

Centropa Summer Academy – Berlin 2024



Ukraine, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Austria, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, United States, Germany, North Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, United Kingdom, Turkey

Between 15 and 22 July 2024, we held our 17th International Summer Academy.

65 teachers, museum educators, and pedagogical experts from 17 countries joined us in Berlin.

“I have participated in many seminars on the Holocaust. But Centropa’s seminar brought a unique and different angle—a deep reference to Jewish life before the Holocaust, to the variety of different religious and national identities of Jews and a fascinating reference to the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in all its complexity. In addition, this program included a wonderful combination of going out into the ‘field,’ to the street, to the neighborhoods where Jews and non-Jews lived—while actively and meaningfully studying—and then we returned to the Adenauer conference center for academic discussions and brainstorming between the teachers and the Centropa staff. That helped us develop a kind of pedagogical toolbox that all of us will use in our classrooms.” *Ronen Cohen, Mazkeret Batya, Israel*

“The Centropa Summer Academy was the most intensive and productive training for teachers I have ever attended. The schedule was filled with practical and theoretical activities. I learned a great many details about historical facts, places and processes, gained new knowledge and skills, and I had the opportunity to exchange experience with colleagues from other countries who shared with me their ideas about using Centropa in class.” *Alina Kvitka, Chernihiv, Ukraine*

“Working with other teachers was a great experience. I get so much from that: new perspectives to consider, some new teaching methods I can readily adapt. I have been able to improve my understanding about my “binary world” perspective. After all, it wasn’t just East and West; during the Cold War there was a middle way, and it was Yugoslavia under Tito. I should know. I was there.” *Vaidotas Pakalniskis, Vilnius, Lithuania*

“I have been to many Holocaust education programs and this one truly surpassed the others. It was the most internationally diverse group and that added so much to my understanding of not only the content but also the diverse pedagogy around the world. The attention to a balanced schedule of tours and talks and work time was really effective. It really enhanced my knowledge.” *Natalie White, Prairie du Chien, WI*

At Centropa, we turn cities into classrooms—for teachers—and since our first Summer Academy in 2007, we have brought more than 1,100 educators from 19 countries to our programs. By making it possible for participants to meet with historians, journalists, Holocaust survivors, and students, going on walking tours and museum visits, we bring scope and breadth to 20th century Jewish history. Which is why, time and again, we hear, “You have changed the way I teach.”

While we have held Summer Academies in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Krakow, and Warsaw, there is one city where every corner shouts 20th century history: Berlin.

From the greatness of German Jewry to its degradation and humiliation, then the deportation and murder of its own citizens, this is a story of immeasurable tragedy. And while the last Jews in Berlin were being deported to their deaths, the Allies had already begun bombing the city, pummeling it into ruin. When the war ended in 1945, an occupied and divided Berlin became a symbol of Europe’s division. It lasted until that night in 1989 when East and West Berliners rushed to the wall that divided them and danced on it. That this happened on the anniversary of Reichspogromnacht, 9 November, added irony to the drama.

For anyone who teaches history, social studies, ethics, literature, media studies, or art, this city offers a richness and complexity found nowhere else—and students benefit when their teachers see it firsthand.

At Centropa, our Summer Academies have three goals:

- add to our teachers’ knowledge base on 20th century European history, the Holocaust and the Cold War;
- help upgrade their skill set with new technologies so they can keep up with their teenage students;
- and facilitate partnerships between teachers—and, through cross-cultural projects, between their students—who share our films, podcasts, online exhibitions, and thematic websites.

This report describes what we did, what we accomplished, and what our participants said about our program. We thank you for reading this.



Dr Lauren Granite, Director, US Programs



Fabian Rühle, Director, Centropa Germany, European Programs



Maximilian von Schoeler, Project Manager, Centropa Germany



Nicola Andersson, Centropa Project Coordinator, Centropa Germany



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This Summer Academy Report was written by Edward Serotta, edited by Lauren Granite, and coordinated by Jonathan Schwerts. Our photographer this year was Wojciech Wojtkielewicz with additional photographs by Ouriel Morgensztern.

