

Call for Workshop Participants

Women's Spaces of Existence: Gendered Everyday Perspectives on the Holocaust

A cooperation between the Center for Jewish Studies, University of Graz, and WHISC - Women in the Holocaust International Study Center (WHISC)

Organizers (in alphabetical order): Yaakov Asher (WHISC), Susanne Korbel (University of Graz), Gerald Lamprecht (University of Graz), Lily Zamir (WHISC)

Location: online and University of Graz (Austria)

Dates: 24-25 February 2025 (workshop part 1: online), 4-6 May 2026 (workshop part 2: in person at the University of Graz)

Women's – Jewish and non-Jewish – spaces of existence and/or survival in the Holocaust existed in different forms, including areas in and adjacent to concentration camps. As Christa Paul demonstrates, women in concentration camps could "earn" "privileged" spaces working as forced prostitutes, for example, which could enable them to survive (Paul 1994). Other spaces of survival were located closer to or in the environment experienced as belonging to the everyday before National Socialist persecution: Politically and/or racially persecuted women could survive outside the camps in privileged "mixed marriages", in hiding and protected by contacts, or in hope of surviving by constantly fleeing.

There is no need to emphasize that the Holocaust and research on the Holocaust are decisively determined by gender and are equally biased in this respect. Research on the Holocaust has started to increasingly focus on gender-specific work, fostering studies on (Jewish) men and masculinity, and gradually also women, sexuality, and queerness.

These important approaches made us learn that gender played a decisive role in camps and ghettos (Goldenberg, Shapiro 2012; Háková 2020, 59) and the few studies that exist to date also indicate that gender could be central to survival outside the camps (Kosmala 2013). Yet, with the exception of a few works (Rittner, 1993, Bergen, Háková, Löw 2013), this gender turn in Holocaust studies has still paid little attention to everyday history – the history of a forced everyday life emerging from radical experiences of violence – in spaces outside the camps, although early works by Carol Rittner, John K. Roth eds. (1993), and Marion Kaplan show the determining role played by women in the exceptional situation of "everyday life" in persecution (Kaplan 1998) as well as Anna Háková also impressively demonstrates the importance of everyday perspectives on the Holocaust and especially for research into women's experiences during the Holocaust (Háková; Bergen, Háková, Löw 2013).

WHISC (Women in the Holocaust International Study Center) together with the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Graz seeks to remedy this gap. We aim to stimulate new research by investigating women's spaces of survival outside the camps as well by researching everyday experiences associated with these survival scenarios.

We envision hosting a workshop in two parts: the first an online meeting and the second an in-person meeting in Graz. Between the two parts of workshop, participants will split into working groups, meeting together in their respective groups to conduct and discuss research on different aspects within the thematical frame of this call.

Workshop Format

The online meeting will be held 24-25 February 2025.

- Day 1: Presentations,
- Day 2: Formation of working groups. Participants already doing research will introduce themselves and their work. Others interested in the thematic direction of the group will participate and identify research focus in discussions.

The in-person meeting will be held at the University of Graz (Austria) 4-6 May 2026. Participants in the meeting will present essays, which we intend to publish in a special issue of an open-access peer reviewed journal.

Call for Papers

We invite interested researchers (graduate students, PhD researchers, established scholars) to submit proposals that will contribute to an in-depth discussion about Women during the Holocaust: survivors, victims, and victimizers, resisters, rescuers, and bystanders. Because WHISC holds funding for fellowships to conduct research about Women during the Holocaust, we particularly encourage PhD candidates and early career scholars to apply.

We also invite declarations of interest to join a working group (to be founded during the first workshop meeting):

- If you want to participate, submit a short biography and a brief declaration of interest (no more than 150 words each);
- If you want to present your research, submit an abstract of no more than 250 words to whisc.center@gmail.com, susanne.korbel@uni-graz.at, and lilyzami@gmail.com.

Please ensure to submit all materials by 15 December 2024. Successful applicants will be notified by 15 January 2025.

Bibliography

Carol Rittner, John K. Roth eds., *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* (New York: Paragon House 1993).

Doris L. Bergen, "What do Studies on Women, Gender, and Sexuality Contribute to Understanding the Holocaust," in *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust*, Myrna Goldenberg, Amy Shapiro eds. (Seattle: University of Washington Press 2012), 16-37.

Myrna Goldenberg, Amy Shapiro eds., *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust* (Seattle: University of Washington Press 2012).

Anna Hájková, *The last Ghetto: An Everyday History of Theresienstadt* (New York: Oxford University Press 2020).

Anna Hájková, *Menschen ohne Geschichte sind Staub: Queeres Verlangen im Holocaust* (Göttingen: Wallstein 2024).

Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press 1998).

Beate Kosmala, "Überlebensstrategien jüdischer Frauen in Berlin: Flucht vor der Deportation (1941-1943)," in *Alltag im Holocaust: Jüdisches Leben im Großdeutschen Reich 1941–1945*, Andrea Löw, Doris L. Bergen, Anna Hájková eds. (Berlin: De Gruyter 2013), 29-48.

Andrea Löw, Doris L. Bergen, Anna Hájková, "Warum eine Alltagsgeschichte des Holocaust?" in *Alltag im Holocaust: Jüdisches Leben im Großdeutschen Reich 1941–1945*, Andrea Löw, Doris L. Bergen, Anna Hájková eds. (Berlin: De Gruyter 2013), 1-12.

Christa Paul, *Zwangsprostitution: Staatlich errichtete Bordelle im Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich 1994).