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**Exploring culture and society in transition:  
Gender, sexuality, and class in Poland**

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**Prerequisite / Co-requisite:**

none

**Description:**

After 1989, as Poland transitioned from a centrally planned to a market economy, and as Solidarity and the Catholic church transitioned from the margins of Poland's political and cultural life to its center, the situation of workers, women, and queer people also underwent major changes. Not all those who were swept up by the changes experienced greater freedom and prosperity, though people and ideas could now cross Poland's borders unimpeded, and store shelves sagged with goods that had once been unattainable. As a result of neoliberal policies, workers who had enjoyed the security of full-time long-term employment found themselves in a precarious position. Likewise, the position of many women and queer people became precarious. Western feminist, gay rights, and queer discourses clashed with the official discourses that relegated queer people to the closet and women to the domestic sphere, where they would not be competing with men for scarce jobs. Meanwhile, backed by the Catholic church, the conservative media, used homophobia as the core of the new Polish nationalism. Local ways of doing gender and sexuality, some of which undermined essentialist ways of thinking, soon gave way to western identity-based feminist and LGBT movements. More recently, as Poland began to attract immigrants from Asia, Africa, and the former Soviet republics, these groups were targeted by the increasingly visible neo-nationalist organizations which blend the American ideology of white power imported with local anti-Semitic discourses. However, not all racial minorities in Poland are disempowered. A sizeable community of Korean and Chinese entrepreneurs and their families has sprung up around the Special Industrial Zone set up by local authorities on the outskirts of Wrocław to remedy the unemployment crisis. While the Chinese and Koreans have created much needed jobs, they have also resorted to unfair labor practices, provoking a strike in the summer of 2012.

The objective of this course, which combines a historical/theoretical component with action research, is to allow students to explore the current situation of women, queer people, workers, and racial/ethnic minorities in Poland, both through printed sources and first-hand. But since one of the main reasons students sign up for study-abroad programs is to expose themselves to cultural difference, a major component of the course will be writing a thematically-focused, self-reflexive journal. In the preliminary phase of the course students will be introduced to the theory

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of intersectionality as well as the basic concepts of the methodology used in ethnographic, autoethnographic and intersectionality studies. To help students process their encounters with difference, they will be also asked to read excerpts from studies on power dynamic between gender, sexuality, class, and race/ethnicity in the Eastern European context.

Malgorzata Maciejew..., 3/27/13 12:50 AM

**Comment [1]:** czy kurs ma sie odbywac do w ogole europy sr-wsch czy tylko do Polski? Bo wczesniej pisalas ze ma zostac polski kontekst poszerzony

**Learning Outcomes\* (definition and examples at end of form):**

**After taking this course, the students will be able to:**

- conduct focus groups and ethnographic interviews with an awareness of the power dynamics at work between the interviewer and interviewee.

- to analyze, and report on socio-cultural data collected in a foreign culture with the assistance of volunteer translators.

- explain the effects of the post-1989 transformation in Poland on working-class people, women, as well as non-heterosexual people.

- reflect critically in writing on their own experience of living and studying in a foreign culture.

**Bibliography/ Texts / Supplies – Required:**

- Adams, Tony E., and Stacey Holman Jones. "Telling Stories: Reflexivity, Queer Theory and Autoethnography." *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies* 11 (2011): 108-116.
- Anthias, Floya and Nira Yuval Davis, *Contextualizing feminism: gender, ethnic and class divisions*, *Feminist Review* 15(1): 62-75, 1983.
- Basiuk, Tomasz, Dominika Ferens, and Tomasz Sikora, eds. *Out Here: Local and International Perspectives in Queer Studies*. Amersham: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2006.
- Brettell, Caroline B., ed. *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography*. Westport, CT: Bergin Garvey, 1996.
- Choo, Hae Yeon, Myra Marx Ferree, *Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A critical analysis of inclusions, interactions and institutions in the study of inequalities*, forthcoming paper
- Denzin Norman, "Emancipatory Discourses and the Ethics and Politics of Interpretation." Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, eds. *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000.
- Dunn, Elizabeth. Chapter 1 (The road to capitalism), Chapter 2 (Ideas of kin and home on the shop floor), in: *Privatizing Poland. Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Ellis, Carolyn, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*. Walnut Cree, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004.
- Graff, Agnieszka. "A Different Chronology: Reflections on Feminism in Contemporary Poland." In: *Third Wave Feminism. A Critical Exploration. Expanded Second Edition*. Ed. Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, Rebecca Munford (London: Palgrave, 2007), 142-155.
- Graff, Agnieszka. "Gender and Nation, Here and Now: Reflections on the Gendered and Sexualized Aspects of Contemporary Polish Nationalism." In: *Intimate Citizenships: Gender, Sexualities, Politics*, Elzbieta H. Oleksy, ed. (London: Routledge Series in Gender and Society, 2009), 133-146.