Katja Grosse Sommer, Logistics Coordinator. Eszter Rózsa, Logistics Coordinator. Ninja Stehr, Deputy Director, Centropa Germany



"I think I still really haven't processed this experience completely. Still overwhelmed by the amount of knowledge, places, and people I had the chance to encounter. I would surely say I am glad I did it, that I have learned a lot, that I benefited from it, that the seminar was very professionally done, and that I was lucky to take part in it. Also, that Centropa offers so much for teachers so that every teacher needs to know of it and explore the endless resources it offers."

Lucy Fried, Department for At-Risk Children and Youth, Ministry of Education, Herzlia, Israel



Walking Jewish Berlin

*“The city as a campus meets city as a living memorial.”
Amos Raban, Digital educational advisor,
Ministry of Education, Israel*

In Berlin, we take our teachers on walking tours of the city’s historic Jewish quarter, where tens of thousands of Jews once lived.

Many Jews who lived in Berlin Mitte were working class and had recently emigrated from Poland and the Russian Empire. But by the late 1800s Jews all over Germany weren’t just attending universities, they were teaching in them. They were playing in symphony orchestras and composing for them. They were running publishing companies and writing literature we still read today. And they were moving into the most expensive parts of town to live in grand apartments and enormous villas.



Pictured above left is the gravestone of Moses Mendelssohn, who translated the Bible into German and became one of 18th century Germany's best known philosophers. Above right is an inner courtyard in Berlin Mitte, which had been filled with Jewish-owned workshops. Below left: throughout Berlin, we came upon hundreds of what are called Stolpersteine, or Stumbling Stones, each

engraved with the name of a victim of National Socialist persecution, along with their birthdate and their personal fate. We also visited the newly redesigned exhibitions in the Berlin Jewish Museum, which sees more visitors annually than any other Jewish museum in Europe.



One of the most innovative Holocaust memorials anywhere can be found in Berlin's Bavarian Quarter, an upper middle-class neighborhood where wealthier Jews brought their families to settle at the turn of the last century.

Once the Nazis came to power in 1933, the rights of Jews were taken away one by one. A sign on one lamppost tells us when Jews could no longer work as doctors or lawyers. On another, we learn when Jews were no longer allowed to drive. On yet another, at what times they were allowed to grocery shop each day. There's even an app visitors can use as they stroll around the neighborhood reading the signs, and here are three telling quotes from our teachers.

"It is the powerful way in which the memorial brought the history of anti-Jewish laws and their impact on daily life into the present. The use of simple, everyday objects on the signs, combined with the historical facts, created a poignant and accessible way to understand the incremental and insidious nature of the discrimination and persecution faced by Jewish residents. This decentralized approach made the historical events feel immediate and relevant, encouraging reflection and empathy."

Nataliia Kuzenna, Kropyvnytskyi City, Ukraine

"Maximilian von Schoeler, who is part of your Hamburg team, was the leader of my tour and he was amazing! Hearing about this memorial project and analyzing the signs together was very thought-provoking and meaningful. Maximilian presented several ways we could use this in the classroom, and I bought the guidebook so I could re-plan my lessons on the Nuremberg Laws. Something that stood out to me was how much Jewish life once thrived in this area, but now almost no Jews live there. And that Hitler started off slowly with the Nuremberg Laws and used each one as a test. When he saw there was no/little resistance he continued." Caryn Keller, Riverdale, NY, USA

"This memorial makes clear how gradual, legal, and almost normal the process of Jews being ostracized from German society was, and it does so in a way that is not too confrontational. You learn by simply taking a walk in a beautiful neighborhood. It also shows clearly that Berlin deals with history in a very open way, which I always find very important to point out to my own (Israeli) students." Yonathan Bar-On, Haifa, Israel

Third Reich Berlin

Berlin has more monuments and museums dedicated to the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust than any other city in the world. That is how it should be, since this was Ground Zero for Nazi ideology and all that spewed from it.

