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Germany/Poland

February 14 to February 23, 2025

ISL Leader: Katherine Edwards (Advancement)

Fee: \$3800 *(funding available)

World War II was the deadliest conflict in human history, marked by over 50 million fatalities. The majority of these were civilians who succumbed to massacres, the deliberate genocide of the Holocaust, strategic bombing, starvation, and disease. WW II escalated on 1 September 1939 with the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany.

During the conflict, the ruling party in Germany sought to gain new territory and create a pure society. This ideology led to the persecution and extermination of Jews, Roma (Gypsies), people with disabilities, Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, Afro-Germans, and others. Concentration camps were established across occupied Europe, in efforts to control these populations.

Over 1.1 million victims lost their lives at Auschwitz-Birkenau alone. At the end of the war, this site was protected, to commemorate all who died and suffered during this regime.

This Immersion Service Learning experience introduces participants to the complex history surrounding WW2, from a German and Polish perspective. Events leading up to the cultural cleansing in Europe, the reality of prison camps, and the aftermath of the war will be explored. Participants will tour important historic sites and memorials in Berlin, and spend a study day in Wannsee, where plans for genocide were mapped out in 1942. In Poland, students will visit Krakow and participate in learning service at the Auschwitz – Birkenau Museum and Memorial in Oswiecim.

Transportation

Group members fly into Berlin, and will travel by train from Berlin to Krakow mid-week. The group will depart from Krakow on their return. Participants may walk, travel by public transport bus/train, or shuttle during their trip.

Housing & Meals

Participants will stay in hostels in Berlin and Krakow, at the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer in Poland. Simple but comfortable rooms typically have two to four students sharing and residence-style washroom facilities. Breakfast is provided in hostel, and meals will be provided at the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer.

Service Placements and Group Sessions

A service day at the House of Wannsee in Berlin, involves educational programming that will have participants working with sources to actively engage in the history. In Poland, participants complete learning service study days at Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. Reflection sessions will take place at the Centre for Dialogue and Prayer. Local facilitators help participants interpret their daily experiences and place this experiential knowledge within the broader framework of social justice, and current political issues. Participants will complete their service with post travel public presentation of their research and reflections.

Friday 14	Evening flight from Halifax.
Saturday 15	Arrival in Berlin. Introductory tour.
Sunday 16	Guided exploration of key sites incl. various Memorials, Topography of Terror, etc.
Monday 17	Learning service study day at House of Wannsee.
Tuesday 18	Travel to Krakow Poland. Walking Tour (Jewish quarter, Krakow ghetto, etc.)
Wednesday 19	Guided exploration of key sites Schindler and Jewish museums (<i>possible</i> Survivor meeting)
Thursday 20	Transfer to Oswiecim. Learning service Study tour of Auschwitz and museum workshop/lecture
Friday 21	Learning service study tour of Birkenau, museum workshop, lessons, reflection
Saturday 22	Jewish center and Oswiecim town. Transfer to Krakow airport and overnight at Krakow airport hotel
Sunday 23	Early morning flight. Late afternoon arrival Halifax

* GSO funding up to \$2000, ISL bursaries, and ISL endowment funds are available.

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Please note this schedule is a guideline for typical activities and is subject to change based on a number of factors. Flight delays, available space and staff at facilities, to name a few factors, all play a role in the scheduling process. Students should be prepared to be flexible.