Lyrics). “The Little Station Treblinka” Music by Poliker, Yehuda and Gilad, Yaakov (Hebrew).