

CfP: (Un)Witnessable: Holocaust in the East - A Grad Student Conference APR 27-28, 2017

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

April 27, 2017 to April 28, 2017

Location:

Pennsylvania, United States

Subject Fields:

Eastern Europe History / Studies, Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, Jewish History / Studies, Modern European History / Studies, Russian or Soviet History / Studies

(Un)Witnessable: Holocaust in the East

A graduate conference presented by The Program in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, Slavic Languages and Literatures, Jewish Studies, and Slavics Without Borders, a Graduate Student Colloquium

University of Pennsylvania

April, 27-28, 2017

Keynote Speaker: Anika Walke (Washington University)

“All in all, as many if not more Jews were killed by bullets as by gas, but they were killed by bullets in easterly locations that are blurred in painful remembrance.”

From “Holocaust: The Ignored Reality” by Timothy Snyder

“No fiber of my body will forget this.”

From “Babi Yar” by Yevgeni Yevtushenko

The fields of Holocaust and trauma studies have been dominated by material and testimonial-based evidence. While these forms of witness capture the concentration camp narrative and illuminate aspects of the catastrophe in Western Europe, the East remains underdeveloped in popular knowledge and scholarly discourse.

This is in part due to the contrast between Nazi extermination strategies in the Western and Eastern regions-- the programmatic, mechanized, and obsessively documented camp model versus the Holocaust administered by bullets, where the majority of victims were killed by shooting squads, often near their homes and even by people they knew. Beyond the workings of an alienated bureaucratic apparatus or oppressive ideology, the East tells a story of personal contact where every pull of the trigger bore the weight of an individual’s own decision to shoot.

Furthermore, the Holocaust in the East remained untold and even denied as a result of Stalin’s post-war anti-Jewish campaign, which among other official memory politics, rejected the fact that Jews

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were both targeted by and fought against the Nazis along with other Soviet nationalities. Thus, Jews were neither soldiers, nor martyrs, leaving their story with no place in official Soviet discourse.

This conference seeks to investigate the (un)witnessed and (un)witnessable atrocities in the East-- the vast territory of the Soviet Union as well as the eastern regions of Poland. In the absence of concrete records and even material remains, we ask: How can we understand, represent, and analyze the crimes of Nazi persecution in these regions? How do we make sense of Eastern monumentalization and memorial practices or their absence? How do contemporary local political attitudes in the East and globally influence the narrative and cultural production surrounding the past? And how might literature and passed down ancestral narratives help re-imagine this traumatic past haunting archives and history books?

We are interested in submissions from all disciplines including, but not limited to: literature, history, Jewish studies, anthropology, sociology, political science, culture and media studies, philosophy and critical theory that engage the following topics:

- Comparative analysis of the Holocaust in the Eastern and Western Regions (lenses include but are not limited to Literature & Literary theory, Jewish Studies, history, anthropology, visual studies, digital humanities, film, art history)
 - The Jewish Question
 - Occupation, complicity & collaboration: victims, bystanders, witnesses
 - Displacement and evacuation in the Soviet interior
- Memory
 - (Post)Soviet era memory, and commemoration, revisionism, and counter-memories
 - Transnational/Global memory construction and commemoration
 - The Memory Industry: Ethical implications around commercialization of trauma
 - Museums, memorials and archives
 - The politics of Holocaust memory transformation by the passing of the survivor generation
 - Post-memory and intergenerational transmission of trauma
 - The influence of technological advances on memory preservation and transmission
- Testimony
 - "Holocaust testimony": initial efforts, ongoing collection practices, analysis of the conceptualization and meaning of the term, etc.
 - Oral history, its theory and practice
- Holocaust Narrative
 - Narrative structures: documentary and fiction
 - Poetry and poetics
 - Correspondence, diary, memoir, autobiography
 - The Holocaust in the East in literature, cinema, theatre, fine arts, and popular culture
 - Front line journalism: newspapers, photography, film, etc.
 - Relationship to the Great Patriotic War narrative
- Postwar Investigations
 - The Extraordinary State Commission (ChGK), NKVD, the Mints Commission
 - Ongoing archeological investigations into mass grave sites
- Gender and Sexuality

- Trauma Theory
- The responsibilities of the scholar
- Contemporary initiatives in the field of Holocaust education

Please send your 300 word abstracts in the body of an email with “(Un)Witnessable” submission, “LASTNAME” in the title to Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach slavicswithoutborders@gmail.com, by December 15, 2016. Submissions should include the paper title, author’s name, affiliation, and email address.

Keynote: Professor Anika Walke (Washington University) is the author of *Pioneers and Partisans: An Oral History of Nazi Genocide in Belorussia*, which analyzes how the first generation of Soviet Jews experienced the Nazi genocide and how they remember it in a context of social change. Her recent continues her interest in the aftermath of the Holocaust and World War II. In particular, she is interested in how people remember and live with the effects and repercussions of systematic violence in Belarus. She will be delivering a Keynote entitled: "Split Memory: Remembering War, Genocide, and Holocaust in Belarus."

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