

## **History 891/901: Modern Jewish History in Comparative Perspective: Russia and the United States**

University of Wisconsin, Madison  
Spring 2020  
Humanities 5255  
Thursdays: 3:30-5:25

Prof. Tony Michels  
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### **Requirements**

Active participation is crucial. I urge you to take risks, test ideas, and raise questions regardless of whether you're convinced you are "right." A successful seminar is one with lively, probing conversation.

Each of you is expected to present the reading(s) throughout the semester. Your presentations should succinctly summarize the authors' arguments and identify what you believe to be the most important issue that we should discuss. Presentations will necessarily vary in length, but should typically be no longer than 15 minutes in length.

Finally, you are required to write three papers during the semester. The first two papers should be 6-page analyses of a given week's readings. They are due on **March 12 and April 23**. Your third paper is due on **May 7**. That paper should be 15 pages in length and synthetic in character, that is, address a particular historiographic issue, question, or problem by drawing on various readings. I encourage you to speak with me outside of class about your final paper topic.

### **Grading**

First paper: 30%  
Second paper: 30%  
Third paper: 40%

### **Tobias Lectures: Prof. Moshe Halbertal (March 24--25)**

I encourage you to attend at least one of Prof. Halbertal's lectures.

March 24: "The Biblical Book of Samuel and the Birth of Politics: Two Faces of Political Violence."

March 25: "Is a Jewish Democratic State Possible?"

(Time and location TBD)

## Books

- Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* (Indiana Univ. Press, 2013). <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9911069042302121>
- Hasia Diner, *How America Met the Jews* (Brown Judaic Studies, 2017).
- Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981).
- Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2006).
- Eli Lederhendler, *Jewish Immigrants and American Capitalism, 1880-1920: From Caste to Class* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009).
- Natan M. Meir, *Kiev, Jewish Metropolis: A History, 1859-1914* (Indiana Univ. Press, 2010). <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9911070491802121>.
- Adam Mendelsohn, *Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (NYU Press, 2015).
- Kenneth D. Wald, *The Foundations of American Jewish Liberalism* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2019).

## Readings

### Jan. 23: Introduction

#### Jan. 30: Early Russian Jewish Historiography

\*Jonathan Frankel, "S. M. Dubnov: Historian and Ideologist," in Sophie Dubnov-Erich, *The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnov: Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish History*, trans. Judith Vowles, ed. Jeffrey Shandler (Indiana Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 1-28.

\*Cecile Esther Kuznitz, *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture: Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), pp. 17-43.

\*Simon Dubnow, "The Doctrine of Jewish Nationalism," in *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism*, ed. Koppel S. Pinson, (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958), pp. 76-115, 256-272.

#### Feb. 6: Jews and the Imperial Russian State

\*Michael Stanislawski, "Russian Jewry, The Russian State, and The Dynamics of Jewish Emancipation," in *Paths to Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, eds. Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 262-283.

\*Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Univ. of California Press, 2002), pp. 1-79.  
<https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9910796619102121>.

**Feb. 13: Jews and the Russian City**

Natan M. Meir, *Kiev, Jewish Metropolis: A History, 1859-1914* (Indiana Univ. Press, 2010), entire book.

\*Ken Moss, "At Home in Late Imperial Russian Modernity—Except When They Weren't: New Histories of Russian and Eastern European Jews, 1881-1914," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (June 2012): 401-452.

**Feb. 20: Revolutionary Jews.**

Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 1-257.

**Feb. 27: Revolutionary Jews, part. 2.**

Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, pp. 258-452.

**March 5: Soviet Jewry**

Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* (Indiana Univ. Press, 2013), entire book.

**March 12: Class cancelled**

(First paper due)

**March 19: Spring break**

**March 26: What Is American Jewish History?**

\*Morris U. Schappes, "Introduction" in *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875* ed. Morris U. Schappes (The Citadel Press, revised edition, 1952), pp. ix-xxiii.

\*Ben Halpern, "America Is Different," *Midstream* 1 (Autumn 1955), pp. 39-52.

\*Henry L. Feingold, "American Jewish History and American Jewish Survival," *American Jewish History* Vol. LXXI, No. 4 (June 1982): 421-431.

\*Hasia Diner, "American Jewish History" in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, Martin Goodman, ed. (Oxford, 2003), pp. 471-490.

\*David B. Ruderman, "Reflections on American Jewish history," *American Jewish History* Vol. 91, Nos. 3-4 (Sep./Dec. 2003): 372-386.

\*David A. Hollinger, "Communalist and Dispersionist Approaches to American Jewish History in an Increasingly Post-Jewish Era," *American Jewish History*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (March 2009), pp. 1-32.

## **April 2: Immigration and Capitalism**

Eli Lederhendler, *Jewish Immigrants and American Capitalism, 1880-1920: From Caste to Class* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009), entire book.

Special Issue on Jews and the American Economy, *American Jewish History*, Vol. 103, No. 4 (Oct. 2019).

\*Rebecca Kobrin, "Introduction: Breaking the Taboo Investigating the Complex History of Jews and the American Economy," pp. 393-405.

\*Marni Davis, "Toward an 'Immigrant Turn' in Jewish Entrepreneurial History: A View from the New South," pp. 429-456.

\*Rebecca Kobrin, "Too Big to Fail in 1930: The Failed Bank of the United States and The Long Shadow of East European Jewish Immigrant Banking," pp. 457-483.

## **April 9: Immigration and Capitalism, part. 2**

Adam Mendelsohn, *Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (NYU Press, 2015), entire book.

## **April 16: Whiteness and Race**

Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), entire book.

\*David Schraub, "White Jews: An Intersectional Approach," *AJS Review: The Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Nov. 2019): 379-407.

## **April 23: Liberalism**

(second paper due)

\*Ira Katznelson, "Between Separation and Disappearance: Jews on the Margins of American Liberalism," in *Paths to Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, eds. Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 157-205.

Kenneth D. Wald, *The Foundations of American Jewish Liberalism* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2019), entire book.

## **April 30: American Exceptionalism**

Hasia Diner, *How America Met the Jews* (Brown Judaic Studies, 2017), entire book.

\*Tony Michels, "Is America 'Different?' A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism," *American Jewish History*, Vol. 96, No. 3, (September 2010): 201-224.

## **May 7: Final Paper Due**