

THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM

cordially invites you to a lecture by

Katherine Lebow

Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies

The Methodology of Witness: Pre-War Polish Sociology and the Jewish Historical Commissions in Poland, 1945-1948

One of the most remarkable responses by Holocaust survivors to the Shoah was the urge to collect testimony. Almost as soon as the Nazi threat had passed, survivors in cities and camps across Europe formed historical commissions whose central mandate was to gather eye-witness accounts of Jewish suffering and persecution. And yet, the urgency with which some survivors pursued this testimonial project, as valuable and obvious as it may seem today, was neither inevitable nor universal. The fact that Polish Jews, for example, were at the forefront of such efforts in the mid- to late-1940s should be understood as a reflection of particular circumstances, including intellectual and cultural legacies of the Polish Second Republic (1918-1939). This lecture will explore how pre-war Polish sociological traditions and a public discourse of „social memoir” left an enduring imprint on Polish Jewish survivors, shaping the methods and assumptions with which historical commissions approached the meaning and practice of testimony.

Tuesday, February 11 at 5.30 p.m.

In Gellner Room



Katherine Lebow (Ph.D., Columbia) is a Research Fellow at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies. She has taught at the University of Virginia and Newcastle University and has held numerous fellowships in Europe and North America. Her recent publications include *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-56* (Cornell, 2013) and "The Conscience of the Skin: Interwar Polish Autobiography and Social Rights," *Humanity* 3:3 (2012), which won the 2013 Aquila Polonica Prize for best English-language article in Polish studies. Currently, she is writing a book about everyman autobiographies in transatlantic space from the Great Depression to the Holocaust.

A reception will follow.