We drove into the leafy elegant suburb of Grunewald, where on Track 17 in a suburban train station, we saw where tens of thousands of Jewish families were herded onto trains and taken to ghettos, concentration camps, and death camps.

22.7.1942 / 100 JUDEN / BERLIN - THERESIENSTADT

“As I walked along Platform 17, I read on steel plates the number of Jews deported to the different camps, and the deportation dates in chronological order. Seeing the number of Jews deported increasing as the dates got closer to the end of the war was almost frightening. The idea of having many trees planted along the tracks symbolized that no train will use Track 17 ever again. That was incredibly powerful.” *Luz Brito, Bronx, NY, USA*



56-58 Am Großen Wannsee is the address where on January 20, 1942, 15 Nazi high officials, led by Reinhard Heydrich and Adolf Eichmann, discussed the logistics of how Germany would set up its death camps and begin the systematic deportation and mass murder of millions of European Jews. Of the 15 men who attended the Wannsee Conference, seven had doctorate degrees.

Our participants met with historians, made notes, asked questions, and spent the afternoon back at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Academy reviewing ways they can incorporate what they learned at Platform 17 and the Wannsee Conference Center into their classroom lessons.

*“I have seen the House of the Wannsee Conference in many movies and read the historian Wolfgang Benz’s chapter on the conference, so I thought I was ‘prepared’ to see the villa in person. I was wrong. The building was even more fascinating in person, and I still can’t wrap my head around the fact that such horrible events and discussions were carried out here. For me, it is like a huge oxymoron. Our guide mentioned that the villa was used kind of like a student hostel after the war and it was something that I haven’t heard before, so this is a huge takeaway for me.
Anna Ébner, Budapest, Hungary*”

The Memorial to Europe's Murdered Jews



Ravensbrück



“In Ravensbrück we all prayed that they would send us back to Auschwitz because that was just indescribable. I think it was the worst camp there was. Above all, we

weren't in blocks, there were just these tents. These sloping things, like tents, were called 'zelta' [from the German 'Zelt' - tent]. And they packed us in there, I don't know how many into one tent. It was like putting 200 people in a tent for four or five. All you could do was sit, one on top of another. And so there we sat like that. That was the worst camp, Ravensbrück. The worst.”

Teofila Silberring was interviewed for Centropa by Magdelana Bizon in Krakow in May 2004.





The Ravensbrück concentration camp was built in 1939 near Fürstenberg, Germany: it became the largest women's concentration camp in the German Reich and the second largest in size after Auschwitz-Birkenau. From its inauguration in 1939, the camp was constantly expanded to accommodate more and more prisoners. From 1941 onwards, Ravensbrück became a death camp. In early 1945 a gas chamber was constructed. By the end of the war, Ravensbrück boasted over 40 satellite camps with over 70,000 mostly female prisoners, whose forced labor was mostly used in agriculture and local industry and armaments production. From 1942 onwards, many women from Ravensbrück were also forced or coerced into prostitution. Beginning in 1942, Ravensbrück also became one of the main training camps for female SS guards. Between 1939 and 1945, a total of 120,000 women and children, 20,000 men, and 1,200 teenage girls were imprisoned in the Ravensbrück concentration camp, although the real number was probably much higher. This number included more than 30 nationalities.

Sources: 1939–1945 Ravensbrück concentration camp. Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück. <https://www.ravensbrueck-sbg.de/en/history/1939-1945/> and Ravensbrück. Holocaust Encyclopedia. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/ravensbrueck>

“For me the visit to the camp was the highlight of the seminar. I had read Margarete Buber-Neumann's book, *Milena, Kafkas Freundin* and wanted to know more about the camp. After the visit, it was clear that a significant part of German society not only knew what was happening in the camps but also cooperated to make a profit.” *Eleni Gerousi, Kozani, Greece*

“A takeaway from the entire week that was cemented by our visit to Ravensbrück was how teaching the Holocaust (and history generally) always requires us to look at what is not still visible. Ravensbrück was physically so empty that visiting it required quite a lot of historical context. Instead of being an educational experience, I think it was a necessary emotional one. That reflection session was some of the best of the entire week; I liked being outside, having time to write silently, and being pushed to talk to a variety of people.” *Colleen Grogan, Chicago, IL, USA*



