

## GEOP Workshops 2020

### Affective Encounters: Jewish Objects and Emotions in Poland and East-Central Europe after the Holocaust, May 2020

#### Organizers:

- Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture – Simon Dubnov
- Leipzig University
- Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences

The workshop explores the afterlife of Jewish objects in Poland and East-Central Europe since 1945. It focuses on the reciprocal relationship between the material and the human world and investigates the extent to which post- Holocaust Jewish things generate emotional and affective power and interact with individuals and societies. Bringing together scholars from different disciplines and curators from POLIN museum, the workshop will examine the fate and evolution of private and communal property, everyday items, sacral remnants, artifacts and commemorative objects, as well as their literary representation and musealization. Analyzing the emotional and affective aspects of post-war Jewish objects and tracing their changing meanings, perceptions and symbolic status, this workshop offers a unique platform for rethinking the material, cultural, social and psychological aftermath of the Holocaust.

### Between and Beyond the World Wars: Innovative Approaches to the Polish-Jewish Experience in the Interwar Period, June 2020

#### Organizers:

- University of California, Berkeley,
- McGill University
- Tulane University
- University of Łódź

The short interwar period shaped Polish-Jewish civilization definitively and those within this civilization as well as those observing it since agree that the richness and complexity of Polish-Jewish life during these two decades was unmatched anywhere else in the Jewish world. Reflecting on this Polish-Jewish civilization in 1986, historian Ezra Mendelsohn posed what is now considered a quintessential question: “interwar Poland: good for the Jews or bad for the Jews?” Building on the interdisciplinary, scholarly work inspired by Mendelsohn

over the past thirty years, the workshop will assemble a range of experts whose continuing research inquiries reach beyond prevailing paradigms and highlight overlooked or misunderstood aspects of the historical narrative that are crucial for a fuller understanding of the complex interwar period writ large.

The papers assembled for this event move forward and backward from the 1920s and 1930s, to embed these two decades within longer trajectories that illuminate other moments within Polish-Jewish, Polish, and East European history, as well as inward, to further dissect the peculiarities of the Polish Jewish experience and the broader links which existed across the region and throughout the Polish Jewish diaspora.

### **Jewish Experiences of Incarceration: Sources, Methodologies and Questions, July 2020**

#### **Organizers:**

- German Historical Institute Warsaw
- Wrocław University
- University of Haifa

The workshop will bring together research on Jewish history and the history of incarceration in Poland and Lithuania from a broad range of disciplines including historical anthropology, philology and art history. It will be a first attempt to discuss a typology of varying forms of incarceration of Jews from medieval times to the earlier 20th century and an analysis of narratives of Jewish experiences of imprisonment. Its main goal is to ask both about specific Jewish community practices of incarceration and about Jewish strategies of dealing with incarceration in state institutions.

### **Representations of Polish Rescuers of Jews in a Comparative Perspective: Lessons from the Holocaust for Contemporary Europe, August 2020**

#### **Organizers:**

- University College London
- Pedagogical University in Kraków

Given the growing scholarly and popular interest in rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust on one hand, and the increasing misuses of the history and representations of rescuers of Jews in political culture and public memory and history writing on the other, this workshop will explore how the history of Polish rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust has been

represented in historical education in state education and in independent non-profit educational programs in museums between 1990 s till the present. Comparisons between representations of rescuers in post-communist Poland and other European countries (and also Israel) will be made in order to identify global and local/national trends and differences and commonalities in themes and strategies of presenting rescuers in different political, cultural and historical contexts. This project is envisaged as a means of creating an intellectual community of scholars, educators and curators engaged in breaching the gap between contemporary research on rescuers of Jews and history education on the subject.

## **Hidden in Plain Sight: Yiddish in the Socialist Bloc, 1941/44-1991, November 2020**

### **Organizers:**

- Columbia University
- Wrocław University
- Free University Berlin
- Jena University

The (hi)story and role of Yiddish in the postwar Socialist Bloc has been studied only selectively and is yet to be told in a comprehensive manner. A lachrymose idea of post/war Yiddish in general and of Yiddish behind the “Iron Curtain” specifically has long justified this neglect: while Hitler killed the readers and Stalin killed the writers, the small portions of Yiddish-speakers who did survive in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union and decided to stay, gradually had to assimilate to Russian, Polish or other hegemonic languages around them – or so the story went. Building on important scholarly exceptions that started to fill this lacuna, the workshop aims to bring together scholars of Yiddish Studies to discuss Yiddish culture – its web of meaning and cultural expressions – and the role of *mame-loshn* – be it symbolic, ritualistic, cultural or political – in the communist countries after the Second World War until the collapse of the Socialist bloc.