INTIMATE VIOLENCE: KOPSTEIN’S STUDY ON ANTI-JEWSH POGROMS

Following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, civilians in Polish and Ukrainian communities thrust violence upon their Jewish neighbors, humiliating, torturing and murdering while the rest of the public watched. Often, the townspeople congregated to witness, participate and celebrate the slaughter of those who had lived so close to them for generations. As this particular type of savagery increased in the early twentieth century, the term “pogrom” emerged to describe a pattern of mass bloodshed that originated toward the end of the nineteenth century. Dr. Jeffrey Kopstein, Chair of Political Science at the University of California, Irvine, visited UT Dallas to share his archival research findings on pogroms in his lecture, "Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust."

Dr. Kopstein examined pogroms in places where the Germans had passed through or were approaching. He uses the term "intimate violence" to describe the phenomenon of neighborly relations that quickly dissolved into violent festival-like spectacles.

SPOTLIGHT

March 2-4: Join us for the 49th Annual Scholars’ Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches. This year’s public event features Dr. Aliza S. Wong and her lecture, “The Texas Liberator: Witness to the Holocaust.”

March 8: The School of Arts and Humanities and the Ackerman Center will jointly host "Holocaust Cantata: Songs from the Camps" at the Arapaho United Methodist Church at 7:30 PM. Details are available on the Arts & Humanities events page.

Dr. Kopstein reads an excerpt from his book. Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust, co-written with Dr. Jason Wittenberg of UC Berkeley

Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust is available for purchase online through Cambridge University Press

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He claims that the dominant history of the Holocaust focuses primarily on concentration camps and argues that the reality for Eastern European Jewry was very different. Many of them never experienced deportation or camps but were instead victims of either pogroms or mobile killing squads. In his analysis of statistical data, he noted a pattern of violence that occurred wherever the dominant majority perceived Jews as politically or socially threatening. Competing nationalism, he claimed, along with anti-Semitism contributed to the pogroms.

Eastern Europe has a long history of pogroms against Jews. Although civilians carried out these atrocities, authorities did not prevent them. Many records documenting the fate of Eastern European Jewry are unexamined. Recent scholarly research has widened the scope to unearth the missing pieces from the history of the Holocaust.

If you missed this lecture and you’re interested in our upcoming events, visit our event page at utdallas.edu/ackerman/events
By the 19th century, scientists purported racial constructions that divided humanity based on arbitrary factors, establishing a hierarchy that dehumanized people of color. Despite its influence on the contemporary world, studies on racial ideology have only just emerged in contemporary philosophical studies. Each year, the Ackerman Center hosts an annual Philosophers and Race Workshop with experts from UT Dallas faculty and visiting scholars who present and discuss their groundbreaking research. This year marks the third workshop, “The Universal Idea of Race, Semiotic Commerce and Vernacular Occurrences,” featuring opening remarks by Dr. Nils Roemer, Stan and Barbara Rabin Professor at University of Texas at Dallas.

PhD candidate Pedro Gonzalez (UT Dallas) presented his lecture, “Manufacturing Race: Racial Technologies in Mexico, Building Blocks of a Modern Nation-State.” Gonzalez analyzed racial classification systems and how evolving racial ideologies and technologies impact the formation of Mexico. Using Casta paintings, he illustrated how colonial Spain's classification of racial hierarchy transformed into a preliminary system of social class.

Below: Ignacio María Barreda's painting, Las castas mexicanas (The Mexican Castes), illustrates a racial hierarchy where people with whiter skin are set above anyone who appeared more indigenous or darker.

PhD Candidate Pedro Gonzalez lectures on racial systems in Mexico

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Dr. Yael Siman (Iberoamericana University) (right) discussed Holocaust survivors and their experiences integrating into Mexican society amidst existing racial perceptions in her presentation, “Race, Mestizaje, and Antisemitism: Political and Social Experiences of Holocaust Survivors in Mexico in the 1930s and 1940s." Having overcome the existence of "foreigners in a foreign land," the Jewish presence merged with the Mexican one, ensuring that the legacy of the Holocaust remained in the country. As a result, the portrait of Mexican society grew more complex.

Dr. Whitney Stewart (UT Dallas) (below right) shifted the focus to the United States' racializing practices of the plantation era in her lecture, “Racializing the American Home: Home-Making on James Madison’s Montpelier Plantation." By analyzing Madison's Virginia plantation architectural structure, Dr. Stewart demonstrated how slave owners racialized "home." Home, she explained, provides both safety and belonging. Madison built his plantation to hide slaves from view thereby excluding them from the household and the home. On the other hand, she expressed that seclusion granted slaves the ability to resist their subjugation through participating in activities they wanted to keep secret from their enslavers. (continued on page 5)
The workshop spanned two days. The first day gave the public the opportunity to listen and learn from scholars as well as ask questions. On day two, the scholars gathered for a private forum where they exchanged views and learned from each other’s research.

Nazis racialized Jews, systematically dehumanizing them and reducing them to vermin worthy of extermination. Therefore, understanding race and racial theories remains essential to Holocaust Studies. The Ackerman Center plans to continue holding workshops on race and racism in the hopes of further expanding Holocaust scholarship.