

Polish Studies PLW 4905– Spring 2004
Section 8754
3 Credit Hours
MWF 6th period in MAEA 327

Instructor: Professor Christopher Caes
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Hours: XX or by appointment
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Society and Culture in Poland, 1905-2004

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course description: This course is an introduction to central issues in Polish culture and society of the last 100 years. Over the period in question, which stretches from the first socialist uprisings in Russian czarist-ruled Poland to the country's entry into the European Union, Poles lived under no less than seven different regimes. Our emphasis in the course will be on the dialectic of continuity and change that this political history has impressed on Polish culture and society. As parliamentary democracy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and war alternate variously on the political landscape, what sorts of cultural representations do Poles fashion to maintain national identity? How are the terms of debates on topics such as intellectuals and political radicalism, national minorities and nationalism, Catholicism and civil society, Polish-Jewish relations, gender and national identity, definitions of resistance to and collaboration with Nazism and communism, and mass culture inflected and reinterpreted over time? Finally, as Poland adopts its latest national and geopolitical guise as EU member state, how does its "carousel" history involve it on its path to integration in contradictions and clashes with Western Europe on issues such as minority groups, church and state relations, and terrorism? This course poses these and other questions via readings of original documents, social and cultural history, essays, literature, and viewing of films.

PREREQUISITE: There is no prerequisite for this course.

REQUIRED READING LIST – Books available at X.

Miron Białoszewski. *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* [1970]. Edited and translated by Madeline Levine. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991.
Jan T. Gross. *Neighbors*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001.
Czesław Miłosz. *The Captive Mind* [1951]. New York: Vintage Books. 1983.
Zbigniew Uniłowski. *Shared Room*. [1932] [My own, unpublished translation.]
Adam Zagajewski. *Solidarity, Solitude* [1986]. Translated by Lillian Vallee. New York: Ecco Press, 1990.
[Additional text to be announced]

Films:

Andrzej Wajda – *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958)

Andrzej Wajda – *Man of Marble* (1976)

Filip Bajon – *Poznań '56* (1996)

Additionally, a course reader containing relevant essays and articles will be made available at a local copy shop. There will be readings from this reader each week.

REQUIREMENTS:

Weighting – attendance and participation, 15%; in-class midterm, 25%; in-class final exam, 30%; 10-page research paper, 30%.

1. Attendance

Attendance is an absolute requirement of this course. The format of this course is lecture and discussion. This means that it is not sufficient merely to read the assigned material in order to make progress. Since the emphasis of this course is on transitions and historical interpretation over time, very often our approach to our primary texts will depend precisely on *not* taking them at face value, but engaging them critically and evaluating their claims and representational techniques. For this reason, absences put you at a severe disadvantage, depriving you of the benefit of lectures and participation in class discussions, often the key staging grounds for exam questions and strong paper topics. Inform your instructor of emergencies that require you to miss class and see your fellow students to catch up on what was covered!

2. Participation

Lively participation in and contribution to class discussions is a key ongoing requirement for the entire course. Students will be expected to assume partial responsibility for initiating, guiding, and continuing discussion.

3. Reading

Attentive and regular reading of our primary texts themselves is an absolute must. Learn to gauge your reading. You will be expected to read upwards of 150 pages a week and it is important that we all stay on the same page! You know your own pace best, so allow yourself plenty of time before class to get through each week's material.

4. Mid-term and Final Exams

There will be two in-class exams in this course, a mid-term and a final. The format of these exams will be a combination of question-and-answer and choice of essay questions.

5. Paper

You will be required to write 10-page research paper on a course topic of your own choosing. Work on the paper will proceed in stages – selection of topic; submission of overview, outline, and bibliography; and submission of final paper.

IMPORTANT DATES

X – Map quiz

X – Mid-term exam

X – Topic for research paper due

X – Overview, outline, and bibliography for research paper due

X – Research paper due

X – Final exam

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1 – Introduction

Poland's shifting borders; Polish history, society, and culture under the partitions; culture and national identity; the 1905 uprisings; Roman Dmowski and Józef Piłsudski, or, National Democracy vs. socialist nationalism; World War I and the creation of an independent Polish state.

Course Reader: Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 172-204; Robert Blobaum, selection from *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907*.

Week 2 – Independent Poland Between the Wars, 1918-1939

The Dmowski/Piłsudski rivalry – theory into practice; ethnic and religious diversity in interwar Poland; shifting definitions of national identity and the “purpose” of national culture; cultural bohemianism.

Zbigniew Uniłowski, *Shared Room*, Chapters 1-6.

Course Reader: Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 204-223; Brian Porter, selection from *When Nationalism Learned to Hate*.

Week 3 – Independent Poland Between the Wars, 1918-1939 (cont'd)

The crisis of parliamentary democracy and the increasingly authoritarian program of *sanacja* [‘cleaning’]; contradictory relations between state and society and the varying

shapes of social reaction; political radicalization and intellectuals; the Polish Communist Party and culture; modernity, the state, and conceptions of the individual.

