

HIS 195-1/POL 150-1

Antisemitism and the Politics of Prejudice: Religion, Israel, & U.S. Foreign Policy

Professor Holly Robertson Huffnagle

Fall 2019: Mondays, 3:15pm-6:30pm

Thinking Historically GE (4 credits)

Thinking Globally GE (4 credits)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Antisemitism has been called the world's longest hatred. It's been called a virus. A disease. The leading cause of genocide. Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel recalled, "We were there. We saw our parents, we saw our friends die because of antisemitism." But what really is it? Is it a bigotry or an ideology? Why has it persisted for so long? And why—decades after the Holocaust—are we now seeing a resurgence around the world? By tracing the development of antisemitism from the past to the present, this course will seek answers to these questions in order to better comprehend current events, trends, and international policies; more effectively monitor and combat this hatred; and increasingly promote democratic principles, human rights, and respect for the other.

In 1948, three years after the end of World War II and the Holocaust (and the same year as the establishment of the State of Israel), the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre published his famous "Reflections on the Jewish Question." He noted that if the Jew did not exist, the antisemite would invent him. Antisemitism was not—and is not—a Jewish problem. It is a problem for non-Jews, and must primarily be viewed and understood as "our [non-Jews'] fault." Antisemitism is especially a problem, as we will see from our own history, for Christians. While hatred of Jews existed before the time of Christ, more than a thousand years of Christian anti-Judaism helped lay the groundwork for the Holocaust. And while many theorized (and hoped) that antisemitism would end after the Holocaust, today it extends across dozens of countries on different continents and takes many different forms. Current trends reveal rising levels; in the last few years alone, Jews have been purposefully targeted and killed once again in the heart of Europe: in France, Belgium, and Denmark. Nor is the United States immune to antisemitism—most religiously-motivated hate crimes take place against Jews. What our nation witnessed in Pittsburgh with the massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in October 2018 or in Charlottesville during the summer of 2017, is a stark reminder of this fact. What are we going to do about it?

This is not one's typical course. As both a historian by training and a former diplomat, my goal is to bring the past—the history of antisemitism—into the current events, conflicts, and diplomatic engagements of the present. The first half of the course will focus more heavily on the historical context, causes, and components of antisemitism, while the second half will explore how antisemitism manifests itself in the political movements of Islam, the far-right, the far-left, and even in countries where there are no Jews. This type of class structure will allow us to grapple with primary sources, such as Martin Luther's *On the Jews and their Lies* or the plagiarized forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and then—once equipped with this contextual knowledge—learn how to engage the topic as a diplomat in an international organizational setting.

Given the timely and controversial nature of this subject, as the few remaining Holocaust survivors pass away, as a fair and democratic resolution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict increasingly seems unattainable, as Islamist terrorist networks and propaganda increase, and as anti-Jewish conspiracy theories spread rapidly across the Internet, it is all the more important for students to study this topic, know its history, recapture its relevance, and participate in more-informed discussions with elected officials and policy makers on ensuring that combating antisemitism remains a domestic and foreign policy priority.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Westmont College actively promotes an interdisciplinary approach across majors and seeks to develop students' intellectual capacities. This course—which has history, religious studies, political science, and international relations components—has two over-arching objectives: to enhance one's ability to think critically and to better engage diplomatically by utilizing historical knowledge and tools. American historian David Nirenberg provocatively said that the critical thinkers of our present age “increasingly reject the idea that history can tell us anything vital about many of the questions that seem most pressing to us” and often “see the mere invocation of the past as a symptom of special pleading” (i.e. when histories of antisemitism or the Holocaust are invoked to silence criticism of the State of Israel). “Far too often they are right,” he continued; “History can easily become unreflective, pathological, impending criticism rather than furthering it.”¹ Yet history—when utilized critically and appropriately—provides a powerful stimulus to consciousness about the ways in which we see and understand the world today.

