



POLSKI UNIWERSYTET NA OBCZYŻNIE  
THE POLISH UNIVERSITY ABROAD  
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## Twentieth Century Polish History Seminar

Convenors: Prof. Michael Fleming and Dr Wojciech Rappak

The seminar series on twentieth century Polish history was initiated at PUNO in 2013. It provides a forum for scholars and the wider public to engage with new historical scholarship. Scholars from a range of universities have presented research in progress and discussed their recent publications. Details of previous seminars can be found at <https://puno.ac.uk/struktura-puno/zaklad-wspolczesnej-kultury-brytyjskiej-seminaria/>

The seminar is open to the public and is especially useful for students reading MA or PhD degrees in history or cognate disciplines. The seminar is conducted in English. The seminar will take place online. Those wishing to participate should contact the convenor prior to each seminar: [michael.fleming@puno.ac.uk](mailto:michael.fleming@puno.ac.uk)

### Programme for the 2022/2023 academic year

26 October 2022      Professor Joshua D. Zimmerman (Yeshiva University, New York)  
**Book discussion: *Jozef Pilsudski: Founding Father of Modern Poland***

In the story of modern Poland, no one stands taller than Jozef Pilsudski. From the age of sixteen he devoted his life to reestablishing the Polish state that had ceased to exist in 1795. Ahead of World War I, he created a clandestine military corps to fight Russia, which held most Polish territory. After the war, his dream of an independent Poland realized, he took the helm of its newly democratic political order. When he died in 1935, he was buried alongside Polish kings. Yet Pilsudski was a complicated figure. Passionately devoted to the idea of democracy, he ceded power on constitutional terms, only to retake it a few years later in a coup when he believed his opponents aimed to dismantle the democratic system. Joshua D. Zimmerman's biography examines a national hero in the thick of a changing Europe, and the legacy that still divides supporters and detractors. As the only European statesman after World War I to champion Ukrainian independence, Pilsudski's legacy has renewed relevance.

Further details of the book can be found here:  
<https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674984271>

**Joshua D. Zimmerman** is Professor of History at Yeshiva University in New York. He is the author of *Jozef Pilsudski. Founding Father of Modern Poland* (2022), *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939-1945* (2015), and *Poles, Jews and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Tsarist Russia* (2003). The editor of two volumes, *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (2003) and *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945* (2005), Zimmerman has also published opinion pieces on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Pilsudski's warning to the East a century ago about the importance of standing for Ukraine in *Politico*, the *Washington Post*, the *Daily Beast* and the *Kyiv Post*.

23 November 2022 Judith Vocker (University of Leicester)

**“In the Name of the German Nation” The German jurisdiction in Warsaw during the Nazi occupation of the General Government (1939-1944)**

In this talk, I provide an introduction to the establishment of the German legal network in the General Government, with a focus on Warsaw. I discuss which legal guidelines and principles were applied to construct an apparent legal basis, according to which criminal offences were prosecuted. I seek to make the period of Nazi occupation intelligible through a legal perspective by focussing on a myriad of hitherto largely neglected archival sources. I offer an introduction to the Nazi legal practices and norms, how their jurisdiction expedited the extermination of the Holocaust and extended the Nazi sphere of influence and control in their occupied territories – which proves the necessity to consider the legal practices of the Third Reich when researching the implementations and mechanisms of the Holocaust.

**Judith Vöcker** is a final year PhD student in History at the Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Leicester and is supervised by Svenja Bethke and Klaus Richter. She holds a BA in Slavic Studies and German literature and linguistics from the University of Cologne, the Jagiellonian University in Cracow and the Literature Institute Gorkij in Moscow; and an MA in Eastern European History from the European-University Viadrina and the University College London. As part of her doctoral research, Judith has been a Fellow at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, the Wiener Library in London, the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, and the Federal Archives in Berlin.

14 December 2022 Dr hab. Artur Roland Kozłowski (WSB University, Gdansk)

**Ukraine's Gradual Westernization - The Eastern Dimension of European Integration**

This talk situates the uneven integration of Ukraine with the countries of the European Union in its historical context and with reference to changes in material culture (technology and economy). It reflects on the challenges facing Eastern Europeans with specific focus on the relationship between culture and the (re)production of social emotions. The presentation assesses how integration with the European Union is understood and considers whether Ukraine is developing a pro-Western orientation and how this country advances institutional co-operation with the European Union.

**Artur Roland Kozłowski** is Vice-Rector for Academic and International Cooperation at WSB University in Gdansk. He is the author of numerous publications on geopolitics, European integration and cross-cultural communication and co-author of the book *Dyplomacja w zagranicznej współpracy gospodarczej. Teoria oraz praktyka polskiej i ukraińskiej aktywności międzynarodowej lat 1989-2020* (Diplomacy in Foreign Economic Cooperation. Theory and Practice of Polish and Ukrainian International Activity 1989-2020).

