



## Holocaust Memorial Day 2025



This year's Holocaust Memorial commemoration took place on the university campus on 5 February 2025 and was once again generously supported by the Association of Jewish Refugees.

More schools than ever before registered for the event including schools from the Widening Participation scheme. 'Widening Participation' is a



government initiative to improve access to higher education for underrepresented students.

Vice Chancellor, Professor Sasha Roseneil welcomed the audience.

Peter Summerfield BEM, spoke movingly about his family life in Germany before the war. He and his twin brother were born in 1933 to a middle-class family living in Berlin. He explained how, gradually, his world became more restrictive as more prohibitions were placed on Jewish people's rights.

Finally, his parents took the decision to emigrate, and Peter outlined the difficulties they had to overcome in finding a country willing to accept them. Many countries closed their borders, fearing an influx of refugees; others accepted a limited number but erected a series of obstacles, such as finding sponsors willing to support an immigrant, which made escaping increasingly problematic. Peter's parents persevered and the four of them left Germany for the United States via the Netherlands and England by train on 27 August 1939, just four days before the start of the war.

His family arrived at Liverpool Street Station with nothing, other than the clothes they were standing in. The Germans had stolen all their possessions in transit except for one thing: Peter's teddy bear. At this point in his story, Peter produced the small bear and placed it at the front of the lectern to gasps of delight from the audience. It was a poignant yet powerful reminder that the lives being turned upside down were those of ordinary people.

Peter concluded by urging all those present to fight the evils of racism for a better and more equal society. He advised each student in the audience to work hard and to make

something of themselves and, most importantly, to pass on the message that racism must never be tolerated. The saying 'Never Again' should be taken to heart, and we must all fight to ensure that it never happens again.

Loud, prolonged applause showed that the audience had understood his message and had, indeed, taken it to heart.

Following the break Police Chief Inspector Dan Eagle lit a candle and asked for a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

'Letter to a Pig', a 17-minute-long animation by an Israeli filmmaker, Tal Kantor, released in 2022 was shown and followed by a discussion between Judy Ironside MBE, Founder and President of UK Jewish Film, and Professor Victoria Grace Richardson-Walden, Deputy Director of the Weidenfeld Institute. They focused on the themes in the film, including an examination of intergenerational trauma, represented by a survivor talking of his experiences to a group of young people. They also raised the question of using the metaphor of the pig as an intelligent animal that is both similar physiologically to humans and acceptable by some and yet repudiated as dirty by others.

The audience found the film powerful, especially in its subtle message that victims could be perpetrators and perpetrators victims.

The film and subsequent discussion provided a reminder that, to pursue this year's theme: 'For A Better Future', it remains of crucial importance to preserve the memory of the past and pass it on to subsequent generations.

# Updates from the Landecker Digital Memory Lab

## The Official Launch of the Landecker Digital Memory Lab



(From left to right) Ellen German, Victoria Grace Richardson-Walden, Jordana Cutler, Aleksandra Gliszczńska-Grabias, Jason Steinhauer

On Monday 18 November 2024, the Landecker Digital Memory Lab was officially launched to an audience of c.200 people joining both in-person at the Imperial War Museum, London and from across the globe via the live-stream.

The event saw Lab Director **Professor Victoria Grace Richardson-Walden** introduce plans for the next five years, highlighting how the Lab's work has become more imperative since the amplification of antisemitism and Holocaust distortion, denial and contestation since October 7, 2023.

Professor Richardson-Walden was joined by a series of special guests. **Lena Altman**, co-CEO of the Lab's funder and key project partner, the Alfred Landecker Foundation, provided the welcome address. Lena described the Lab as 'a call to action to each of us.' She homed in on the importance of the Lab's interdisciplinary approach in confronting the challenges of the Holocaust in the digital age.

After the main presentation, **Lord Pickles** (UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues and President of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) told the audience: 'It's a perfect time to launch this significant initiative. We're entering a world where we must hold on closely to clarity, empathy and above all, our archives. Nobody should be frightened of the truth.'

**Professor Michael Luck** (Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost) and **Professor Cornel Sandvoss** (Executive Dean of the Faculty of Media, Arts and Humanities) offered a view from the University of Sussex, explaining how the Lab's work complements the university's wider values.

