

Introduction to Modern Jewish History

Spring 2021: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-2:15 PM (online)

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 12-12:50 pm (online)

OVERVIEW

This introductory course surveys the history of the Jews in the modern period (ca. 1750 onward). It begins in the present day, laying out some features of the contemporary existence of the Jews, understood as a religious collective, ethnic group, and nation. We then first travel back in time to the eve of modernity in order to understand how contemporary Jewry came to be and then retrace our steps forward. In our study of Jewish intellectual, cultural, and religious history we will encounter the many conflicts among Jews about how Jews and Judaism were to function in modernity. For example, we will discuss the emergence of Hasidism, the Reform movement, and Zionism. In our study of the political and social history of the Jews, we will seek to understand the major challenges imposed on Jewish life from without. These will include the rise of political antisemitism and the Holocaust. One of our main guiding themes will be the relationship between tradition and innovation and between continuity and change in modern Jewish life. We will investigate what connects modern Jews to the Jewish people and Judaism of antiquity and the Middle Ages.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through the study of modern Jewish history in this course, you will

1. Study several geographic areas of the world in the modern and pre-modern eras;
2. Practice posing historical questions and explaining their academic and public implications;
3. Experiment with drawing on historical perspectives and knowledge to analyze contemporary issues.

REQUIREMENTS

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|------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| 1. Interview | 20% | due Sunday, February 14 at 9 PM |
| 2. Paper 1 (3-4 pages) | 20% | due Sunday, March 7 at 9 PM |
| 3. Paper 2 (3-4 pages) | 20% | due Sunday, May 2 at 9 PM |
| 4. Participation | 40% | |

BOOKS AND TEXTS

Please see Canvas for access to readings for each week. There are two books, each available as ebooks, and one film (available to stream) that you will have to purchase/rent online:

1. Carol Isaacs, *The Wolf of Baghdad: Memoir of a Lost Homeland* (Myriad Editions, 2020).
2. Moshe Koppel, *Judaism Straight Up: Why Real Judaism Endures* (Koren, 2020).
3. Film: *The Dove Flyer* (2014).

Week 1	Unit I: Jews and Judaism Today
Tu 1/26	Key Terms and Linked Themes
Th 1/28	Contemporary Jewish Centers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sergio DellaPergola, "World Jewish Population, 2016."
Week 2	Unit II: Delving into One Contemporary Center: American Jews Today
Tu 2/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEW Research Center Survey of US Jews (2013), "Overview," 7-19.
Th 2/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEW Research Center Survey of US Jews (2013), Chapter 1: "Population Estimates," Chapter 2: "Intermarriage and Other Demographics," 23-46.
Week 3	
Tu 2/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEW Research Center Survey of US Jews (2013), Chapter 3: "Jewish Identity," Chapter 4: "Religious Beliefs and Practices," 47-80.
Th 2/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEW Research Center Survey of US Jews (2013), Chapter 5: "Connection with Israel," Chapter 6: "Social and Political Views," Chapter 7: "People of Jewish Background and Affinity," 81-118.
Week 4	Unit III: Delving into Another Center: Israeli Jews Today
Tu 2/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEW Research Center Survey of Israelis (2016), Overview: "Israel's Religiously Divided Society," 5-44
Th 2/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEW Research Center Survey of Israelis (2016), Chapters 1-6, 46-125.
Week 5	
Tu 2/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEW Research Center Survey of Israelis (2016), Chapters 7-9, 126-188.
Th 2/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEW Research Center Survey of Israelis (2016), Chapters 10-12, 189-228.
Week 6	Unit IV: Traveling Backward from 2021 to 1750
Tu 3/2	The Post-WWII Era <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Brenner, <i>A Short History of the Jews</i>, 349-387.
Th 3/4	Building the State of Israel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selections from Shimon Ballas, Erez Bitton, Yitzhak Shami, and Abraham Isaac Kook.
Week 7	The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in the Twentieth Century
Tu 3/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol Isaacs, <i>The Wolf of Baghdad</i>, Afterword, 183-207 (pay attention to timeline).
Th 3/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol Isaacs, <i>The Wolf of Baghdad</i> and watch <i>The Dove Flyer</i> on Vimeo.
Week 8	The Shoah
Tu 3/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saul Friedländer, Selection I.
Th 3/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saul Friedländer, Selection II.
Week 9	Antisemitism as a Political Force

Tu 3/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilhelm Marr
Thu 3/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocols of the Elders of Zion
Week 10	Spring Break
Week 11	The Age of Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Europe
Tu 4/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary sources: Dohm (1781); Michaelis (1782); Grégoire (1789); Mendelssohn, "Judaism as Revealed Legislation" (1783).
Th 4/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution of the Hamburg Temple; The Light of Splendor; These are the Words of the Covenant; A Reply Concerning the Question of Reform.
Week 12	The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Empire
Tu 4/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dovid Katz, <i>Lithuanian Jewish Culture</i>, selection.
Th 4/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Engel, <i>Zionism</i>, 27-50. • Pinsker, <i>Autoemancipation</i>
Week 13	Unit V: Back Toward the Future
Tu 4/20	<p>The Israel-US Schism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Engel, <i>Zionism</i>, 1-24. • AJC Surveys of Jews in Israel and the U.S. (2018). • Daniel Gordis, "Why many American Jews are becoming indifferent or even hostile to Israel," <i>Mosaic Magazine</i> (2017)
Th 4/22	<p>Secularization and Sanctification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Chabon Commencement Speech. • Moshe Koppel, <i>Judaism Straight Up</i>.
Week 14	
Tu 4/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moshe Koppel, <i>Judaism Straight Up</i>.
Th 4/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moshe Koppel, <i>Judaism Straight Up</i>.

GRADING SCALE

A	≥93%
AB	87-92%
B	80-86%
BC	75-79%
C	70-74%
D	60-69%
F	≤59

CREDIT HOURS AND WORKLOAD

The credit standard for this 4-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 180 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled instructor-student meeting times [group meetings of 150 minutes per week], dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

GOALS OF THE HISTORY MAJOR

The goal of the history major is to offer students the knowledge and skills they need to gain a critical perspective on the past. Students will learn to define important historical questions, analyze relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing arguments and conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. In History, as in other humanistic disciplines, students will practice resourceful inquiry and careful reading. They will advance their writing and public speaking skills to engage historical and contemporary issues.

To ensure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers breadth, depth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. Broad acquaintance with several geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
2. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
3. In-depth understanding of a topic of their choice through original or creative research.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.

SKILLS DEVELOPED IN THE HISTORY MAJOR

DEFINE IMPORTANT HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

1. Pose a historical question and explain its academic and public implications.
2. Using appropriate research procedures and aids, find the secondary resources in history and other disciplines available to answer a historical question.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases of pertinent historical conversations in order to highlight opportunities for further investigation.

COLLECT AND ANALYZE EVIDENCE

1. Identify the range and limitations of primary sources available to engage the historical problem under investigation.
2. Examine the context in which sources were created, search for chronological and other relationships among them, and assess the sources in light of that knowledge.
3. Employ and, if necessary, modify appropriate theoretical frameworks to examine sources and develop arguments.

PRESENT ORIGINAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Present original and coherent findings through clearly written, persuasive arguments and narratives.
2. Orally convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.
3. Use appropriate presentation formats and platforms to share information with academic and public audiences.

CONTRIBUTE TO ONGOING DISCUSSIONS

1. Extend insights from research to analysis of other historical problems.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of a historical perspective to contemporary issues.
3. Recognize, challenge, and avoid false analogies, overgeneralizations, anachronisms, and other logical fallacies.