“This was the most impactful day of the whole Summer Academy. Our guide was a wealth of knowledge, the reflection session was definitely needed, and I also really needed and wanted the extra ninety minutes to explore further on my own. I am also really glad that the teachers from Israel conducted the ceremony by the lake and we all had the chance to toss a rose into the water and people could read names of departed loved ones.” *Marina Outwater, Litchfield, CT, USA*

“In Israel we mainly teach about the big camps like Auschwitz, Majdanek, and Treblinka, we hardly ever learn about smaller camps, and except for a mention of this camp I don’t remember ever being asked about it. I have a personal connection to the camp since my grandfather’s sister was a prisoner there; besides this, it is a camp for women, not only Jewish women, and it is important to teach the students about the suffering of women, and non-Jewish women as well. I think that schools should consider taking trips to camps that did not necessarily operate in Poland; Ravensbrück is one of them.” *Tammy Segal, Rehovot, Israel*

Cold War Berlin



“I had very mixed feelings about it. I am from the former Communist country. I know what the Soviets did, what crimes they committed, and are still committing but now under the name of the Russian Federation. So, my first thought was: that memorial needs to be destroyed. But later I realized that it is a good place to teach about propaganda and disinformation, and that it is a place to teach about all war criminals and their crimes in connection for today. It was very good not to see Russian or Soviet flags in this place.” *Vaidotas Pakalniskis, Vilnius, Lithuania*



“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” So we read in the Book of Hosea and anyone who visits Berlin, even today, sees vast empty lots throughout the city and, here and there, remnants of the Berlin Wall that separated the city’s residents. More than 90% of Berlin was damaged or destroyed during the Second World War, and even now not all of it has been put back together. Add to that the story of the Berlin Airlift of 1948-1949, when Stalin sealed off West Berlin from West Germany, then came the face-off between the western Allies and the Soviet Army. For decades, the world held its breath. During our Summer Academy, we visited the remnants of the Berlin Wall, took selfies in front of it, and discussed with our German colleagues what it was like to lie in the divided city. The visit was invaluable to most of our participants, nearly all of whom teach social studies—meaning, the Cold War as well as the Holocaust.

“It was my first time visiting places related to the Cold War (except for the Berlin Wall, which I’d seen before), and I found it very interesting. I enjoyed it so much. What really stood out were the stories from teachers who came from former communist countries. Their personal experiences were wonderful to hear, and I wish we had more time to listen to their stories. It added a real, human dimension to the history we were learning about.”
Yahel Ox, Mazkeret Batya, Israel

Teachers working with and learning from each other



“Working with other educators opened my eyes to different styles and ways of teaching. Working with teachers from several countries helped me build my lesson plan and project. Brainstorming came fast and easy and the flow of ideas was practically constant. We worked as a real team, accepting each other’s suggestions and ideas with ease. We were on the same page all the time and it was easy for us to agree on the task.” *Samantha Ward, Nottingham, United Kingdom*



If you have been following Centropa for any length of time, then you know we do not create our own lesson plans and then “train” teachers to use them. The reason teachers adore Centropa is because we create great content, and we put teachers around the table so they can write their own lesson plans because teachers know their curriculum, their teaching standards and, most of all, their students.

The best part is: when teachers write their own lessons, they use them in class—and they are always thrilled to share their best practices with other teachers. That is why each year we set up sessions throughout the Summer Academy for our teachers to reflect on what they learned and experienced on our walking tours and site visits. And then they collaborate on lesson plans they can use when they get back to school—and connect their students with each other.

“This Summer program really was the perfectly balanced combination of the city-as-classroom, cross-cultural collegiality, the balance of experience with traditional learning, all led by your team. I really want to give a shout out to Lauren Granite for all the grounding and centering we did before the conversations – it was really beneficial.”
Melanie Gottdenger, Elizabeth, NJ, USA

Discussions on complicated topics



We shared our experiences on what it has been like to teach the Holocaust in the wake of 7 October and the responses from our teachers were thoughtful and sometimes painful. We also invited three Jewish women living in Berlin to discuss with each other and us about being Jewish in Germany today.