In grappling with both historical complexities and current world events, the course will uphold Westmont's mission of cultivating thoughtful scholars, faithful leaders, and grateful servants for global engagement. It aspires to promote curiosity, intellectual insight, and reflection, while humbly acknowledging our own limitations. Throughout the semester, students will wrestle with the difficult and complex topics of antisemitism and prejudice. With gained insight, they will be able to provide more informed and compassionate responses to the following questions: What is the relationship between Christian anti-Judaism and racial (and genocidal) antisemitism? How have the old theological and racist forms of European antisemitism been incorporated into the anti-Jewish and anti-Israel sentiment within Islamist sources? How did (and does) the State of Israel and Israeli governmental policies affect antisemitism? While criticism of Israel (as the self-proclaimed Jewish state) is not necessarily antisemitic, where is the line? When can anti-Israel animus become antisemitic? How do Jews themselves view antisemitism (and what constitutes antisemitism) differently? And given the varied opinions and beliefs, how do we promote the judicious use of the term? Lastly, and more importantly, what does this topic—as both academic and advocative—mean to us as Christians?

Even if our questions have no easy answers, Nirenberg rightly concludes, “without asking them, we cannot become self-conscious about how we think, either about past worlds or about our own.” So often we stop asking the hard questions too early—as soon as “we reach an answer that harmonizes comfortably or usefully with our own view of the world.”² It is my hope that this course will ask higher order questions to challenge our current views and make us uncomfortable, in order to become more thoughtful, well-informed citizens of the world.

¹ David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 11.

² *Ibid.*, 2-5.

HIS 195/POL 150 and GENERAL EDUCATION:

This course fulfills the “Thinking Historically” component of the Westmont General Education curriculum. By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Better understand the complex process of historical change, while also appreciating the particularities of time and place.
2. Read and work critically with primary and secondary historical texts. They will be able to recognize and understand source subjectivity and its contribution to a more balanced historical perspective.
3. Engage in thoughtful and interpretive conversations; further develop critical thinking skills; and practice constructing a historical narrative through written assignments, oral presentations, and class discussions.
4. Appreciate the important role historical context plays in shaping our understanding of the world and develop the ability to see others in this context to better cultivate compassion and encourage a posture of humility.

Secondly, this course will also fulfill Westmont’s “Thinking Globally” requirement. Given the multifaceted nature and global impact of antisemitism, this course will utilize a comparative global perspective and equip students to be informed participants of enacting justice in the world. It will enable students to think globally about contemporary antisemitism by exposing them to a range of comparative perspectives on history, religious views, politics, and society; placing this phenomenon in a global context; discussing how hatred of Jews and Judaism has been impacted by globalization; and considering how issues of justice are at stake in the contemporary challenges being examined. Students will encounter various ways of thinking different from their own, work with multiple (and often competing) narratives, and be exposed to a range of methodologies that extend beyond Western/North American approaches.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

In accordance with Westmont’s Institutional Learning Outcomes, students will be better able to:

- Differentiate different types of antisemitism and apply appropriate foundational theories to analyze pagan/Greco-Roman, religious, socio-economic, racial, and political antisemitism.
- Analyze antisemitism through the lens of different Jewish internal and external experiences, categorized by political, religious, and historical contexts.
- Articulate how antisemitism is approached in different countries or distinct geographical areas.
- Demonstrate how antisemitism, its development, and different understandings affect contemporary politics and policies around the world, and within the United States.
- Understand contemporary sources of antisemitism and discuss what is meant by Zionism and anti-Zionism and if/how criticism of Israel can cross the line into antisemitism.
- Show increased global awareness and compassion, and reflect on how the study of antisemitism, including Christian anti-Judaism, might better inform one’s Christian faith.

COURSE PROCEDURE and CLASSROOM POLICIES:

Classes will vary in format, including but not limited to formal lectures, student-led discussions, documentaries, and site visits (museums, synagogues, etc.). Prior to the lecture, students will have completed the required reading assignments. Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussion unless they have an excused absence.

