



Call for papers for the International Conference Underprivileged Bodies: Marginality and Minority in Europe, 1850–1939 Wrocław, 6-8 July 2026

The organizing committee invites proposals for papers for the upcoming international conference **“Underprivileged Bodies: Marginality and Minority in Europe, 1850–1939”**, to be held in English on July 6–8, 2026, at the Taube Department of Jewish Studies, Wrocław University.

From the rise of industry to the emergence of racial science and eugenics, from the expansion of empires to the contestation of class, gender, and disability norms—the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a profound transformation in the ways bodies were perceived, categorized, and regulated. This transformation was driven by the increasing entanglement of state power, medical knowledge, and culture in the definition of bodily norms and the disciplining of deviant bodies. Scientific discourses strove to codify human difference, often along biological or racial lines; social institutions—from schools and hospitals to asylums and prisons—intervened in the everyday lives of the young, the poor, the sick, and the deviant; and both popular and elite, textual and visual cultures became invested in delineating the “fit” and “unfit,” the “civilized” and the “primitive,” the “normal” and the “abnormal.”

This conference seeks to explore how marginalized and minority bodies were imagined, categorized, and governed in Europe between 1850 and 1939, as well as how individuals and communities experienced, performed, and contested these regimes of representation and control. We welcome papers that address a broad range of minorities—including ethnic, religious, gender, class, age, sexual, and disabled communities—but we place particular emphasis on the Jewish body as a key site of modern European anxieties, fantasies, and negotiations. We are also interested in exploring diversity within Jewish society itself, including the experiences of Jewish women, children, the poor, migrants, or religious and cultural sub-groups who were subject to multiple layers of marginalization.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):

- Visual and scientific representations of Jewish and other minority bodies—by the minorities themselves or through dominant discourses
- Minority and marginalized bodies in institutional settings: prisons, asylums, schools, hospitals, poorhouses
- Gendered and queer embodiments



- Jewish laboring bodies: class, migration, gender, occupation
- Public health campaigns, hygiene discourses, and the surveillance of Jewish and other minority bodies
- Narratives and experiences of illness, disability, and corporeal difference in Jewish and non-Jewish communities
- Embodiments of childhood, adolescence, and old age in minority contexts
- Jewish and other minority bodies in imperial and transimperial settings: the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and German empires
- Comparative or transnational approaches to marginal bodies across European regions, states, or empires

The geographical scope of our interest includes eastern, central, and southern Europe, including the Balkans. We particularly encourage contributions that foreground Jewish experiences while situating them in broader comparative, transnational, or interdisciplinary frameworks.

Submission Guidelines:

Please send a 300-word abstract along with a short bio (max 200 words) to the email underprivilegedbodies@gmail.com by **January 15, 2026**. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by February 28, 2026.

For questions, please contact Dr. Ekaterina Oleshkevich at ekaterina.oleshkevich@mail.huji.ac.il or Dr. Zuzanna Kołodziejska-Smagala at zuzanna.kolodziejska-smagala@uwr.edu.pl.

The conference is organized with the support of the Taube Department of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Languages, Literature and Cultures, University of Wrocław and Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.