**Lord Khan of Burnley**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Minister of Housing, made the closing remarks, reminding the audience that 'we've all had the experience of seeing an innovative project that works for a couple of years, until technology moves on and we lose access. In the light of this, the development of the Landecker Digital Memory Lab is timely. Mapping the Holocaust digital landscape is an important first step.'

## Engaging with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

2024-2025 saw the Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) sit with the United Kingdom delegation led by **Lord Eric Pickles**. The presidency's theme was 'In Plain Sight', emphasising that the Holocaust did not only happen in far away, hidden places, but in local neighbourhoods, and has had impact on communities across the world.

During the presidency, in her capacity as Director of the Landecker Digital Memory Lab, **Victoria Grace Richardson-Walden** was invited to contribute to several international events.

She contributed to a panel discussion on AI, Holocaust Distortion and Education in Bucharest, Romania. US historian **Jason Steinhauer**, Professor of international law **Aleksandra Gliszczńska-Grabias** and **Jordana Cutler** from Meta were also on the panel. It was chaired by **Ellen German**, US Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues. The event was part of the 'Conference on Holocaust Distortion and Education: Current and Emerging Challenges, National Measures in Place' sponsored by the governments of Romania and the United States

of America, with the support of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and the UK Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, in consultation with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Ideas shared at the event were developed into the policy briefing: 'Does AI have a place in the Future of Holocaust Memory?' (available at:

<https://www.digitalmemorylab.com/publications/>) which was shared through an expert session with the IHRA's education working group and through the keynote of the IHRA's first international conference on 'AI in the Holocaust Education, Research and Remembrance Sector' at Lancaster House, London.

Read more on this topic in the related blog posts: <https://www.digitalmemorylab.com/the-10-key-implications-for-ai-in-holocaust-memory-and-education/>

## Visiting Fellows

In November and December 2024, **Dr Mykola Makhortykh** and **Maryna Sydorova** (University of Bern) joined the Landecker Digital Memory Lab as visiting fellows, thanks to the Isaacsohn and André Families' visiting fellowship scheme and funding from the Alfred Landecker Foundation.

During an intensive two weeks, they co-hosted a symposium influenced by the non-hierarchical 'Falmer method' developed at the University of Sussex on 'AI and the Production of Historical Knowledge' for the Sussex Digital Humanities Lab; they presented a lecture on their ongoing work on the role of AI in Russia's aggression against Ukraine as part of the Sussex AI seminar series and contributed to a work-in-progress session about the Lab's work for the department of Media, Communication and Journalism.



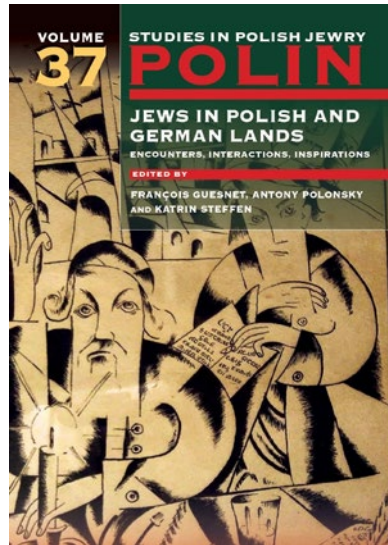
Work has continued since, with Dr Makhortykh and Ms Sydorova collaborating with **Dr Kate Marrison**, of the Lab, on an article about the 'Third Reich of Dreams and AI'; co-submitting a funding bid to create an expert group to move forward with AI and Holocaust memory work and working towards a co-authored book proposal.

## House of Lords

The Rt Hon Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury, David Edmond Neuberger, Life President of the Weidenfeld Institute/Centre for German-Jewish Studies, spoke in a debate at the House of Lords that marked Holocaust Memorial Day 2025.

He gave a compelling speech on the importance of Holocaust education. Reflecting on the contemporary political climate, he highlighted how education and research are critical to confronting racism: 'It is through education that we seek to ensure that future generations are encouraged and enabled to recognise and combat racism in general, and antisemitism in particular. It seems to me essential that young people are both taught to disavow racism, antisemitism and intolerance and educated about our constitutional system and the rule of law ... when it comes to education, I would like to take the example of the work of the Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex, home to the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, of which I am privileged to serve as president. For over two decades, the Institute has been dedicated to scholarly inquiry into the history, culture and thought of Jewish refugees from German-speaking lands. This not only preserves the memory of those who fled persecution but, by actively engaging with students, school children and the wider academic community, helps to ensure that contemporary understanding is informed by past knowledge and experience.'

