

Prof. **Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern**
Northwestern University, Illinois
E-mail: yps@northwestern.edu

The City: a locus of Jewish, Polish, and Ukrainian encounter (with a focus on Ukraine)

**Lviv Summer School
Jewish History, Multiethnic Past,
and Common Heritage: Urban Experience in Eastern Europe
July 13 – August 7, 2015
Center for Urban History. Lviv, Ukraine**

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

This intensive 5-lecture mini-course (12 academic hours) takes a close look at various urban centers (sometimes the shtetl-like and sometimes the city-like) that shaped Jewish-Polish-Ukrainian cultural encounters that inspired the rising literary figures to explore East European multi-cultural urban legacy and make this legacy central in their creative writing. Students will explore various forms of East European urban culture—a shtetl (Chortkiv and Berdychiv), a provincial center (Chernivtsi and Ternopil), a city (Kyiv), a metropolis with a strong East European diaspora presence (Montreal and New York). This course will provide students with methodological tools at the intersection of the literary and cultural studies, urban studies, and social history. Students' progress will be evaluated by a final in-class test based on short essay-type 10-15 lines answers to 5 questions and a brief analysis of a literary text in Ukrainian.

Session one

A Marketplace in Berdychiv: Polish, Jewish, and Ukrainian interaction

Although Russian empire swallowed 66 percent of Polish territory and established its control over the former eastern Polish borderlands (Ukraine, Lithuania, Belorussia), most of the market towns—the shtetls-- in the new Russia's western borderlands remained in private possession of the Polish magnates. The market place was the economic and cultural center of the shtetl. Taking Berdychiv (owned by the Radzivils) as a case study, this session will discuss forms of economic, linguistic, and cultural interactions between Russia administration, Ukrainian peasants, Polish magnates and Jewish urban dwellers—all competing for the control of the marketplace.

Readings: YPS, *The Golden Age Shtetl* (Chapters 2, 3, 4, pp. 57-149)

Session two

From Uman through Montreal to Kyiv: the global revolution of Ivan Kulyk

Today almost forgotten and completely misunderstood, the first head of the Ukrainian Union of Writers Ivan Kulyk (born Izrail Yudovych Kulyk) brought together his Ukraine-centered cultural enthusiasm, his Marxist utopianism, and his profound belief in the messianic role of socialist revolution. As a poet, journalist and writer, he enriched Ukrainian literature with the rhythms and themes of urban folklore, be that Uman-based romantic legends or New York-based jazz and blues. This session would explore the cultural and literary aspects of the Ukrainian national communism looking at one of the key cultural figures of the 1920s-early 1930s, who sought to fuse his Jewish, Ukrainian, Canadian Mestizo (sic!) and proletarian identities.

Readings: YPS, *The Anti-Imperial Choice* (Chapter 2)

Session three

From the Chervonohrad bookbinding shop to Kyiv-based semiotics: the avatars of Leonid Pervomaisky

Born Illia Shliomovych Hurevych to a bookbinder, Leonid Pervomais'kyi discovered his themes and metaphors that followed him throughout his life in a bookbinding shop. This session explores how multi-cultural, Russian, Ukrainian, and Jewish themes shaped the prose narrative of the would-be Ukrainian classic, how Pervomais'kyi treated the topic of Ukrainian-Jewish interaction, and how he transformed the motif of Jewish suffering and victimization into his fascinating vision of the suffering and victimized poetic language.

Readings: YPS, *The Anti-Imperial Choice* (Chapter 3)

Session four

From the Chernivtsi theater to a Jewish-Ukrainian Messianism

One of the most complex and fascinating modern Ukrainian poets, Moisei Fishbein sought to become an actor but instead discovered himself as a divine messenger sent from above to Ukraine to redeem the Ukrainian language from Russification. His life itinerary brought him from Chernivtsi to Novosibirsk to Kyiv to Jerusalem to Munich and back to Kyiv—and each of the cities significantly shaped his imagery and vision. This session discusses the Israeli-Ukrainian-Jewish encounter in life and poetry of Moisei Fishbein and places this encounter against a broader backdrop of Ukraine-Israel rapprochement in the dissident movement of the 1970s and post-1991 environment in Ukraine.

Readings: YPS, *The Anti-Imperial Choice* (Chapter 5)

Session five

Chortkiv, Ternopil, New York: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians in Vasyl Makhno's prose and poetry

There were multiple attempts at creating a myth of East Europe (particularly Galicia) as an exotic cultural colony at the edge of European civilization. There has been so far only one attempt to create a myth of North-American and European civilization as an exotic yet recognizable colony, if not a double, of the Galician multi-cultural urban environment. This session analyses how Vasyl Makhno uses poetic discoveries of Czeslaw Milosz, Dylan Thomas, and Joseph Brodsky to create his own narrative in which New York resembles Chortkiv and in which modern Israel for the first time speaks the Ukrainian language.

Readings: Vasyl Makhno, *Prose and Poetry* (Selections)