Zbigniew Uniłowski, *Shared Room*, Chapters 7-12.
Course Reader: Aleksander Wat, selection from *My Century: Odyssey of a Polish Intellectual*.

Week 4 – World War II, 1939-1945

September 1939: the fall of Poland; Polish society and culture under German and Soviet occupation; cultural memory and national models of behavior; the Warsaw Uprising; culture and “historical trauma.”

Miron Białoszewski, *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*, pp. 1-140.
Course Reader: Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 223-249;
Jan Gross, selection from *Polish Society Under German Occupation*.

Week 5 – World War II, 1939-1945 (cont'd)

The Holocaust in Poland; Poles and Jews before, during, and immediately following World War II; competing historical and cultural narratives.

Miron Białoszewski, *Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*, pp. 141-234;
Jan Gross, *Neighbors*, pp. 1-80.

Week 6 – The Future in Flux, 1945-1949

The redrawing of Poland's boundaries at Yalta and the geopolitical inevitability of communism; postwar violence in Poland; shifting debates on the legacy of interwar Poland and of the culture of wartime resistance; the historicism of the intelligentsia.

Jan Gross, *Neighbors*, 90-240.
Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, vii-53.

Course reader: Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 250-255.

Week 7 – Stalinism, 1950-1955

The imposition of Stalinist communism; Socialist Realism in literature, film, and culture; competing models of cultural agency under Stalinism: resistance vs. collaboration; cultural plurality under Stalinism?; the Church and secular Catholicism.

Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, pp. 54-251.

Week 8 – The ‘Thaw,’ 1956-1960

The collapse of Stalinism and the appearance of cultural freedom; October 1956; the remarkable rise and topicality of Polish cinema; the partial rehabilitation of the wartime resistance; political reform vs. party restoration; intellectuals and Marxist revisionism; competing explanations for Stalinism.

Course Reader: Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 256-263; Paweł Hertz, "Recollections from the House of the Dead;" Leszek Kołakowski, "The Priest and the Jester."

View Andrzej Wajda's film *Ashes and Diamonds* [1958].

Week 9 – "Really Existing Socialism" and the events of March 1968; Polish Culture in Emigration

Strange bedfellows: political stagnation and cultural avant-garde experimentation; irony and social fragmentation; student demonstrations and communism's rapprochement with Polish anti-Semitism; mass exodus of Jews as well as prominent members of cultural intelligentsia; models of Polish culture abroad: emigration or exile?; Jerzy Giedroyc and *Kultura*.

Course reader: Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 264-266; selections from Gombrowicz, *Diary*; Miłosz, *Private Obligations*; and Robert Kustrzewa, *Between East and West: Writings from Kultura*.

Week 10 – Gierek's Poland and the path to Solidarity, 1970-1981

New conceptions of culture: consumption vs. ethics; the constitutional debate and the founding of the Workers' Defense Committee; the appearance of underground presses and the establishment of underground culture; new perspectives on interwar Poland and Stalinism.

Course reader: Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 267-276; Adam Michnik, "A New Evolutionism;"

View Andrzej Wajda's film *Man of Marble* [1976]

Week 11 – Gierek's Poland and the path to Solidarity, 1970-1981

Polish in the spotlight: the election of Karol Wojtyła as Pope John Paul II and the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Czesław Miłosz; the establishment of Solidarity; the new alliance between intellectuals and "nation"; competing conceptions of Solidarity – class or nation?; women in Solidarity.

Course reader: Michael Bernhard, selections from *From the Polish Underground Selections from Krytyka, 1978-1993*; Shana Penn, selection from *National Secret: The Women Who Brought Democracy to Poland*.

Week 12 – From martial law to the ‘Third’ Republic, 1981-1989

The imposition of martial law; culture and martyrology; interpretations of martial law; resistance and/as diversity; the end of communism.

Course reader: Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 276-289.
Adam Zagajewski, *Solidarity, Solitude*, pp. 1-166.

Week 13 – Post-communism, 1990-2004

Political discontinuities and cultural continuities; symbolic politics; economic privatization and the privatization of historical memory; *ressentiment* in cultural narratives.

Course reader: Gil Eyal, Ivan Szelenyi, Eleanor Townsley, selection from *Making Capitalism Without Capitalists*.

View Filip Bajon’s film *Poznań ’56*.

Week 14 – Post-communism, 1990-2004

Redefinitions of national identity and the “purpose” of national culture; commercialization and mass culture – imitation or improvisation?; the departure of post-Solidarity actors from the political and cultural scene; political, social, and cultural analogies with interwar Poland; economic difficulty, corruption, and political radicalization.

Text to be announced.

Week 15 – Poland in the New Europe, 2004- .

East-West dilemmas and dichotomies; Poland – margin or heart of Europe?; hopes and apprehensions regarding European Union membership.

Text to be announced.