18 January 2023

Dr Janek Gryta (University of Wales Trinity Saint David)

**Between assimilation and emigration. Identity building amongst Polish Jews in the 1950s and 1960s.**

Taking as its case study the ambitious programme of Jewish memory work in the Małopolska region, this paper aims to offer a new interpretation of the history of Polish Jews during Gierek's tenure. It suggests that while some chose migration and some assimilation there was also a core group of Polish Jews who selected a third way; who wanted to stay in Poland as Polish Jews and to that end aimed to create a new Polish-Jewish identity. This new identity was built around the memory of the Holocaust and expressed in a set of Holocaust memorials created in the 1950s and the 1960s. It aimed to maintain ethnic and cultural independence while at the same time being firmly and uniquely Polish. While the identity-building project was largely ruptured by the anti-Zionist campaign of 1967-68, the Holocaust memorials nevertheless still exist in Poland and keep the memory of the Jewish presence and destruction alive.

**Janek Gryta** is a Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. His research interests revolve around the problems of memory, heritage and nation-building. His current project focuses on heritage and memory work that brought together socialist activists from across the globe uniting them in the socialist ecumene. He is the author of *Jews and Poles in the Holocaust Exhibitions of Kraków, 1980 and 2013: Between Urban Past and National Memory*, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2020 and a number of articles and chapters on Holocaust memory and Jewish heritage.

1 February 2023

Agnieszka Pasięka (University of Bayreuth)

**Unwanted heirs: The Solidarity movement and youth far-right activists in contemporary Poland**

Solidarity/"Solidarność," an independent trade union and social movement, is undoubtedly one of the central symbols of civic resistance against the authorities of People's Poland and Soviet bloc policies. Given its importance in Polish and European history, many find it difficult to accept that the memory of the Solidarity movement has become a site of struggle and competition between different political actors. In my lecture, I would like to talk about a particular group of actors that "claim" Solidarity heritage: youth radical nationalist movements that claim to find inspiration in Solidarity's preoccupation with workers' plights and the nation's well-being. In short, they refer to Solidarity in drawing their own political project combining socialist and nationalist agendas. In discussing young radical nationalists' claims, I shall highlight a sometimes-forgotten face of the Solidarity movement - reflection on which may pave a way to a more complex understanding of the present-day conflicts in the post-Solidarity camp.

**Agnieszka Pasięka** is a socio-cultural anthropologist, and in her research she explores questions of religious and ethnic pluralism, religious and national identities, and political mobilization. Her first book, "Hierarchy and Pluralism: Living Religious Difference in Catholic Poland" (Palgrave Macmillan 2015), looked at the situation of religious and ethnic minorities in Poland. Her new book focuses on transnational networking of European far-right movements. She is also the co-editor of two edited volumes, "Anthropology of transformation" (Open Book Publishers) and "Rethinking modern Polish identities" (forthcoming with Rochester University Press). Recipient of numerous fellowships, she is currently a visiting professor at Beyreuth University and research fellow at the University of Vienna.

28 February

**Event organised in co-operation with the Institute for Polish Jewish Studies and UCL.**

Piotr Paziński (author, journalist)

**Discussion on *Bird Streets (Ptasie ulice)*** translated by Ursula Phillips.  
Discussant Professor Antony Polonsky, Chair Professor François Guesnet.

On the occasion of the publication of the English translation of Piotr Paziński's collection of four novellas *Bird Streets (Ptasie ulice, 2013)*, author Piotr Paziński and translator Ursula Phillips discuss the work with Professor Antony Polonsky. The book is Paziński's second work of fiction, following *The Boarding House (Pensjonat, 2009)*, which appeared in English in 2018. The eponymous Bird Streets refer to the pre-war names, several still surviving, of streets in the Muranów or Northern District of central Warsaw where many Jews lived before 1939 and which were enclosed in the Ghetto in November 1940: Gęsia (Goose; the name no longer exists on present-day maps, the roughly equivalent street now renamed as Anielewiczka), Pawia (Peacock), Wronia (Crow), Orla (Eagle), Kacza (Duck). Following the forced transportation of the Jewish residents to extermination camps and the crushing of the Ghetto Uprising (19 April-16 May 1943), the area encompassed by the Bird Streets was razed to the ground. The book captures vestiges of a culture that was once abundantly present but is now absent from today's streets. Hidden remnants, echoes and signs can still be found, especially underground. It is important to realize, however, that Paziński's prose is not Holocaust memoir as such. All four narrators, third generation survivors, intrigued by the lost world which an older generation still embodies and talks about and which they themselves, as the last recipients of the memories, feel bound to write down, convey a tone of wistful reflection and gentle irony.

**Piotr Paziński** is a literary critic, philosopher, translator, and novelist of Jewish heritage who lives in Warsaw and writes in Polish. From 2000 to 2019, Paziński was editor-in-chief of *Midrasz*, a monthly journal published in Warsaw on Jewish culture, religion, literature, and history including Polish/Jewish relations past and present. He is author of two volumes of critical essays: *Torn and Frayed Reality (Rzeczywistość poprzecierana, 2015)*, which includes essays on Joyce, Kafka, Borges, Paul Celan and Polish-Jewish writers of the interwar period; and *Fake Realities (Atrapy stworzenia, 2020)* about dolls, dummies, wax-figure cabinets, androids and mannequins in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Western culture. Paziński also translates from Hebrew into Polish. In 2017 he received the Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński Prize awarded by the City of Gdańsk for his translation of stories by Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888-1970).