Westmont College's policy for academic integrity will be strictly followed. Dishonesty of any kind may result in loss of credit for the work involved and the filing of a report with the Provost's Office. Major or repeated infractions may result in dismissal from the course with a grade of F. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. To plagiarize is "to present someone else's work—his or her words, line of thought, or organizational structure—as your own. This occurs when sources are not cited properly, or when permission is not obtained from the original author to use his or her work." The College's plagiarism policy can be found here:

http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/provost/plagiarism/plagiarism_policy.html.

Students who have been diagnosed with a disability are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by the Office of Disability Services. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your equal access to this course. Please contact Sheri Noble, Director of Disability Services prior to the group's departure date in August (805-565-6186, snoble@westmont.edu) or visit the website for more information: http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/disability.

All electronic devices need to be silenced and put away before class begins. Please use computers for note-taking purposes only. To ensure focus and limit distractions, I recommend coming to class with a notebook and a writing utensil.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- Class attendance and participation: **10%**
- Leading a class discussion: **10%**
- Mid-term Exam: **25%**
- One primary source analysis essay: **15%**
- Group presentation: **15%**
- Final Paper: **25%**

1. Class Attendance and Participation (10%)

Regular class attendance and active participation are central requirements to do well in this course. It is expected that all students will come to class prepared (having read all assigned reading material), take thorough class notes, and contribute to course development by demonstrating your grasp of the readings, asking questions, and sharing thoughtful insights and ideas.

2. Leading a Class Discussion (10%)

In addition to the lecture, each class will spend ample time reflecting on and debating the readings. Each student will have the opportunity to co-lead one of these discussions and will need to come to class prepared with questions, possible answers, and ready to keep the conversation moving. Further instructions will be provided in class.

3. Group Presentation (15%)

Students will work in groups of 3-4 and participate in a simulated United Nations High Level Forum on Global Antisemitism. They will be given a case study on an antisemitic incident (of varying sources; i.e. far-right, far-left, Islamist extremism, social media, Holocaust distortion, etc.) and will present on the history and current manifestations of that type of antisemitism in their represented country. They will then introduce a resolution with specific policy recommendations to monitor and combat antisemitism for the international body to vote on and implement. The prompt will be provided separately in class.

4. Mid-term Exam (25%)

A midterm exam, consisting of both objective and subjective questions, will be given during the semester. The majority of exam points will be earned during the exams' essay section. Students will be given a choice of four prompts (based on class readings, lectures, and class discussions) and will select two to answer during the exam.

5. Writing Assignments (40%)

Students will turn in two major writing assignments. The prompts will be provided separately in class. The first is a primary source-based essay (6-8 pages) which will constitute 15% of the final grade. The second—in lieu of a final exam—will be a final paper (12-15 pages), in which each student will research (using primary and secondary sources) the history of the Jewish community in a selected country, sources of antisemitism using landscape mapping tools, and provide a comprehensive policy plan to lower levels of antisemitism within the country. This assignment will be worth 25% of the final grade. Essays will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- a. The essay addresses the questions asked in the prompt.
- b. The essay is well written and well organized.
- c. The essay uses a range of appropriate sources historical background/context and to defend your arguments.
- d. The essay includes citations using footnotes as well as a separate bibliography at the end of the essay. Both the footnotes and bibliography information should follow the Chicago Manual of Style.

(https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html)

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Required Books (to be purchased)³:

³ Additional readings to be completed prior to each class will be located here:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RfPcDBSFFYcuEPtvq7SJ6qkUuswh-hLh?usp=sharing>

1. Lipstadt, Deborah. *Antisemitism: Here and Now*. New York, Schocken Books, 2019.
2. Laqueur, Walter. *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
3. Wistrich, Robert S. *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*. New York City: Random House, 2010.