## Jews in Polish and German Lands: Encounters, Interactions, Inspirations



Organised by the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, UCL Institute of Jewish Studies, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Weidenfeld Institute, this conference took place at the Polish Embassy in London on Wednesday 12 February 2025 and marked the launch of 'Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry', Volume 37. This volume provides new insights into the cultural, social and historical ties between Jewish communities in Poland and Germany, moving beyond national narratives to explore shared experiences and mutual influences.

The contributors included Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Wladyslaw T. Bartoszewski** and the Ambassador of Israel to the

UK, **Tzipi Hotovely**. The editors – **Professor François Guesnet**, **Professor Antony Polonsky** and **Professor Katrin Steffen** were praised for their scholarship and dedication. A particular highlight of the evening was the keynote lecture by **Dr Anne Christin Klotz**, entitled 'Jewish Laughter and Jewish Tears: Fascism and Antisemitism in the Joke Pages of the Yiddish Press in 1930s Poland', which offered a compelling exploration of how humour reflected and responded to the political and social realities of the time.

Since its inception in 1986, the Polin series has played a pivotal role in advancing scholarship on Polish-Jewish history. This latest volume continues that tradition, fostering academic dialogue and deepening our understanding of this shared past.

## Conference Report: Displacement, Forced Migration, and Reparation: Comparisons and Controversies

The workshop entitled: 'Displacement, Forced Migration and Reparation: Comparisons and Controversies' was held at the University of Sussex from 12–13 December 2024. It was organized by the Weidenfeld Institute in partnership with the Jacob Robinson Institute for the History of Individual and Collective Rights at the



Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Institute of Advanced Studies. This collaboration is part of an ongoing effort to foster critical discussions on the redress of historical injustices.

The workshop brought together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to examine reparations as a policy instrument for societies that have experienced violent uprooting and forced migration. Presentations explored different types of mass displacement – ranging from internal displacement and displacement caused by wars of aggression to climate-induced migration – scrutinizing the role of states and international organizations in responding to these human rights' violations. Discussions highlighted the urgent need for more comprehensive, evidence-based and comparative research on these issues, which are critical for reconciliation and maintaining peace during periods of transition.

A keynote address was delivered by **Megan Bradley** (McGill University) on 'Citizenship, Alienage, and Irreparable Loss.' Bradley

introduced the concept of 'just return', challenging the notion of simple 'solutions' to displacement. She emphasised the irreparable losses and long-term effects on individuals and communities, advocating for approaches that centre on the aspirations and agency of displaced persons.

The workshop faced challenges beyond the academic discussions. Local BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, a movement that advocates for economic sanctions, boycotts, and divestment against Israel) activists called for a boycott of the event and during the first session on *Palestinian Displacement* a loud demonstration took place outside the venue. Despite these disruptions, the event proceeded.

Such events underscore the importance of engaged scholarship in addressing historical injustices and contemporary crises of displacement. The discussions contribute to a broader, ongoing conversation about the role of reparations, human rights and transitional justice in shaping a more just and sustainable future.

# Forthcoming Events

## Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School for PhD Students in Modern European-Jewish History and Culture

29 June–2 July 2025,  
University of Sussex

Founded in 2009, the Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School for PhD Students in Jewish Studies provides a vital platform for emerging scholars. Designed to support junior researchers—particularly those based at universities without dedicated Jewish Studies programmes—the Summer School offers an academic space where participants can present their research, receive in-depth feedback and engage in discussions with both established and early-career scholars in the field. Around 50 applications have been received, and 24 participants will be welcomed to Sussex from 29 June to 2 July 2025. We look forward to an enriching and collaborative exchange of ideas.

## The Second Peter Summerfield Public Lecture

Professor Lior Sternfeld  
(Pennsylvania State University)

## Fatal Attraction: Understanding the Israel-Iran Relationship

July 1, 2025, 17:00-18:30  
Jewish Community Centre (BNJC)  
29-31 New Church Road, Hove BN3 1AD

An important event during the Summer School is the Peter Summerfield Public Lecture, which will take place at the Jewish Community Centre in Hove (BNJC). This year's lecture will be delivered by Professor Lior Sternfeld who is a social historian of the modern Middle East with a particular focus on the histories of Jewish communities and other minorities in the region.

His talk will explore the complex and historically layered relationship between Israel and Iran, shedding light on political, social, and cultural dimensions that continue to shape interactions between the two nations.

