

# Why Do Pogroms Occur in Some Localities But Not Others? Evidence From Poland, 1941

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Jason Wittenberg is associate professor of political science at UC Berkeley and a former Academy Scholar at Harvard University. He is the co-author of *Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Cornell, 2018). His first book, *Crucibles of Political Loyalty: Church Institutions and Electoral Continuity in Hungary* (Cambridge, 2006), won the 2009 Hubert Morken award for the best political science book published on religion and politics. He has published on a variety of topics, including electoral behavior, ethnic politics, historical legacies, and empirical research methods. His favorite course to teach is titled “Dictatorship and Its Discontents.”

Why do pogroms occur in some localities but not others? This talk addresses that age-old question through an examination of a particularly brutal wave of violence that occurred across hundreds of predominantly Polish and Ukrainian communities in the aftermath of the June, 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union. Exploiting the collapse of state authority, ordinary Poles and Ukrainians viciously attacked their Jewish neighbors in over 200 localities. What distinguishes these places from the hundreds of others that did not experience a pogrom is the nature of political relations between Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors. Pogroms were significantly more likely to occur in communities where Jews, through their support of Zionist political parties, signaled their aspiration for national equality with their Polish and Ukrainian co-citizens. This quest for a Jewish national life alienated Poles and Ukrainians from across the political spectrum, who were not accustomed to seeing Jews as equals in this way. And it inflamed Polish and Ukrainian nationalists, who considered Zionists a mortal threat to their aims. In communities where Zionism was strong, Poles and Ukrainians exploited local indifference to rid themselves of “foreigners.”

**THURSDAY**  
**October 11, 2018**

5:15 pm

3335 Dwinelle Hall  
UC Berkeley Campus

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