



Center for Urban History  
of East Central Europe

**Connecting (to) Histories: Engaging with the Urban Pasts and  
Displaying Jewish Heritage**

**8<sup>th</sup> Summer School  
July 10 – August 4, 2017**

**DR. KAROLINA SZYMANIAK**

**SYLLABUS**

**"JEWS ON DISPLAY. EXHIBITING JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE IN THE EAST  
CENTRAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY"**

**LVIV 2017**

**Center for Urban History of East Central Europe**

“Connecting (to) Histories: Engaging with the Urban Pasts and Displaying Jewish Heritage”

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Karolina Szymaniak (University of Wrocław / Jewish Historical Institute)

**Jews on Display. Exhibiting Jewish History and Culture in the East Central European Context at the beginning of the 21st century**

The course explores the ways in which Jewish history and culture are narrated and visualized in the new museum and exhibitions projects in post-communist East Central Europe, and how those museums as public institutions, and curatorial interventions contribute to establishing, (re)shaping, countering or petrifying respective national narratives, the understanding of cultural difference and prejudice. We will discuss the politics of display, and social agency of museums, possible role of museums as sites of cultural therapy and as sites of denial. We will look at the ways contemporary East Central European representations of Jewish culture are rooted in the past, asking questions about practices of othering, Jewish historical subjectivity and agency. We will discuss different ways how minority histories are included into majority context. Finally, we will ask questions how debates about complicity of East Central European societies in the Holocaust influence the way history is narrated in the new museums.

While the point of departure for discussion will be projects and debates originating in Poland, such as the POLIN Museum, the Shtetl Museum in Chmielnik, the Warsaw Uprising Museum, the Warsaw Ethnographic Museum, and the Ulma Museum of Poles Saving Jews in the WW2, as well as Erica Lehrer’s exhibition *Lucky Jews*, other major projects in the region, such as museums in Prague, Budapest, or Vilnius will form a context for our reflection. Participants are also encouraged to present projects originating in their respective countries/cities.

**Dr. Karolina Szymaniak** – Assistant Professor at the Department of Jewish Studies of University of Wrocław, head of the Yiddish Culture Unit of the Jewish Historical Institute (currently on sabbatical), academic advisor to the Center of Yiddish Culture in Warsaw. Former editor-in-chief of “Cwiszn” – Jewish arts and literary quarterly. She was a consultant for the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and for the Łódź Art Museum, where she is currently co-curating an exhibition. She was also part of the team working on an initial conception of the new permanent exhibition at the JHI. She has taught different courses and given invited lectures in Poland, France, Sweden, Australia, Israel, Lithuania, Ukraine and the United States.

## **1. The Ethnographic Jew. *Ostjuden*, the museum effect and ambi/polivalences of representation**

Case study: The Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw; Moishe Vorobeichic, *Ein Ghetto im Osten*; Erica Lehrer, *Lucky Jews*

Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998 (fragments)

## **2. The Shtetl Nostalgia? – cultural construct and the problem of Jewish spaces on display**

Focus-projects: Świętokrzyski Shtetl (Chmielnik, Poland); Town on the Trail of Borderland Cultures (Biłograj, Poland); Lost Shtetl: Memorial Project (Seduva, Lithuania),  
Context projects: The Jewish Shtetl in Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center (Moscow, Russia), Shtetl Gallery in POLIN Museum (Warsaw, Poland)

Websites: <http://www.swietokrzyskisztetl.pl/>; <http://bilgoraj21.pl/en/>; [loststetl.com](http://loststetl.com);

Readings:

Svetlana Boym, 'Restorative Nostalgia: Conspiracies and Return to Origins'; 'Reflexive Nostalgia. Virtual Reality and Collective Memory'. In eadem: *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, p.41-43; 49-51; 53-55.

David Roskies, 'The Shtetl in Jewish Collective Memory.' In: Idem, *Jewish Search for Usable Past*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999 (fragments).

Deborah Yalen, 'The Shtetl in the museum: representing Jews in the eras of Stalin and Putin', 'East European Jewish Affairs' vol. 45 (2015), no 2-3 (fragment)

## **3. Un-Innocent Eye. Jewish Life&Jewish Void in the post-Holocaust era.**

Focus-projects: Roman Vishniac, *From the World that is No More*, Alter Kacyzne, Poyln. Jewish Life in the Old Country, Wojciech Wilczyk, *There Is No Such thing as Innocent Eye*; Wojciech Wilczyk, Elżbieta Janicka, *The Other City*.

Carol Zemel, 'Z'chor! Roman Vishniac's Photo-Eulogy of Eastern European Jews.' In, eadem, *Looking Jewish: visual culture and modern diaspora*, Bloomington : Indiana University Press, [2015] (fragment).

Adam Mazur, 'Was There a Synagogue Here?' In: Wojciech Wilczyk, *There is No Such Thing as an Innocent Eye*, Kraków: Ha-Art 2009.

#### **4. Beyond representation? Performance&video art, difficult Polish Jewish past, and perils of deconstructions**

Case study: Rafał Betlejewski, *I miss you Jew*; Yael Bartana, The Jewish Renaissance Movement & the Polish Pavillon for the 2011 Venice Biennale; Patrycja Dołowy, Views (Widoczki)/ Memory of the City/Memory of the Body.

Websites: [widoczki.patrycjadolowy.pl](http://widoczki.patrycjadolowy.pl)

Erica Lehrer, Magdalena Waligórska, 'Cur(at)ing History: New Genre Art Interventions and the Polish-Jewish Past', *East European Politics, Societies, and Cultures* vol. 27 no. 3, August 2013.

#### **5. Ex/inclusion/absorption. Jewish history&culture and contemporary politics of history and memory**

Focus-projects: Museum of the Warsaw Uprising (Warsaw, Poland), the Ulma Museum of Poles Saving Jews in the WW2 (Markowa, Poland), The Cut (POLIN Museum Residence Project);

Elżbieta Janicka, 'The Embassy of Poland in Poland: The Polin Myth in the Museum of the History of Polish Jews as Narrative Pattern and Model of Minority-Majority Relations.' In (Eds.) Irena Grudzinska-Gross and Iwa Nawrocki, *Poland and Polin: New Interpretations in Polish-Jewish Studies*. . Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2016 (fragments).

Joanna Wawrzyniak, 'Temple of Romantic Martyrdom: Poles, Germans and Jews in the Historical Museum of Warsaw.' In: *Enemy on Display: Identity, Memory and the Second World War in European City Museums*, New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books (fragments).

Erica Lehrer, 'Most Disturbing Souvenirs: Curative Museology in a Cultural Conflict Zone.' In: Shelley Ruth Butler, Erica Lehrer (ed.), *Curatorial Dreams. Critics Imagine Exhibitions*. Montreal-Chicago-London: McGill's-Queen's University Press (fragments).