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- Hardy, Jane. Chapter 1 (*Introduction: Poland's New Capitalism*), Chapter 7 (*Every Day Life Under Neoliberalism: Work And Welfare*), Chapter 9 (*No More Stockings And Acknowledgements Glossary*), in: *Poland's New Capitalism*. London: Pluto, 2008.
- InterAlia: A Journal of Queer Studies* [www.interalia.org.pl](http://www.interalia.org.pl) (published in English and Polish).
- Leong, Russell. "Eclipse." *Phoenix Eyes*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.
- McCall, Leslie. "The complexity of intersectionality." *Signs* 30.3 (2005): 1771-1800.
- Maciejewska, Małgorzata. "Exhausted bodies and precious products: Women's work in a Special Economic Zone for the electronics industry in Poland." *Work Organisation, Labour and Globalisation* 6.2 (2012): 94-112.
- Mizielińska, Joanna and Robert Kulpa, eds. *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*. Ashgate, 2011.
- Munoz, Jose Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The then and there of Queer Futurity*. New York: NYU Press, 2009.
- Kamberelis George and Greg Dimitriadis. "Focus Groups: Strategic Articulation of Pedagogy, Politics, and Inquiry." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Eds. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000.
- Plummer, Ken. "Critical Humanism and Queer Theory: Living with the Tensions." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Eds. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000.
- Puar, Jasbir, K. "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages." *Social Text* 84-85 (Fall-Winter 2005): 121-139.
- Puwar, N. Chapter 1 (Introduction: Proximities) and Chapter 2 (Of men and Empire) in *Space invaders. Race, gender and bodies out of place*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004. 1-29.
- Witkowski, Michał. *Lubiewo*. 2005; English translation *Lovetown*. Anagrama, 2011. (novel on the non-normative underground sexual life in communist-era Wrocław).

### **Supplies–Additional:**

#### **Films**

- Strajk matek* [Mothers' Strike] <http://en.labournet.tv/video/6189/mothers-strike>. Dir. Małgorzata Maciejewska and Magda Malinowska (2011, documentary film co-produced by SzumTV and OZZIP on homeless mothers in the post-industrial town of Wałbrzych).
- Podziemne państwo kobiet* [The Women's Underground State]. Dir. Anna Zdrojewska and Claudia Snochowska-González (2009, documentary on the abortion underground in Poland).
- Marsz Równości idzie dalej* [The Equality March Goes On]. (2011, documentary on Polish gay pride marches).
- Specjalne strefy wyzysku* [Special Exploitation Zones] Dir. Małgorzata Maciejewska and Magda Malinowska, produced by SzumTV and Feminist Think Tank (2013, documentary on a workers' strike in the Special Industrial Zone near Wrocław).
- Papusza*. Dir. Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze (2013, feature

### **Requirements:**

#### **Student projects:**

1. Throughout the course, students will write a thematically focused journal and may collaborate in groups to read and comment on each others' writing.
  - Students will choose topics to focus their personal reflections. They will be encouraged to make cross-cultural comparisons, referring to their US experience.
  - The practice of autoethnography will be introduced through Carolyn Ellis's *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography* (2004) and other texts on the methodology of autoethnographic research..
2. Students will work in pairs to conduct interviews with local university students and activists on a topic of their own choice to practice the research process and interviewing techniques. They will

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then write a report commenting on their group feedback on the research process. In order to prepare for this task, students will be introduced to several methods of conducting free interviews presented in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln. The instructors will assist students to make contacts with volunteers and student-interpreters from the Department of English Studies.

Students will then collaborate in groups to analyze the interviews, collectively produce a short report referring to selected sources from the syllabus, and present the report to the class.

Students working on labor and gender can refer to statistical evidence from the Local Data Bank [http://www.stat.gov.pl/bdlen/app/strona.html?p\\_name=indeks](http://www.stat.gov.pl/bdlen/app/strona.html?p_name=indeks) (available in English).

**Grading:**

Attendance and participation	20%
Journal entries	40%
Interview and report	40%

**Course Specific Policies on attendance, late work, make up work, examinations if outside normal class time, etc.:**

[To be announced – we need to know what the policies are at Syracuse].

**Additional Information:**

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**Academic Integrity**

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort.

For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

**Disability-Related Accommodations**

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services(ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for

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requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

**Religious Observances Policy**

SU religious observances policy, found at [http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm), recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to are religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through **MySlice/StudentServices/Enrollment/MyReligiousObservances** from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

Class no.	Date	Topic	Readings
1.	Oct. 2	Theoretical intro. and historical background	Excerpts from: Dunn; Hardy; Basiuk et al.; Maciejewska; Graff
2.	Oct. 8	Documentary films <i>The Women's Underground State</i> <i>Mothers' Strike</i>	Excerpts from Dunn; Maciejewska; Graff Excerpts from Ellis, <i>The Ethnographic I.</i>
3.	Oct. 9	Intersectionality: gender and class	Excerpts from: Puar; McCall; Choo et al.; Puar; Mizielińska and Kulpa
4.	Oct. 15	Intersectionality: race and sexuality Documentary film: <i>The Equality March Goes On</i> Excerpts from feature film: <i>Papusza</i>	Excerpts from Witkowski; Basiuk et al.; Mizielińska and Kulpa
5.	Oct. 16	Documentary films and discussion <i>Special Exploitation Zones</i>	Excerpts from Ellis, <i>The Ethnographic I.</i>
6.	Oct. 22	Race, gender, and sexuality at the university	Excerpts from Ellis, <i>The Ethnographic I.</i>
7.	Oct. 23	Trip to university, "milk bar," and CRK	
8.	Oct. 29	Intro. to action research	Excerpts from: Denzin & Lincoln; Dunn, Leong
9.	Oct. 30	Introduction to action research	Brettell
10.	Nov. 5	Interviewing methods and techniques	Denzin & Lincoln
11.	Nov. 6	Formulating research projects	
12.	Nov. 13	Conducting interviews	
13.	Nov. 27	Group group analysis of interviews	
14.	Dec. 4	Round table with informants	
15.	Dec. 11	Conclusions	

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