

Course Title

Antisemitism: an introductory overview of the longest hatred

Introduction

Like Theodore Herzl in 1896 we are once again facing a new era in the long history of the longest hatred. After the Holocaust and its devastating consequences for both the Jewish people and the world, antisemitism has in the last years reinvented itself always keeping at the core its murderous features. Contemporary antisemitism and anti-Zionism, by appropriating and recreating old myths, bring to our days once again, the shadows of the “Jewish question” which, like a fever, sets an alert about an infectious process that, if unattended, may spread to the rest of the body -in this case, society as a whole- threatening the organism’s own survival. The patient in question is modern society itself, putting at risk its core values: democracy, culture and freedom.

Description of the Course

The course has been designed as a 12-week introductory level program in which basic and more complex historical, political and philosophical aspects of antisemitism will be approached in order to establish a solid foundation for students on which to develop the means to identify, debate and counteract the discourse and actions that lead to the dangerous consequences of antisemitism in all its forms.

The target audience of the course is:

- entrance level college students
- high school students
- high school teachers (training)
- lifelong learners

This syllabus is also aimed at online programs in Portuguese to be offered on existing platforms.

Objectives of the Course

The course aims to equip students at an introductory level with a broad set of tools ranging from linguistics to history, from media to philosophy, from testimony to first source material analysis. Activities involving discussions of the materials being studied will be explored.

Resources (RVL)

All resources related to this course will be available in a companion book in Portuguese for the Brazilian public or in Spanish for the rest of Latin America to be developed and published. Every unit will also present a list of suggested films and literature as well as QR codes linking the book to complementary online resources.

Weekly sessions

1. Discrimination, Racism and Antisemitism. A conceptual approach.

This unit deals with the concepts of discrimination and racism and how they compare and contrast with the definition of antisemitism and its unique aspects. In that sense, the students will be encouraged to also confront and debate their own definitions with the definitions from several sources.

2. Who are the Jews? Antisemitism as a unique phenomenon of lethal consequences.

This session will focus on the long historical process of the Jewish people up to the current days and to establish a net of cultural meanings encouraging the student to have a closer look on the richness of their experiences and contributions and to reach an understanding of some of the conditions that develop into the several forms of hatred against the Jew.

3. Historical antisemitism. Exploring the myths.

This unit will explore some of the myths about the Jews that have been established along the centuries and its potential and real lethal consequences.

4. Antisemitism in Brazil and Latin America.

The session will analyze the particular context in which antisemitism developed in Brazil from the Colony to its contemporary aspects. Special attention will be consecrated to the years 1933 to 1945 called the “Vargas Era” and Brazil’s role with regards to the refugees of Nazi Germany.

5. Genocidal antisemitism: Nazism and the Holocaust 1.

In this session the students will explore the origins of the Nazi party and its rise to power. Special attention will be given to the developments that led to the Final Solution up to the Wannsee Conference in 1942 having as sources speeches and writings of some of the main characters involved. By analyzing those materials, important connections can be established to the discourse of antisemitism in its old-new version.

6. Genocidal antisemitism: Nazism and the Holocaust 2.

In this unit, the focus is on the developments that led to the Final Solution from the Wannsee Conference in 1942, to the end of WWII. The focus will be especially on the post-liberation period and the world’s reaction and response (or lack of response) to the drama of the Jewish refugees from the so called displaced persons camps.

7. Holocaust Denial in the context of Post-WWII antisemitism.

Here the analysis will be centered on a phenomenon which is now part and parcel of the long history of antisemitism and has found a voice in several venues including the academia.

8. Jewish Nationalism and Zionism.

One of the main targets of modern antisemitism has been aimed at the State of Israel. Understanding the roots of the Jewish national movement and the return to the promised land is

another important chapter aimed at equipping students with an understanding of the origins of Zionism and in the next session, Anti-Zionism.

9. Zionism and Anti-Zionism.

In this unit, the focus will be on understanding how Anti-Zionism has been used as a tool to delegitimize not only the State of Israel, but also to throw a mantle of permissiveness to antisemitic attitudes.

10. Antisemitism in the Muslim Arab World.

After understanding the process of the establishment of the State of Israel and the significance of Zionism in the recent history of the Jewish people and the State itself, students will contemplate the new realities and contemporary threats.

11. Israel as a Target: the Old-New Antisemitism.

This unit will develop the subject of the previous lecture and discuss how old elements and new developments have shaped the current form of antisemitism.

12. A look into the future: the Iran deal and its potential consequences.

On this final session, the focus will be on questions regarding the consequences of a nuclear Middle East for Israel and for the world in the wake of the agreement signed in July 2015. Once again, as it happened in the early thirties, a nation whose leaders clearly state as their goal, to make the Jewish people disappear from the face of Earth are being empowered by the family of nations. What does it mean? What are the lessons that should have been learned? How can the civil society react to this new and real threat?