



KIIS Slavic Europe: Poland, Summer 2026

HIST 490 Topics: Battlegrounds of Empires

Instructor: Dr. Adrian Mandzy, Ph.D.

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description: This course focuses on the peoples, histories and cultures of Ukraine and Poland with special focus on the Soviet and Nazi occupations. The class combines traditional class activities with excursions to relevant places of interest in Eastern Europe, including two Nazi camps (Auschwitz and Sviatoslav). Students are asked to critically examine their encounters with Slavic society and how the past is remembered. Includes an opportunity to present a paper at an international student conference.

2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

Learning Goals: Historical Knowledge and Thinking

1. Students will be able to identify the key events which express/define change over time in a particular place or region
 - o Examine the history of Ukraine and Poland
 - o Appraise the historical significance of nationalism and its influence on East Europe
2. Graduates will be able to articulate historical arguments orally
 - o Participate in discussions and other forms of verbal discussion
 - o Deliver a historical presentation in oral form
3. Students will appreciate the influence the past has on the present
 - o Critically examine what is emphasized in public space and historical memory
 - o Evaluate and use multiple forms of evidence
 - o Formulate important historical questions

4. Major Topics covered in the Course: This history course explores how the past influences current society. To provide students with a basic grounding in the region's complex history, an overview of events is presented in lecture form. To get a better understanding of how these past events are remembered and internalized, a significant amount of time is devoted to on site visits of museums and public space which remember (or in some cases forget to remember) that which came before.

5. Required Readings: There is no required textbook. Readings will consist of an autobiography, Maria Savchyn Pyskir, Ania Savage (Translator), *Thousands of Roads: A Memoir of a Young Woman's Life in the Ukrainian Underground during and after World War II*, McFarland & Company, 2001, ISBN: 0786407646. Three additional book chapters and articles will be made available to students.

6. Graded Assignments:

Writing Assignment: Each student will write two cultural journal essays during the semester. In writing the cultural journal essay, students are asked to examine critically their encounters with Ukrainian and Polish societies in written form. The subject matter should reflect the student's familiarity with current course material as well as a processing of his/her real cultural experiences/encounters. Often, topics or guiding questions for the cultural journal will be announced in class.

Presentation: In addition to lectures and discussions, every student will be called on to deliver a lecture in their area of study at the end of the program. Past lectures have dealt with such varied topics on preserving the Jewish ghetto in L'viv, observations on racism, the public treatment of veterans, and re-enactors. Presentation of a paper at the conference fulfills this require.

Exams: Since knowledge is not simply an exercise in restating memorized facts, the final exam will allow students to incorporate the information they have learned during the course of the semester and apply it to particular questions. However, since the application of information requires a familiarity with the basics of the course material, the exam will include a section that tests the student's acquaintance with this information.

Class Participation: Students need to actively participate in class discussions. To do so, students will need to read ahead of time and actively observe the society they are interacting with during their time abroad.

Grades

Essays (15% each)	20%
Presentation	30%
Final Exam	20%
Class Participation	20%

Total – 100%

Grading Scale:

- A 90 - 100%
- B 80 - 89%
- C 70 - 79%
- D 60 - 69%
- E 0 – 59%

I will round up grades if they are .5 or above, for example, an 89.5 is an A, but 79.2 remains a C.

7. Generative AI Policy:

Generative AI is permitted/encouraged in some ways, with proper attribution, but prohibited in other ways.

Students are allowed, encouraged, and even required to use Generative AI in some ways but are prohibited from using it in other ways. Keep in mind that any content produced by generative AI can “hallucinate” (produce false information), so students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any AI-generated content. Examples of citing AI are available at: <https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai>.

Students are permitted and encouraged to use generative AI in the following ways:

- Brainstorming: You may use generative AI to stimulate creativity, generate ideas, or brainstorm topics for papers, presentations, and discussions. The generated content must serve as a steppingstone, not a final product.
- Citation Assistance: AI tools can be used to manage, format, and organize citations and references, promoting adherence to academic writing standards and specific style guides required for individual assignments.
- Grammar and Style Checking: AI-powered writing enhancement tools may be used to help with spelling, grammar, syntax, and stylistic errors.
- Concept Understanding: Generative AI can be used to explain or simulate concepts taught in class, aiding in a deeper understanding.
- Research Assistance: AI can be used to conduct initial research, compile data, and summarize articles, books, or papers. It should not replace traditional research methods but rather enhance them.

You may not use generative AI in coursework in the following ways:

- Plagiarism: Using AI-generated content as your original work without attribution. This includes essays, papers, presentations, and exam answers.
- Data Manipulation: Using AI tools to alter data or create misleading information.
- Misrepresentation of Skills: Using generative AI to complete tasks that are meant to assess your knowledge and skills.
- Confidentiality Breach: Using AI tools that might violate KIIS/university policies or laws related to data privacy and confidentiality.

Metacognitive Reflection. In addition to a proper citation, the student should include the following statement with any assignment where generative AI is used for assistance.

"I used generative AI [INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM] for assistance in the following ways on this assignment: [INSERT WAYS USED, such as brainstorming, citation assistance, grammar and style checking, concept understanding, and research assistance, etc.]."

8. Attendance Policy:

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

9. Disability Accommodation:

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

10. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/titleix/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.