

# Holocaust and Genocide Studies

## 2018-2019 Newsletter

West Chester University has been a pioneer in Holocaust Studies since 1978 when an undergraduate course on the Holocaust was first offered. The program now includes a Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, an undergraduate minor, a regional education center, and a library collection.



## From the Director's Desk...

The Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker might argue in his recently released book *Enlightenment Now*, that the human condition has never been better, but from the perspective of scholars in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, there are some trends that are alarming, if not downright depressing. Hate crimes in the ten largest cities of the United States have increased for the fourth year in a row, genocides are occurring in Darfur, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Syria, and Myanmar, and the number of refugees worldwide is over 60 million, a number which we haven't seen since World War II. The faculty and students of the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program are committed to informing as many people as possible about these issues and other human rights abuses.

Our programming this year is an important part of this work. We will host programs on new research on the 1938 pogroms in Nazi Germany, on LGBT Jewish life in the United States and United Kingdom, and on the founding of Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, soon to be 25 years old. We have taken students to sites of Holocaust history many times and will keep our focus on experiential learning with field studies to Rwanda and Cambodia.

We will also continue to work with departments and programs across campus that are actively engaged in promoting racial, social, and economic justice. As always, Holocaust and Genocide Studies will remain a force in the cause of advancing human rights writ large.

Jonathan C. Friedman, Ph.D.  
Director

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## Germany and Poland: Field Studies 2018

*In June 2018 four Holocaust and Genocide Studies students traveled to Germany and Poland with Dr. Friedman to study the Holocaust and Jewish history in both countries. The trip lasted almost two weeks, and covered Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Munich, Warsaw, Lublin, Krakow, and Oswiecim. The following is a brief account from one of the students who participated.*

Spending two weeks touring Holocaust sites and memorials gave me more to think about than I could have anticipated. I have been left pondering everything from the nature of humanity to the role and responsibility of memorialization, to the responsibility of Holocaust historians to try to ensure such atrocities never again occur. In the weeks since our trip friends and family have asked me if I had fun, if it was depressing, how I coped with the emotionality of such a trip, and what it was that I learned. None of their questions have simple answers. Did I have fun? It is difficult to say that a trip spent touring sites of discrimination and mass murder was fun (and perhaps one shouldn't say it was).

However, spending time traveling in fascinating foreign countries with intelligent people and debating huge ethical and historical concepts is certainly something I greatly enjoy. Was the trip depressing and how did I cope with the emotions? At times it was depressing, or at the very least it was emotional. However, the nature of the sites we visited was so jarring that I was never completely immersed in the devastation. It is difficult to fully sink into the horror of the Auschwitz gas chambers when tourists with fanny packs, giant cameras, and grinning Mickey Mouse shirts gather behind you. What did I learn? How much time do you have and how interested are you in Holocaust memorialization? Ultimately, I consider this an ultimate pilgrimage for a person like me: a student of history and, specifically, an aspiring scholar in human rights and genocide. Like so many things in our lives, the key to our future lies in our past. If we truly are to prevent genocide in the future then we must look to the past to learn all we can and ensure that we never forget the cost of complacency.

*Alyssa Robishaw, HGS MA Student, Class 2019*



## Holocaust and Genocide Studies Events Fall and Spring 2018-19

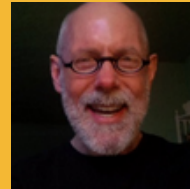
**November 8, 2018—Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Kristallnacht Pogroms**—Dr. Jonathan Friedman, Director of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, will present a lecture on how the pogroms in three cities in which they occurred impacted the lives of ordinary people. Sykes Theater, 7:00 pm.



**November 13, 2018—The Dragon, the Mountain, and the Nations: An Old Testament Myth, Its Origins, and Its Afterlives**—This presentation will be given by Dr. Robert Miller, Associate Professor of Biblical Archaeology at Catholic University. Sykes Theater, 7:00 pm.



**November 29, 2018—LGBT and Jewish Life in the United States and the United Kingdom**—This program compares and contrasts the experiences of LGBT Jews in the US and UK and features Henry Goldring, a San Francisco-based AIDS activist, historian, and author of the memoir Unbelievable, and Surat-Shaan Knan, head of the Rainbow Jews and Twilight People projects, which are preserving the history of LGBT Jews in the United Kingdom. Sykes Theater, 7:00 pm.



**April 16, 2019—The Holocaust in Popular Culture and Public History: A Forum on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Schindler's List and the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.** This symposium brings together scholars Igor Kotler (current President of the Rutgers University affiliated Museum of Human Rights), Rachel Lithgow (Executive Vice-President of Beit Hatfutsot –Tel Aviv's Museum of the History of the Jewish People), and James Licthi (History Teacher at the Milken Community School in Los Angeles) in a discussion of Holocaust research, education, and representation twenty-five years after Schindler's List. Sykes Theater, 6:30 pm.