**Ursula Phillips** is a British translator of Polish literary and academic works, and an historian of Polish literature specializing in women of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Recent translations include novels by interwar writer Zofia Nałkowska, *Choucas* (1927) and *Boundary* (1935), which received the Found in Translation Award 2015 and the PIASA (Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America) Waclaw Lednicki Award 2017 respectively. Her most recent translations include Grzegorz Niziołek's *The Polish Theatre of the Holocaust* (2019) and *Another Canon: The Polish Nineteenth-Century Novel in World Context*, edited by Grażyna Borkowska and Lidia Wiśniewska (2020). She is currently translating the 1000-page sci-fi-cum-alternative-history epic *Ice* (2007) by contemporary author Jacek Dukaj.

**Antony Polonsky** is Chief Historian of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw and Emeritus Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University. Until 1991 he was Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is co-chair of the editorial board of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, author of *Politics in Independent Poland* (1972), *The Little Dictators* (1975), *The Great Powers and the Polish Question* (1976); co-author of *A History of Modern Poland* (1980) and *The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland* (1981) and co-editor of *Contemporary Jewish writing in Poland: an anthology* (2001) and *The neighbors respond: the controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (2004). His most recent work is *The Jews in Poland and Russia, volume 1, 1350 to 1881; volume 2 1881 to 1914; volume 3 1914 to 2008* (2010, 2012), published in 2013 in an abridged version *The Jews in Poland and Russia. A Short History*.

**François Guesnet** is Professor of Modern Jewish History at University College London. He specializes in Eastern European Jewish History and is co-chair of the editorial board of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*. His book publications include *Polnische Juden im 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, Cologne, 1998), and, as editor, *Warsaw. The Jewish Metropolis* (2015, paperback 2017). He also co-edited the collected volume *Sources on Jewish Self-Government in the Polish Lands from Its Inception to the Present* (Boston, Leiden: 2022).

10 May 2023

Professor Colin Clarke (University of Oxford)

**Germany's Exploitation of the Jews, Evisceration of Poland and Exploitation of the General Government's Ghettos**

The first phase of Nazism, following Hitler's accession to power in Germany in 1933, is known as the persecution of the German Jews, and involved the removal of the Jewish capacity to vote, the Aryanisation (Germanisation) of Jewish property and occupations, and the brief but terrorising impact of the concentration camps. A second – international – phase followed soon after, and included the German lightning attack on Poland in September 1939 which was now focused on Poles and Jewish Poles and the destruction of the Polish state. To this end SS *Einsatzgruppen* terrorized the civilian population, targeting the Polish elite, and murdering politicians, the highly educated and those who were notably patriotic. A programme of Germanization ensued, and *Volksdeutsche* were introduced from former Poland and the USSR to settle the Polish territories annexed to Germany. The remaining Polish state was slimmed down into the General Government which was established as a quasi-German colony; into it

were driven the unwanted Poles and Jews displaced eastwards from the lands annexed to Germany.

The third phase involved the expulsion of the German Jews to rump Poland in 1941, and the mixing of Polish and German Jews in the urban ghettos. The Germans were trapped in a dilemma: they did not want to pay for food and welfare for the Jews; but they could not initially use ghetto labour usefully until the German war against the USSR broke out in June 1941, and enabled ghetto industries to be established across Poland, especially in Warsaw and Lodz. Jewish slave labour was deployed in small workshops set up under German business supervision to produce clothing for the armed forces in the East. Although this manufacturing process was for a while successful, in 1942 Himmler decided that the General Government, too, was to be free of Jews and targeted as a settlement zone for in-coming *Volksdeutsche*. Despite ghetto resistance to the German occupation of Poland, clearances of the ghettos took place in 1942-4, and two death camps were set up in Chelmo and Treblinka to reduce, if not eliminate, the entire population of Lodz and Warsaw. By this time the failing war with the Soviet Union on the eastern front had already severely impacted Poland and Germany economically, and universal shortages of labour had occurred.

**Colin Clarke** is Emeritus Professor of Geography at Oxford University and an Emeritus Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. Colin received his D.Phil. from Oxford University in 1967, and his D.Litt. in 2004. He has taught at the universities of Liverpool and Toronto, and has carried out numerous research projects in Mexico and the Caribbean. His principal research interests are in urbanization in developing countries; race, ethnicity and class in urban and rural social structures; peasant transformations; and the problems of small states. Throughout his research he has been concerned with the interrelationships between geography, history and anthropology. He was a Senior Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany in 2011-12, and is currently writing a book based on that research for Palgrave Macmillan with the title: *Racist Regimes, Forced Labour and Death: British Slavery in the Caribbean and the Holocaust in Germany and Occupied Europe*