Films

Students will have the opportunity to watch several recent films (mostly documentaries) during the course of the semester, including:

- Watchers of the Sky (2014), Edet Belzberg
- Germans and Jews (2016), Janina Quint
- Denial (2016), Mick Jackson
- Charlottesville (2017), Vice Documentary
- The Cleaners (2018), Hans Block

COURSE SCHEDULE

Classes will be held once a week on Mondays from 3:15pm-6:30pm. There will be a 15-minute break every class session. Please note the below schedule is subject to change.

8/26/19: Why the Jews?: Introduction and Definitions

Before working on ways to combat antisemitism, we first need to explore what exactly is it. This class will discuss the origins and types of antisemitism. Is a formal definition needed? Why or why not? We will also explore how antisemitism fits within the family of bigotries and racisms, but how and why it is also different, and why this nuance matters in making more informed policy decisions.

9/02/19: Early Christian and Medieval Anti-Judaism

“The madness, the hatred, the dehumanizing attitudes which led to the events known collectively as the Holocaust did not occur overnight or within the span of a few years, but were the culmination of centuries of such Christian theology, teaching and church-sanctioned action directed against the Jews simply because they were Jews.” Where and why did Christian anti-Judaism begin and how did it become entrenched in European medieval society?

9/09/19: Socio-economic and Political Antisemitism: Origins and Persisting Theories

The term ‘antisemitism’ is a product of a specific time and place in late-19th century, post-emancipation Germany—created to protest Jews’ rising socio-economic status and influence in German society. Conspiracy theories about Jewish wealth and power continue to haunt our society decades after the Holocaust, yet they had their beginnings here. Why did these beliefs come to the forefront in the 19th century, how were they propagated, and how did they pull from traditional Christian anti-Judaism to gain a larger following? And, given the historical context of this term, is it appropriate to use ‘antisemitism’ to apply to all forms of Jew-hatred past, present, and future?

9/16/19: Genocidal Antisemitism: The Holocaust

It is during the Holocaust, “the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators,” where antisemitism in a new form—racial antisemitism—turned deadly. The Holocaust did not happen in a vacuum, but was built upon previous prejudices against Jews combined with new “modern” tools of eugenics, science, and technology. How did Nazi racism and the Holocaust alter the ways in which Jews, scholars, policy makers, and government leaders understood antisemitism?

9/23/19: Israel, Zionism, and Anti-Zionism

Is there a ‘new’ antisemitism? Should a definition of antisemitism include some of its anti-Israel manifestations? Are comparisons of Israel with Apartheid-South Africa antisemitic? Calls for Boycott/Divestment and Sanctions? Questions of a “Jewish Lobby”? When Iran’s foreign policy agenda is to “wipe Israel off the map,” do their statements and actions enter the realm of antisemitism? This class will explore some of the most controversial political issues surrounding antisemitism and the State of Israel.

9/30/19: The Muslim World: Antisemitism as Conspiracy Theories and Political Islam

Eliminationist antisemitism is part and parcel of jihadist ideology, as it was to Nazi ideology. Conspiracy theories and antisemitic texts, such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which came from Europe, have been brought to the Arab world by Sayyid Qutb (founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt) and other Islamist leaders. Within political Islam today, there is often no distinction between ‘Israeli’ and ‘Jew.’ But what about the rest of the Arab world? Arab Muslims and Jews have lived in (predominantly) peaceful coexistence for hundreds of years in the Middle East and North Africa before the establishment of the State of Israel. What happened?

10/14/19: Midterm Exam

10/14/19: Communism and the Soviet Jewry Movement

Antisemitism within the Soviet Union may seem surprising given that communism is a political system which espouses equality of all its citizens, in part through the elimination of religion and ethno-national identities. Yet Jews who did not conform to the expectations of the state (and even many who did) faced severe persecutions and restrictions. The Soviet Jewry movement was an international human rights campaign that advocated for the right of Jews in the Soviet Union to emigrate in the 1980s. Why was this campaign so successful?

