

HISTORY 705

Topics in Global History:

Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism

Spring 2016

Professor Amos Bitzan

Mondays 3:30-5:25 PM in Humanities 5245

IMAGE: An antisemitic poster with the caption "Jews to the Ghetto!" from the 1938 Polish parliamentary elections. The stamped text reads "Want to expel the Jews, vote for the National Camp." SOURCE: [YIVO](#)



The term “antisemitism” (*Antisemitismus*) was popularized by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr, who used it in an 1879 pamphlet to describe his aversion to Jews on racial and cultural grounds. Marr derided religious Christian antipathy to Judaism as backward and unsound, presenting his own hostility to Jews as derived from secular, scientific considerations. As a founder of the Antisemitic League, Marr is often cast as the spokesman of a distinctly “modern” antisemitism that culminated in the genocidal, racist vision of the Nazis. But many historians of antisemitism would dispute that one can draw a clean distinction between a pre-modern religiously-rooted anti-Judaism and a modern, secular antisemitism.

What then is antisemitism? What have been its origins, causes, and motives? Some historians see the answers to these questions as so disparate as to undermine the coherence of the category across time and space. They prefer to focus on the local and the particular. However, a well-received [recent work](#) by David Nirenberg, which focuses on anti-Judaism – a phenomenon that does not necessarily have actual Jews as the objects of its hostility – argues for the continuity of anti-Jewish ideas from antiquity to modern times across “the West,” in which he includes parts of the Islamic world.

Nirenberg’s *Anti-Judaism* seems to go against the grain of his [earlier work](#), *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (1996), which highlighted the particularity of fourteenth-century violence against Jews and denied its connections to modern antisemitic persecution.

In this seminar, we will use an eclectic list of recent and classic works of scholarship on antisemitism, anti-Judaism, and racism (one book) to discuss how historians might best understand these phenomena. The approach is global in the sense that we read works from several different national historiographies as well as books that move inside empires, traverse regions, and bound over long swaths of time.

Requirements

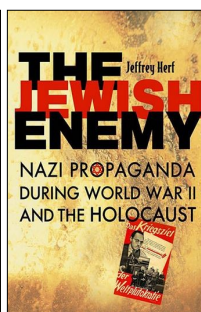
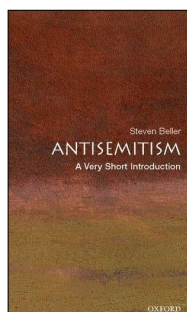
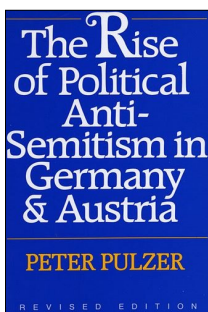
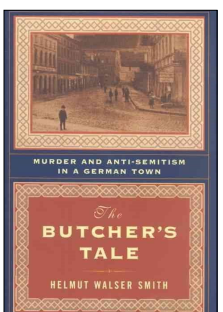
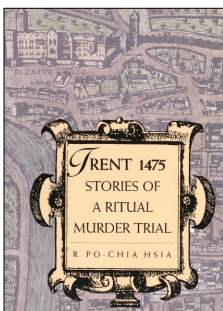
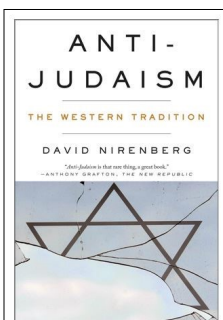
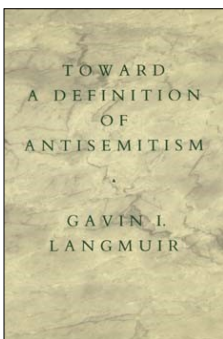
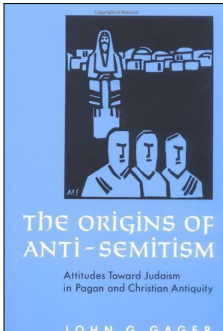
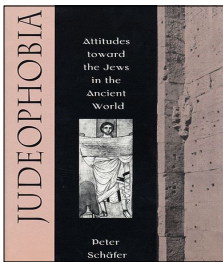
Discussion	30%
3 book reviews 1,000 words each	45%
2 presentations	20%
1 review of undergraduate paper	5%

Office Hours

Wednesdays 3-4 PM
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Goals

1. Acquire familiarity with the major events and questions in historical scholarship on antisemitism.
2. Become practiced thinking about the lens you choose to study a historical phenomenon.
3. Learn to reflect regularly on what interpretations you find persuasive.
4. Gain experience making rigorous arguments that take seriously opposing positions.
5. Learn to negotiate the special pressures around historical problems entangled in contemporary debates.
6. Master the craft of writing scholarly book reviews for publication.



