

The Jewish people lived together in Poland as Polish Jewish citizens for over one thousand years interacting throughout the Polish society. Poland had the second largest Jewish community in the world while in Krakow 25% of the residents were Jewish. After WWII of the 3,300,000 Jews in Poland only 300,000 survived. Of those who survived many left Poland almost immediately after the war, others in 1956 and then, again, in 1968. Today, Poland, a country that had a rich Jewish past has only 4,500 people with a Jewish identity.

The Jewish population has diminished not only in Poland, but throughout the world, outside of the State of Israel. Today France, although declining with many Jews migrating, has the largest Jewish population in Europe with 0.70% of its population Jewish, while Poland's Jewish population is 0.01%. Regardless of the fact that the Jews are a minute 0.23% of the world population, anti-Semitism is rising throughout the world and, in particular, in Europe. Anti-Semitism expresses itself not only against Jews in each country but, more additionally, against the State of Israel.

The international seminar in November was a project innovated and organized by Dr. Agnieszka Kania to raise awareness among future teachers regarding this phenomenon and the impact it has left on Polish society. While once Jews were part of the society, today there is an empty space left in Polish society with the disappearance of the Jews. Students have virtually no knowledge about the Jews and facts about the Jewish State. In addition, this seminar served as a continuation of a project initiated by Dr. Agnieszka Kania and myself which included parallel courses on Poland and its Jewish past with emphasis on the period of WWII.

The seminar included three lectures and a workshop. The first lecture was on Israel and included: its geography, the history of the Land of Israel, Israeli achievements and innovations, the Israeli educational system, demographics, and life in Israel. The second lecture was my personal story and included: my grandmother's letter in 1933 with Hitler's comment on it, my parents escape from Germany and eventually arriving in the USA, and my immigration to Israel. The third lecture on anti-Semitism included: definitions through the years, examples, how anti-Semitism is expressed today in the world, more specifically in Europe and in Poland. The lecture terminated with the question if freedom of speech and allowing people to openly express anti-Semitism is more important than protecting individuals in the society. The lectures were followed by a workshop where students brainstormed in groups and arrived at suggestions of various methods to combat anti-Semitism. Their proposals were based upon educating the youth and were very inspiring.