10/21/19: Challenges on the Left: The Labour Party

Before the creation of the State of Israel, leftist antisemitism focused on perceived Jewish power, banking, and capitalism. And while the left has a strong tradition of confronting racism, when it comes to antisemitism—and its intersection with anti-Zionism—there continue to be challenges (especially after the Six-Day War in 1967 when anti-Imperialism became an absolute principle). Most recently, antisemitism accusations were on full display in Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party in Great Britain. Why?

Primary Source Essay due today

10/28/19: Challenges on the Right: Populist Parties and Fascist Fantasies

Most antisemitic acts today in the U.S., as in Europe, reportedly come from the far-right: white/ethno-nationalist and neo-Nazi groups. In fact, far-right, traditionally antisemitic political parties—which have roots in fascism and National Socialism, such as Jobbik in Hungary—have experienced unprecedented growth and support in recent years. Set against a backdrop of global backdrop of rising economic uncertainty, societal failure to integrate immigrants, and increased security threats, many Europeans—and Americans even—have placed a renewed emphasis on national identity and race. Where do these trends and (often xenophobic) sentiments leave the Jewish community?

11/04/19: Antisemitism after Auschwitz: Holocaust Denial and Distortion

Holocaust denial is “the attempt to negate the established facts of the Nazi genocide of European Jewry.” It is generally motivated by “hatred of Jews and build on the claim that the Holocaust was invented or exaggerated by Jews as part of a plot to advance Jewish interests.” Both Holocaust denial and distortion are forms of antisemitism and undermine historical truth. Why do people deny the Holocaust? Why is it imperative to confront denial and distortion? How and why are governments, especially in eastern and central Europe, dabbling in Holocaust revisionism in efforts to promote their own national narratives?

11/11/19: Violent Antisemitism: Western Europe and the United States

Since 2006, there have been at least 20 Jews who have been killed in western Europe simply because they were Jews. In May 2018, an 85-year-old French Jewish Holocaust survivor was murdered—stabbed 11 times and her apartment set on fire. And in the United States, 11 Jewish worshippers were murdered in Pittsburgh in October 2018, followed by another fatal shooting at a synagogue in Poway, CA six months later. In western Europe, we will go beyond the oft-cited connection of violence against Jews with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and wrestle with decolonialization, immigration, integration, identity, and discrimination to better understand—albeit not to justify—the contexts often plaguing the perpetrators of these antisemitic crimes. And in the U.S., we will look at white nationalism and supremacy as the main source of American antisemitic violence.

Country Abstracts for Final Paper due today

11/18/19: Digital Antisemitism and Hate Speech

Today the biggest increase in antisemitism is found online and on social media. Given our first amendment rights in the U.S. of free speech, how do technology companies curb hatred spreading online? Where is the line between free speech and incitement to violence? How effective is counter speech? Are European governments, whose laws make hate speech illegal, more effective in combating antisemitism online?

11/25/19: Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism Today: What is being done?

This class will do a deep dive into what the U.S. government and civil society organizations are currently doing to monitor and combat antisemitism at home and abroad. We will also hear from the Santa Barbara/Tri-Counties Anti-Defamation League (ADL) on their reporting and combating hate crime methodologies for Santa Barbara county, trainings for law enforcement, and anti-bias education.

Extra credit opportunity: Volunteer project with the Anti-Defamation League and/or Jewish Federation of Santa Barbara.

12/02/19: UN High Level Forum on Global Antisemitism: Student Presentations

We will conduct a United Nations High Level Forum on Global Antisemitism, where groups will represent a UN member state and present to representatives of other member states (the rest of the class) on contemporary antisemitism issues within that country. The group will introduce a resolution with specific policy recommendations to monitor and combat antisemitism for the international body to vote on and implement.

12/11/19: Final Paper Due by 3pm