“I appreciated the way you had us diving into this difficult topic of how we can teach about the Holocaust after the horrors of October 7th. It was fascinating to hear from so many teachers from different places. We teachers need to practice having these difficult discussions and learn how to be better prepared for our students. Hearing from teachers working in Israel and in Europe helps me know the importance of continuing to work with students to use education as a way of combatting antisemitism.” *Lynette Wescott, Pittsburg, KS, USA*

“In Israel, we had many debates on how to teach the Holocaust after October 7th. We decided to start with the discussion that asks if one can even remotely compare the October 7th attack to the Holocaust. The students researched both events (we formed a list of criteria to help guide them), then we held an open class discussion about it. After that, we mainly focused on the years 1932–1939, but also about the war years.” *Nili Caine Jerusalem, Israel*

After the events on October 7, just like after the events that began here in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, my cadets and students became much more interested in studying historical topics, because now everyone realizes that history is not “something that happened a long time ago somewhere to somebody else” but that history is going on right here, right now, and with us.” *Alina Kvitka, Chernihiv, Ukraine*

Historian Dr Miriam Rürup, Rabbi Helene Braun, and novelist and essayist Mirna Funk discussed Jewish identities among women in today's Germany.

"The panel was incredibly topical, especially after our visits and discussions about Holocaust memorials. I am absolutely sure that my colleagues found this discussion both touching and enlightening because we got to hear that we could hear different points of view about a Jewish future in Germany." *Antonia Ilona Simonyi, Budapest, Hungary*

"The session on Female Jewish identities really brought home the idea that not everyone's experience of being Jewish (and a woman) is the same. The debate about experiences and understanding of antisemitism in Germany was particularly interesting." *Samantha Ward, Nottingham, United Kingdom*

"The panel discussion on Sunday was very interesting and refreshing. Given the three different perspectives on female Jewish identity and antisemitism, this panel offered something very different. The small clashes of opinion by the three women were super interesting and it gave us a broader context on the matter of being Jewish in Germany today." *Sasa Cirkovic, Kragujevac, Serbia*



The Cold War Quiz

A game one can only play in Berlin. We divided our participants into international groups and asked them probing, Cold-War questions such as:

- *Who was Che Guevara's East German Jewish girlfriend?*
- *What was the name of the first dog into Space?*

A great way to end our 18th annual Summer Academy!





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Our participants

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Ana Volf



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Marion Guttman



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Ute Riehm

Greece



Eleni Gerousi



Marina Vlachou



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Evangelia Foutsitzi



Gözde Şahin



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Our participants

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Bernardka Avsenik



Kristijan Robic



Antónia Simonyi



Anna Ébner



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North Macedonia



Zaklina Mucheva



Filip Jakovlevski



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Aleksandra Kurowska-Susdorf



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Fredy Reyes, New Jersey



Ruth Kros, Nebraska



Caryn Keller, New York



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Erin Divers, Maryland



Lynette Wescott, Kansas



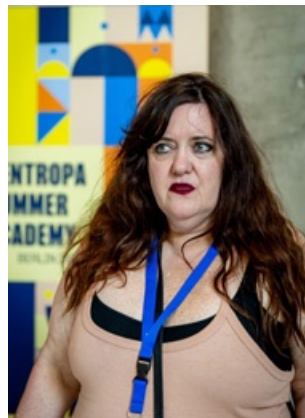
Luz Brito, New York



Vanessa Bloom, California



Casey Voss, North Carolina



Christine Giles-Lefkowitz,
Florida



Daniel Colon, California



Colleen Grogan, Illinois

Our participants

USA



Lauren Erb, New Jersey



Carol Neuman, Kansas



Natalie White, Wisconsin



Kristi Ferguson, South Carolina



Kerry Mulligan, Florida



Marina Outwater, Connecticut

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