

Lecture Series: Inter-American History and Culture, University of Graz

Wednesday, 24.11.2021

18.45 – 20.15 Hrs

<https://unimeet.uni-graz.at/b/cwi-ery-125-wse>

Starting a new life elsewhere: Flight and Integration Stories of Jewish Refugees in Canada and the United States of America

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Abstract:

The lecture deals with the expulsion of the Jewish population from Nazi Germany and in particular with the possibilities of fleeing to Canada and the United States of America. It discusses conditions under which refugees were able to find admission and asylum there, the difficulties they encountered, and how the situation of refugees changed after the outbreak of World War II in 1939, as they became “enemy aliens” in countries at war with Nazi Germany (e.g., Canada, Great Britain).

Furthermore, the talk explores subsequent lives of Jewish refugees in North America. Based on individual life stories (with a special focus on Austrians), the possibilities for a new beginning in a different social and cultural world will be discussed. In this context, it should be mentioned that in the postwar period some of these refugees moved from Canada to the United States or vice versa, from the United States to Canada (e.g., for study, work reasons, marriage). The case studies will be used to discuss limitations and opportunities these women and men experienced in their respective host societies, the extent to which it was possible for them to continue professional careers interrupted by the expulsion or to build new ones, and what factors were essential for a successful integration into the host society (e.g., age, gender, education, knowledge and special skills). The talk will also highlight achievements of such refugees in various fields such as art and culture, economy or academia from which Canada and the United States much benefited.

Biographical note:

Andrea Strutz, historian, key researcher and head of the program line “Forced Migration” at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on Consequences of War and lecturer at the Universities of Graz; postdoctoral habilitation in Contemporary History, University of Graz.

Her research and publications focus on historical migration studies (particularly Canada), Jewish displacement, exile studies, memory and migration, National Socialism and restitution matters, biographical studies, gender, and methodological and theoretical questions of oral and video history.

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