Free entry, to reserve your place:  
BNJC: **01273 750333** [info@bnjc.co.uk](mailto:info@bnjc.co.uk)

## Book Talk – Jewish Men and the Holocaust: Sexuality, Emotions, Masculinity

Florian Zabransky

May 14, 2025, 18:30-20:00  
The Wiener Holocaust Library,  
29 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DP

During the Holocaust, amid death and violence, Jewish men were not mere powerless victims. Linking gender studies with a history of sexuality and emotions will highlight intimate agency, power struggles, negotiations of relationships, social dynamics, representations of masculinities, the representation of masculine ideals, intimate violence, and the expression of various emotions such as honour and love. As research on the Holocaust often links women with sexuality or portrays women as gendered beings, it is crucial to excavate the intimate, hidden lives of Jewish men and their specific intimate experiences as men.

The analysis not only demonstrates how Jewish men remember and make sense of their experiences, but also how they chose to form the narrative and how they represented their ordeal in four chapters, namely ghettos, concentration camps, Jewish resistance in the countryside, and finally, DP camps in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

The consideration of these four spaces allows a nuanced, innovative understanding of the intimate history of Jewish men during the Holocaust, i.e. how some men established male dominated structures and established intimate strategies to find solace and pleasure.

Florian Zabransky completed his PhD in 2022 at the University of Sussex, where he was awarded the Clemens N. Nathan Scholarship for his research on male Jewish intimacy during the Holocaust. He is a trained sociologist, and during his studies worked at institutions commemorating the Holocaust, such as the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Site near Hamburg and the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt am Main. He is now a programme manager at the Federal Agency for Civic Education in Germany with a focus on antisemitism and memory cultures.

**Book now:** <https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/event/book-talk-jewish-men-and-the-holocaust-sexuality-emotions-sexuality-with-florian-zabransky/>

## Connective Holocaust Commemoration Expo

The inaugural 'Connective Holocaust Commemoration Expo' will be hosted at the University of Sussex from 24-26 June 2025. This event brings together Holocaust memory and education organisations, creative and tech professionals and academics who will share practice and co-design digital futures for Holocaust memory.

The event will blend elements of academic conferences with 'hyper talk' panels; a roundtable and a special discussion to

launch the new online publishing space 'Digital Memory Dialogues', with digital arts exhibition features such as a VR suite, exhibitor hall and arcade, as well as hands-on skills workshops and a work-in-progress session.

Over a hundred international colleagues will showcase their projects and expertise, joining from as far afield as Brazil and Australia, as well as the US, Canada, Europe and Israel.

## New PhD Opportunity:

## The Morris and Bessie Emanuel PhD Scholarship in Modern Jewish History and Culture

We are offering a fully funded three-year PhD for a doctoral candidate wishing to pursue a research project in Jewish studies, including Israel and Holocaust studies.

The scholarship covers UK or international fees and provides a stipend that matches that provided for UK doctoral students by the UK Research Council.

**Deadline for applications: 12.05.2025**

The recipient of this scholarship will be enrolled in the doctoral programme in the School of Media and Arts at the University of Sussex. Applications should be submitted through the Sussex University postgraduate website. Please indicate on your application that you wish to be considered for the 'The Morris and Bessie Emanuel PhD scholarship.'

### How to apply

Applicants must apply online for a PhD at Sussex. Please include Research proposal (2500 words), CV, Statement of purpose (500 words), Copy of MA diploma and 2 letters of recommendation.

To find out more contact Gideon Reuveni:  
[g.reuveni@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:g.reuveni@sussex.ac.uk).

Questions regarding the submission or status of your application can be directed to:  
[Paige.Thompson@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:Paige.Thompson@sussex.ac.uk)

Further information on application procedures can be found at:  
[www.sussex.ac.uk/study/pg/applying/2016entry](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/study/pg/applying/2016entry)

## For further information about the Weidenfeld Institute/Centre for German-Jewish Studies and joining the Friends please contact:

**Diana Franklin**, Centre Manager  
Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies/  
Centre for German-Jewish Studies  
University of Sussex  
Brighton BN1 9QN, UK

**T:** +44 (0) 208 455 4785 (London office)  
**E:** [d.franklin@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:d.franklin@sussex.ac.uk)

**Please see our website:**  
[www.sussex.ac.uk/research/centres/jewish-studies/](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/research/centres/jewish-studies/)