



Gratz Insider, February 2016 - Story Continuation

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### **Meet Our Faculty: Dr. Jennifer Marlow**

Dr. Marlow's interest in Polish-Jewish relations during the Nazi era was sparked by an apparent historical inconsistency that piqued her curiosity when she was a student in a small state college in Michigan. Her European history class was taught by an elderly Polish woman, who, in discussing World War II, described Polish efforts to protect Jews from the Nazis. In another class, taught by a specialist in Polish history, the assigned reading included the book [Neighbors](#) by Jan Gross, which recounts the murder of Jewish residents by their neighbors in a Polish town during the Nazi occupation.

Dr. Marlow explains that as a student, she needed to understand how to reconcile "these two completely different narratives." Her curiosity spawned more reading, and her reading inspired her to concentrate in Polish history. She studied the Polish language, and despite being a single mother with two young children, managed to attend a Polish language institute in Krakow after graduating from college.

Marlow continued to pursue her interest in Polish history as a graduate student at Michigan State University. There, she was mentored by two well-known academics: a Polish historian and then-director of graduate history studies, Professor Keely Stauter-Halsted, and the director of the Jewish studies department, Professor Kenneth Waltzer.

As Marlow delved deeper into her studies of Polish-Jewish relations, she was dogged by the question of why some Poles risked their lives to save Jews, while others either ignored the plight of the Jewish people or even participated in their persecution. As she studied this phenomenon, she repeatedly came across cases of friendships between Polish and Jewish women. Eventually, she narrowed her research to a very specific female relationship, but one rich in stories and testimony: the relationship between Polish Catholic maids and nannies and their Jewish employers during the Nazi era. This subject became the topic of her doctoral dissertation, as well as her niche area of expertise.

Dr. Marlow explains that these domestic servants were by and large Polish Catholic peasants who had been living and working in Jewish middle class homes. While most of these women simply left their Jewish employers once the war began, there were many who risked death to save Jewish children by taking them from their families and caring for them throughout the war. Marlow found that a domestic servant's decision to protect a Jewish child "was rooted in the pre-war relationship" with the child's family.

Dr. Marlow is now an assistant professor of modern European history at Bethel University in McKenzie, Tennessee, and an adjunct faculty member at Gratz College. She has presented papers at academic conferences throughout the country, as well as in Israel and the United Kingdom. She has also written a chapter in a forthcoming book about Jewish families in Europe during the period from 1939 until today.

Dr. Marlow's teaching positions at Bethel and at Gratz require her to consider her subject matter from completely different perspectives. At Bethel, which is a Christian university, she teaches undergraduate students, who have had little or no exposure to Jews or Judaism. Her goal is to fill in these gaps and provide her students with a context for studying the Holocaust. While her instruction at Bethel takes place in the classroom, her teaching at Gratz takes place online. At Gratz, she teaches Holocaust and genocide studies courses to graduate students, whom she engages in in-depth conversations on the online discussion forum.

For Dr. Marlow, a quest for knowledge and understanding became a lifelong academic passion - a passion that she now shares with her students at Bethel and with our students here at Gratz.