Introduction to Modern Jewish History

JEWISH STUDIES/HISTORY 220
MWF 11-11:50am
Classroom: Humanities 1101

Instructor: Dr. Wobick-Segev
Office Hours: Fridays, 10-10:50am and 12:00-1:00pm
Office: Humanities 5216
Email: sewobick@wisc.edu
Office phone number: 608-890-0586

Course Description:
This course is intended to introduce students to the major events, figures and themes of modern Jewish history from 1492 to the post-war era. As such, it explores the political, social, cultural, intellectual and religious history of the Jewish people over 500 years of history. We will pay particular attention to central individuals and their experiences as a way of gaining insight into significant moments in Jewish history. We will also concentrate on the changing temporal and geographic contexts, acknowledging both commonalities and exceptional experiences of various Jewish communities. This course seeks to understand how Jews at times served as the agents of historical change, and at others reacted to changes imposed on them by non-Jewish society. Most importantly, this course seeks to dismantle stereotypes that insist that Jewish history can simply be reduced to a tale of oppression. Instead, we will consider the vibrant and rich cultural legacy of the Jewish people in the modern world. In addition to the course textbook, students will read a wide variety of primary sources, from political and philosophical texts, to religious tracts, autobiographical material, and modern literature.

Required Texts:
(Available at the University Bookstore)

Michael Brenner, A Short History of the Jews
The Memoirs of Glückel von Hameln
Puah Rakovsky, My Life as a Radical Jewish Woman
Zapruder, Salvaged Pages

The remaining readings can be found online at Learn@UW.

Course Requirements:

Essay 1 20%
Essay 2 25%
Midterm 25%
Final Exam 30%
**Classroom Behavior:**

1. Students are expected to come to class ON TIME, prepared, having read the material thoughtfully.
2. Students will turn off all cell phones, pagers, iPhones, iPods, laptop computers, and all other conceivable electronic devices upon entering the classroom. Laptop computers may be used only if the student has an authorized medical need AND the instructor receives written confirmation to this effect in the first two weeks of instruction.
**Introductions**

**Week 1**

Wed, Sept. 4  
Course Introduction

Fri, Sept. 6  
NO CLASS – Jewish New Year

**Week 2**

Mon, Sept. 9  
Ancient and Medieval Precursors

**Unit 1**  
*Establishing Boundaries, Creating New Communities*

Wed, Sept. 11  
1492 and the creation of the Sephardi Diaspora

Fri, Sept. 13  
A New Home: The Ottoman Empire, the Mahgreb, and *Eretz Israel*

**Readings:**


*(Begin reading *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln.*)

**Week 3**

Mon, Sept. 16  
Joseph Caro, the *Shulhan Arukh* and the continued codification of the *Halakhah*

Wed, Sept. 18  
Safed: *Kabbalah* and Jewish mysticism

Fri, Sept. 20  
The Jews in Renaissance Europe

**Readings:**

Brenner, 137-166.

I. L. Peretz, “The Golem”

*(Continue reading *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*. You should be about halfway through.)*

**Week 4**

Mon, Sept. 23  
The Reformation and Wars of Religion

Wed, Sept. 25  
Court Jews

Fri, Sept. 27  
Poland and the Autonomous Community

*(ESSAY #1 due today)*

**Readings:**

Brenner, 167-188.

*The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln* (Finish this week).

Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 18-20.
## Unit 2  Religious Change

### Week 5
- **Mon, Sept. 30**  Amsterdam, Old Jews and New Christians
- **Wed, Oct. 2**  Messianism and Heresy: Shabbetai Zvi and Sabbatianism
- **Fri, Oct. 4**  Hasidism

**Readings:**
Hasidic tales.

### Week 6
- **Mon, Oct. 7**  Vilna and the Mitnagdim
- **Wed, Oct. 9**  Combatting secularism – the Yeshiva and the Musar Movement (in-class primary source analysis)

### Unit 3  Emancipation
- **Fri, Oct. 11**  Social mobility and change in the 17th and 18th centuries, an overview

**Readings:**
Mendes-Flohr, 368-69, 372-377.
I. L. Peretz, “If not higher”
I. J. Singer, “Repentance”

### Week 7
- **Mon, Oct. 14**  The Enlightenment and Haskalah
- **Wed, Oct. 16**  The Century of Enlightenment: From Germany to Russia and beyond
- **Fri, Oct. 18**  MIDTERM

**Readings:**
Brenner, 189-207.
Mendes-Flohr, 68-72, 90, 360-365, 444-445, 460-463.
S. Ansky, “The Sins of Youth”. 
Week 8
Mon, Oct. 21  Emancipation
Wed, Oct. 23  Reform Judaism in Europe
Fri, Oct. 25  Neo-Orthodoxy

Readings:

Unit 4  The Politics of Integration and Difference
Week 9
Mon, Oct. 28  German Jews and the Politics of Liberalism
Wed, Oct. 30  Russia and the Pale of Settlement
Fri, Nov. 1  America: Dreams of Freedom and Political Realities

Readings:
Brenner, 209-254.
Puah Rakovsky, 20-52, 70-106.

Week 10
Mon, Nov. 4  Jews of the Balkans and North Africa: Between the
Alliance and Zionism
Wed, Nov. 6  Palestine and life in the Yishuv: Zionism in practice

Unit 5  Assimilation or Renovation: New Jewish Identities
Fri, Nov. 8  Religious Reform in America

Readings:
Brenner, 255-286.
Mendes-Flohr, 589-91, 599-603, 616-617, 660, 693-97,
Rakovsky, 130-171,182-196.

Week 11
Mon, Nov. 11  Communist Russia and the New Jew
Wed, Nov. 13  Central Europe and the Return to Jewish Culture
Fri, Nov. 15  The Yishuv and the emergence of Religious Zionism
(Essay #2 due today)

Readings:
Brenner, 287-318.
Isaac Babel, “Crossing the River Zbrucz”, “Gedali”, “The Rabbi’s Son”  
I.L. Peretz, “The Pious Cat”  
Rakovsky, 172-181.  
Mendes-Flohr, 411-415, 421-422, 613.

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**Week 12**

Mon, Nov. 18  The birth of ultra-Orthodoxy

**Unit 6  Emancipation and its discontents**

Wed, Nov. 20  The Emergence of modern antisemitism  
Fri, Nov. 22  WWI and the rise of Nazism

**Readings:**  
Kafka, “The Animal in the Synagogue”  
([http://zork.net/~patty/oldkafka/ksynagogue.html](http://zork.net/~patty/oldkafka/ksynagogue.html))  

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**Week 13**

Mon, Nov. 25  WWII and the Shoah  
Wed, Nov. 27  The Shoah  
Fri, Nov. 29  NO CLASS, Thanksgiving

**Readings:**  
Brenner, 319-348.  
Mendes-Flohr, 730-731, 737-739, 751-754.  

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**Unit 7  Coming, Going or Staying: Old and New Centers of Jewish Life**

**Week 14**

Mon, Dec. 2  Jews in Cold War Europe  
Wed, Dec. 4  The Creation of a Jewish State in the Middle East  
Fri, Dec. 6  Coming Home? Middle Eastern Jews in Israel

**Readings:**  
Brenner, 349-387.  
Reb Kringle, Englander.  
Mendes-Flohr, 708-713.
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mon, Dec. 9</td>
<td>Post-war America and the Jews</td>
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<td>Wed, Dec. 11</td>
<td>Contemporary Jewish Culture</td>
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<td>Fri, Dec. 13</td>
<td><strong>REVIEW</strong></td>
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