

## **Identity Formation Processes in Central Europe**

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The aim of the seminar was to examine processes that fostered different national and individual identities in Central Europe. Subsequently, from 12 to 23 June 2011, fourteen students with backgrounds in different disciplines travelled from Krakow to Venice and presented topics at sites along the route. During the seminar and the concluding study excursion, Central Europe was examined through complementary historical, political, cultural, artistic and religious prisms. Specifically, the seminar sought to identify similarities and differences of history and narratives in four countries that were all at one time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and Northern Italy. The excursion route included Krakow, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Olomouc, Brno, Telč, Český Krumlov, Linz, Gmunden, Traunkirchen, Bad Ischl, Gurk, Klagenfurt, Udine, Trieste, Aquileia and Venice. This excursion allowed the analysis of components of contemporary identities in these regions through presentations at the sites prepared by the students.

During the semester, seminar meetings were held as well as three field trips in Jerusalem, guest lectures on the history of Poland and the Habsburg Empire, and personal meetings with each student in preparation for their presentations and for writing papers on specific sites. During the study trip the students visited urban centres and met with staff of the Austrian libraries situated along the route, learning from them about the history and cultural life of the respective regions and about their degree of integration into the European Union. One of the major aims of the trip was to deal with architectural monuments as sources of learning. The topics of the presentations included essential cross-cultural sections: history of the Habsburg Empire (Bad Ischl), traces of the empire in its farther regions (Krakow, Trieste), formation of national identities and the rise of nationalism (Klagenfurt, Brno, Udine), WWII and Jewish history (Olomouc, Krakow, Trieste, Linz), religious wars, Reformation and Counter-Reformation (Olomouc, Bad Ischl, Krakow), local religious practices and the role of the Holy Land in shaping them (Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Traunkirchen, Linz, Brno, Gurk), urbanism, art and architecture (Krakow, Venice, Český Krumlov, Telč, Aquileia). By the time the excursion concluded, a picture emerged of the residual traces of common history in the different countries of Central Europe.

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