

*When I was the rabbi of the Jewish community in Berlin under the Hitler regime, I learned many things. The most important thing that I learned under those tragic circumstances was that bigotry and hatred are not the most urgent problem. The most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful and the most tragic problem is... **silence**.*

- Rabbi Joachim Prinz

POLS 378

## **Antisemitism: History, Reality, Prevention**

Spring 2021

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### **Introduction:**

Following the memorable words of Rabbi Prinz spoken to those who gathered in Washington, DC, to fight for civil rights in the United States, the worst that we can choose to do is to remain silent and indifferent. Yet, is there a need to speak up? Academia is the place of asking questions and looking for answers. Recent years have proven that - YES - there is the need to speak and act now against rising antisemitism. It is a global need. But to spark the ripple effect of change, we need to touch our home communities first. In fact, we may quickly find out that it is where our words and actions are needed the most. If we are able to make others in our local place believe in the power of our striving for justice and human rights adherence, we may end up shortly, indeed walking from Selma to Montgomery.

Over the past three years, in Nebraska, we have observed an increase in antisemitic attacks by six percent.<sup>1</sup> It might sound little, but 18 persons, with their families, friends, and communities were stricken.<sup>2</sup> What is more, compared to the other states in the Great Plains Region, Nebraska had the highest number of antisemitic crimes.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the largest distribution source of neo-nazi printed materials has been located for many years in Beatrice, Nebraska, and the capital city, Lincoln.<sup>4</sup> It is why this course and its localization are so significant and important!

Welcome on board! After 14 weeks, the world might not instantly become a better place, but we will try our best to make it happen!

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Haave, "ADL Plains States - Anti-Semitic incidents up," in: 3newsnow, Apr. 30th, 2019 [viewed Aug. 27th, 2019], (available from: <https://www.3newsnow.com/news/local-news/adl-plains-states-anti-semitic-incidents-up>).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Carson Vaughan, "The Farm Belt führer: the making of a neo-Nazi," in: The Guardian, Jul. 6th, 2017 [viewed Aug. 27th, 2019], (available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/06/neo-nazi-gerhard-lauck-nebraska-antisemitism>).

## **Course Description and Learning Goals:**

The ultimate goal of this course is to **enable students** to rethink themselves as individuals and members of society as well as **to become ‘upstanders’ against discrimination and antisemitism.**

In our course, we will do a multidimensional **survey of the history** of local and global antisemitism, look at the calamity **Holocaust**, the creation and challenges of **Israel**, and current **antisemitic attitudes** in Nebraska, US, and the world. While learning, we will enthuse ourselves for *praxis*, and through **Action Academy**, we will work on the off- and on-line projects to counter antisemitism. Our course is **interdisciplinary** touching on different fields of social sciences: history, sociology, political science, as well as on international law and legal studies as we will not shun ourselves from placing acts of antisemitism in the legal context and discussing **genocides**.

In our encounters, we will strive for **Creativity, Action**, and above all, **Compassion**. We will learn with/from **Five Senses**. Each controversial or emotionally ‘heavy’ topic has scheduled a debrief session. We can also always call a debrief session upon request and/or encourage individual conversations with the instructors. Moreover, in case of any discomfort, you are heartened to talk to us or the UNL **CAPS** (<https://caps.unl.edu/>). Whenever you see something, please say something! The success of this course rests in the creation of a **safe space** where we can exchange with respect and collaborate. Please report any misconduct, especially any instances of discrimination and harassment, including this of the instructors.

During the course, we will pursue the following learning **goals** inspired by the pedagogy of Kurt Hahn:

- *Striving for self-awareness and enlightening conversations;*
- *Listening humbly and deeply;*
- *Communicating courageously;*
- *Practicing the power of thoughtful apologies;*
- *Getting curious about difference;*
- *Embracing the complexity of truth;*
- *Pursuing solutions collaboratively;*
- *Expressing gratitude.*

## **Requirements and Assessment:**

**Attendance** is required. If you have any illness, crisis, or emergency, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

**Class Participation and Careful Reading** (of the assigned materials) in advance of class, are essential components of this course.

**Written Assignments:** throughout the course, students will keep their **journal** (provided from the instructors) in which they will put self-reflection from daily class meetings (approximately 200-words in English), outside-class-room observations that relate to the course, as well as raise their questions (three questions about the material learned *per* lesson). Journals will be submitted at the beginning of each class (A) and given back during class (B).

For the **Final Examination**, teams of students will develop their action projects.

