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 25: "Is a Jewish Democratic State Possible?"
(Time and location TBD)
Books

Readings

Jan. 23: Introduction

Jan. 30: Early Russian Jewish Historiography


Feb. 6: Jews and the Imperial Russian State

*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](https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9910796619102121).
Feb. 13: Jews and the Russian City


Feb. 20: Revolutionary Jews.

Feb. 27: Revolutionary Jews, part. 2.
Frankel, Prophecy and Politics, pp. 258-452.

March 5: Soviet Jewry

March 12: Class cancelled
(First paper due)

March 19: Spring break

March 26: What Is American Jewish History?


April 2: Immigration and Capitalism


April 9: Immigration and Capitalism, part 2

April 16: Whiteness and Race


April 23: Liberalism
(second paper due)


April 30: American Exceptionalism


May 7: Final Paper Due