



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

Convenors: Prof. Michael Fleming, Prof. Mikołaj Kunicki 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 British and Polish 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. This academic year the seminar will take place online, beginning at 6.30pm. Those wishing to participate should contact the convenor prior to each seminar: michael.fleming@puno.ac.uk

Programme for the 2023/2024 academic year

11 October 2023 Prof. Michael Fleming (PUNO)
The Contemporary Relevance of the United Nations War Crimes Commission.

The Bucha massacre and other Russian outrages in Ukraine has put the issue of war crimes firmly on the international agenda alongside a renewed focus on gaps in international law. This presentation considers how reflection on the work of the United Nations War Crimes Commission during the Second World War may provide insight into contemporary challenges of securing justice for victims. Jurists at UNWCC, which was founded in October 1943, considered a range of war crimes and made important contributions to thinking about other international crimes. The presentation pays attention to the Polish contribution to debates at the UNWCC as well as at the London International Assembly and other fora.

Michael Fleming is a historian at The Polish University Abroad, London. His publications include *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland, 1944-1950* (2010), *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust* (2014), (as editor) *Essays Commemorating Szmul Zygielbojm* (2018) and *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: Poland, the United Nations War Crimes Commission and the Search for Justice* (2022). He is a recipient of the Kulczycki Book Prize for Polish Studies, and the Aquila Polonica Prize.

22 November 2023 Hanna Reidler (University of Klagenfurt)
Journey into the Unknown. A Comparison of Deportations in the German and Soviet Occupation Zones of Poland 1939-1941

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, deportations have once again become a subject of public interest. Especially in the course of the double occupation of Poland in 1939-1941, comprehensive deportation programmes were implemented in both the German and Soviet

occupation zones. While the Soviets deported about 320,000 people to the interior of the USSR in four deportation campaigns to be used as forced labour in forestry and collective farms, the Germans resettled about 450,000 people from the incorporated territories and deported them either to the *Generalgouvernement* or for Germanisation or forced labour in the *Altreich*. The deportations not only represented a break in the biographies of those affected, but also permanently changed Polish society. Comparisons of National Socialism and Stalinism usually consider the two systems as a whole. However, with the deportations in an almost identical area during the same period serving as a *tertium comparationis*, it becomes possible to undertake a more systematic comparison. While it is important to problematise the term totalitarianism as a very politically loaded concept in today's Poland, there are nevertheless parallels between the deportation programmes of the two regimes. The objective of this paper is to clearly highlight the differences on the one hand, but also to identify functional equivalents on the other. For this purpose, the *modus operandi*, the underlying legitimisation strategies as well as the conceptions of space that were present in both regimes and, in a further step, the effects on Polish society will be analysed. Beyond the concept of totalitarianism – can certain aspects that were specifically inherent to these two regimes be identified and can such features be found in other examples – such as that of Ukraine?

Hannah Riedler studied History and Slavic Studies at the University of Vienna. In April 2021, she started working as a project assistant at the University of Klagenfurt researching the double occupation of Poland in 1939-1941. Her research interests include the history of Poland, the comparison of dictatorships as well as the Holocaust. She has received several fellowships and grants for her research, including from the IfZ in Munich, the DHI in Warsaw, and Yad Vashem. She has presented the results of her research at international conferences and workshops - for example at the POLIN Museum in Warsaw and Yad Vashem.

21 February 2024 Prof. Adam Leszczyński (SWPS, Warsaw)
People's History of Poland: Methodology and Reception

"People's History of Poland" sold more than 70,000 copies on the Polish market and sparked a lively debate about the presence of lower classes in historical consciousness in present day Poland. In my presentation, I will talk about the ideas behind my book and its reception.

Adam Leszczyński - historian, sociologist, journalist, associate professor at the SWPS University, member of the "Krytyka Polityczna" team and co-founder of OKO.press, a leading Polish online medium. He has published, among others, "People's History of Poland" (2020) and recently "Defenders of serfdom" (2023).

15 May 2024 Professor Robert Hampson (Institute of English Studies, University of London)
Conrad and the Polish problem

The talk will start with 'The Shadow of 1863': it will begin with Conrad's parents, Apollo and Ewa Korzeniowski – their political activities in relation to Polish independence; the hopes they placed on their son, Konrad; and Apollo's role in relation to the Central National Committee. It will consider Conrad's sense of himself as a child growing up in the shadow of 1863 and

also why he left Poland. The next section, 'Emigration of the Talent', will begin with Orzeszkowa's 1899 criticism of Conrad and the charge of desertion. It will discuss Conrad's work of reminiscence, *A Personal Record*, which he began in 1908, as a response to Orzeszkowa and to a more recent criticism (by Robert Lynd) that he was a man 'without either country or language'. *A Personal Record* asserts the continuity of Conrad's life as a sailor and as a writer, while also bringing Polish life and history into English literature. It displays Conrad's commitment to Poland, but also his pessimistic sense of the prospects of Polish independence. The third section, 'Autocracy and War', will begin with Conrad's response to the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) in the form of his 1904 essay 'Autocracy and War'. It will consider how he subsequently takes on the role of a public intellectual in relation to 'the Polish problem' with 'A Note on the Polish Problem' (1916) and 'The Crime of Partition' (1918). The role of Józef Retinger will be considered here. The final section, 'Poland Revisited' will focus on Conrad's 1914 visit to Poland and the essay he wrote of that title. It will consider his engagement with his father's legacy and his own sense of complex, multiple loyalties.

Robert Hampson FEA, FRSA is a Research Fellow at the Institute for English Studies and Professor Emeritus at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is the author of three monographs: *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity*; *Cross-Cultural Encounters in Conrad's Malay Fiction*; and *Conrad's Secrets*, which won the Adam Gillon Award from the Joseph Conrad Society of America. He co-edited *Conrad and Theory* with Andrew Gibson, *Conrad and Language* with Katherine Isabel Baxter, and *The Reception of Joseph Conrad in Europe* with Véronique Pauly, and has recently published a critical biography, *Joseph Conrad*, with Reaktion Books. His latest book, *Joseph Conrad, From Cosmopolitanism to Transnational Activism* was published this year (2024) by Palgrave Macmillan. He is Chair of the Joseph Conrad Society (UK) and recipient of the Ian P. Watt Award for Excellence from the Joseph Conrad Society of America.