## Holocaust and Genocide Course Offerings Spring 2019

### Undergraduate Courses

HIS 368 Gay America

Dr. Friedman, Tu 7:15-10:00 pm

### Graduate Courses

HIS 601 Readings in LGBT History

Dr. Friedman, Tu 7:15-10:00 pm

HIS 535 Nationalism and Democracy

Dr. Gaydosh, Tu 5:50-8:35 pm

CRJ 505 Criminological Theory

Dr. Przemieniecki, M 4:25-7:10 pm



## Thoughts from a HGS Graduate

My name is Alexandra Kramen, and I graduated from the Holocaust and Genocide Studies Master of Arts program at West Chester University in 2015. I am now in the second year of my doctoral studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University in Worcester, MA. My master's thesis topic, focusing on Jewish life and community in Displaced Persons Camp Föhrenwald, played a crucial role in the formation of my initial dissertation proposal and, ultimately, in my admission into the program. For that topic, and for his unwavering support throughout my master's studies, I owe a debt of gratitude to the Director of the H&GS department, Dr. Jonathan Friedman.

For those of you who currently study with Dr. Friedman and are considering pursuing a doctoral degree in the future, I offer you encouragement and advice. I once sat in the seats you now occupy, and I remember well the stress of choosing whether to write a master's thesis and, later, the topic on which I would write. Below are some thoughts on the process that might help you along your way.

First: Choose the thesis option! It may be tempting to choose the non-thesis route, but ultimately if you foresee any chance of a PhD program in your future the master's thesis provides you with an invaluable opportunity to distill your interests into a topic and develop the basic foundation of your research on that topic.

Second: Step outside of your comfort zone. When considering thesis topics, I had my heart set on studying Jewish musicians and artists in Terezín (Theresienstadt).

Dr. Friedman encouraged me to explore a less-studied topic, and pointed me in the direction of Föhrenwald and Jewish DPs in postwar Europe. Jewish spiritual resistance in Terezín (and elsewhere) remains a scholarly passion of mine; however, refugee studies and Jewish postwar displacement now constitute an integral part of my studies, and will serve as my third area of specialty in my current program. Remember that while surviving a doctoral program requires one to have a passion for her proposed dissertation topic, your topic also needs to pique the interest of potential dissertation advisers. Without the interest of a professor in the department to which you are applying you will not jump the hurdle of admission. Keep this in mind when brainstorming thesis ideas and take Dr. Friedman's advice to heart - it may very well lead you to passions you never knew you had.

Finally: Just keep swimming! Graduate studies can be overwhelming at times. Especially once you begin thinking about next steps. Others might question your choices, or tell you that you have very little chance of getting into a particular program. If this is your passion, then go for it no matter what anyone else says. But don't go forward without preparing. Do your homework, find potential advisors whose work aligns with your interests, tap into your passion when speaking and writing about your topic, and reach out to potential advisors and ask to meet with them to discuss your overlapping research interests and the doctoral program in which they teach. No matter what the obstacles, just keep swimming! Eventually you will find your way.

I wish you all the best of luck!

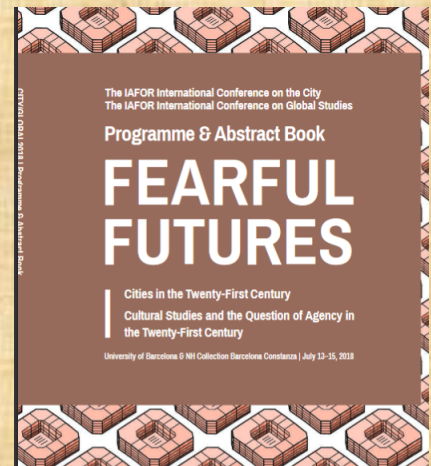
by Ali Kramen

## Academic Publications & News

Dr. Friedman, Director of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, was on sabbatical in the spring 2018, writing up the research he conducted in 2016 on LGBT Jews in the United Kingdom. He will present his initial findings in 2019 at the 19th International Conference on Diversity in Organizations, Communities, and Nations, which will be held at the University of Patras, Greece.

In addition to regional presentations on the Kabbalah and popular music and the Holocaust in recent film, Dr. Friedman gave the main workshop at the International Academic Forum's Global Studies Conference at the University of Barcelona. The workshop was entitled "The Perils of the Post-Cold War World."

Finally, his article entitled "I'm a Survivor!: The Holocaust and Larry David's Problematic Humor in *Curb Your Enthusiasm*," will be featured in the 2018 issue of the Vienna Holocaust Institute's journal *S.I.M.O.N.*



For Information about WCU's Master of Arts Program  
or the Minor in Holocaust Studies

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