1. Ancient and Medieval Origins (January 25)

- 1) Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 1-11, 197-211. PDF packet ([Learn@UW](#)).
- 2) John Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 3-34, 247-269. [Ebook](#).
- 3) Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 57-133. [Ebook](#).

2. A Global Take: Anti-Judaism I (February 1)

- 1) David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2013), pp. 1-245. ISBN 9780393058246 ([Purchase](#) or [Course Reserves](#)).

3. A Global Take: Anti-Judaism II (February 8)

- 1) Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, pp. 246-474.

4. Early Modern European Microhistory (February 15)

- 1) R. Po-chia Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). ISBN 9780300068726 ([Purchase](#) or [Course Reserves](#)).

5. Modern European Microhistory (February 22)

- 1) Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002). ISBN 9780393050981 ([Purchase](#) or [Course Reserves](#)).

6. Modern Germany & Austria (February 29)

- 1) Steven Beller, *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). [Ebook](#).
- 2) Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988). 9780674771666 ([Purchase](#) or [Course Reserves](#)).

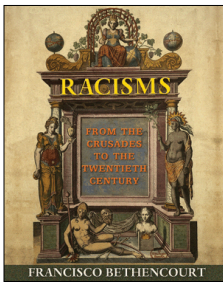
7. Nazi Antisemitism (March 7)

- 1) Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). [Ebook](#).

BOOK REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

Identify a recently-published book connected to our seminar and review it for an academic journal, magazine, or digital venue of your choice after contacting the review editor. See Bruce Mazlish, "[The Art of Reviewing](#)" (AHA) to start.

Due: 2/26/16, 3/18/16, 5/6/16



8. Racism: A Global Take (March 14)

- 1) Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). 9780691155265 ([Purchase](#) or Course Reserve).



9. Eastern Europe I: Modern Poland (March 28)

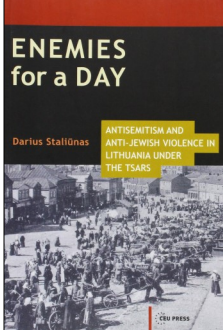
- 1) Robert Blobaum ed., *Antisemitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). 9780801489693 ([Purchase](#) or Course Reserve).

10. Eastern Europe II: Borderlands (April 4)

- 1) Darius Staliunas, *Enemies for a Day: Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Violence in Lithuania under the Tsars* (New York: Central European University Press, 2014). [Ebook](#).

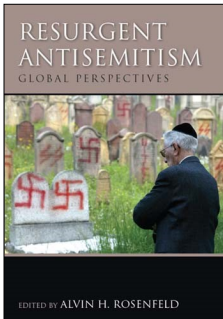
11. Eastern Europe III: Memory (April 11)

- 1) Anna Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of Jews in Wartime Jedwabne* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015). 9780374178796 ([Purchase](#) / Course Reserve).
- 2) Alvin Rosenfeld ed., *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), Chapters 7-9. [Ebook](#).



12. The United States (April 18)

- 1) Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). [Ebook](#).
- 2) Tony Michels, "Is America 'Different'? A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism," *American Jewish History* 96:3 (2010): 201-224 (PDF on Learn@UW).

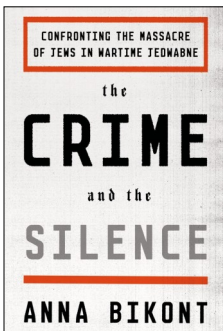


13. The Middle East and Anti-Zionism I (April 25)

- 1) Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). [Ebook](#).
- 2) Resurgent Antisemitism, Chapters 1-2, 6, 14. [Ebook](#).

14. The Middle East and Anti-Zionism II (May 2)

- 1) Meir Litvak and Esther Webman, *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). 9780199326747 ([Purchase](#)).
- 2) Resurgent Antisemitism, Chapters 10-12 and 15. [Ebook](#).
- 3) Rusi Jaspal, "Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism in Iran: The Effects of Identity, Threat, and Political Trust," *Contemporary Jewry* 35 (2015): 211-235. (PDF on Learn@UW).



PRESENTATIONS

Summarize the main argument of the book that week. Provide background about the author and relevant previous work. Prepare a 1-page handout listing and summarizing 2-4 reviews of the work. Kick off discussion with a question that will guide our seminar.