### **Grading:**

Participation 30%  
Journal 30%  
Action Project 30%  
Pop Quizzes 10%

### **Expectations:**

You are expected to be a **regular, active, and informed** participant. The success of this course depends on your careful preparation and willingness to **engage** in the intellectual work of sharing and generating ideas.

You are expected to treat other members of this course **respectfully**, which means engaging with them in an open dialogue and debate. When different interpretations emerge, this means being ready to challenge others, to have your own view challenged, and to learn from these encounters. You may expect the same from your instructors.

You are **expected not to use cellular phones during the class**, as well as to not engage in activities that are not related to the course during the class. In case of an emergency requiring the use of a phone, please inform the instructors.

### **Services for Students With Disabilities**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 117 Louise Pound Hall; 402-472-3787.

### **Counseling and Psychological Services**

UNL offers a variety of options to students to aid them in dealing with stress and adversity. [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) is a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and counselors that works collaboratively with Nebraska students to help them explore their

feelings and thoughts and learn helpful ways to improve their mental, psychological and emotional well-being when issues arise. CAPS can be reached by calling 402-472-7450. [Big Red Resilience & Well-Being](#) (BRRWB) provides one-on-one well-being coaching to any student who wants to enhance their well-being. Trained well-being coaches help students create and be grateful for positive experiences, practice resilience and self-compassion, and find support as they need it. BRRWB can be reached by calling 402-472-8770.

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. The responsibility for maintaining that integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. The University's [Student Code of Conduct](#) addresses academic dishonesty. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision.

### **Face Coverings Syllabus Statement**

As of July 17, 2020 and until further notice, all University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) faculty, staff, students, and visitors (including contractors, service providers, and others) are required to use a facial covering at all times when indoors except under specific conditions outlined in the COVID 19 face covering policy found at: <https://covid19.unl.edu/face-covering-policy>. This statement is meant to clarify classroom policies for face coverings:

To protect the health and well-being of the University and wider community, UNL has implemented a policy requiring all people, including students, faculty, and staff, to wear a face covering that covers the mouth and nose while on campus. The classroom is a community, and as a community, we seek to maintain the health and safety of all members by wearing face coverings when in the classroom. Failure to comply with this policy is interpreted as a disruption of the classroom and may be a violation of UNL's Student Code of Conduct.

Individuals who have health or medical reasons for not wearing face coverings should work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (for students) or the Office of Faculty/Staff Disability Services (for faculty and staff) to establish accommodations to address the health concern. Students who prefer not to wear a face covering should work with their advisor to arrange a fully online course schedule that does not require their presence on campus. Students in the classroom:

1. If a student is not properly wearing a face covering, the instructor will remind the student of the policy and ask them to comply with it.
2. If the student will not comply with the face covering policy, the instructor will ask the student to leave the classroom, and the student may only return when they are properly wearing a face covering.
3. If the student refuses to properly wear a face covering or leave the classroom, the instructor will dismiss the class and will report the student to Student Conduct & Community Standards for misconduct, where the student will be subject to disciplinary action.

Instructors in the classroom:

1. If an instructor is not properly wearing a face covering, students will remind the instructor of the policy and ask them to comply with it.
2. If an instructor will not properly wear a face covering, students may leave the classroom and should report the misconduct to the department chair or via the TIPS system for disciplinary action through faculty governance processes.

\*Courses that have been granted an exception to the Face Covering Policy for pedagogical reasons are excluded. Exceptions to the Face Covering Policy are only granted after an approved health safety plan is developed.

### **Schedule:**

#### **Week 1: *Introduction***

**Objectives:** This week, we will learn about each other and the course as well as assess our standing in society and make an attempt to deconstruct our identities.

**A:** Let us meet each other! Explanations about the Syllabus, Assignments, Academic honesty, and Academic Integrity.

**B:** Otherness & Words that matter.

Re-recognizing *ego* (self-identities) and own *positionale*.

What are the stereotypes and prejudices?

**Action:** Exercise “Take a step forward.”

#### **Week 2: *Jews 101***

**Objectives:** This week, we will learn who Jews are. Interested participants will be able to take part in Abrahamic Service, which we will prepare together. This service will showcase unity between three ‘Abrahamic’ religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

**A:** Who are Jews? (History).

**B:** Who are Jews? (Culture and Religion).

**C:** Action (extra credit): Abrahamic Service, Saturday.

#### **Week 3: *The origins of antisemitism***

**Objectives:** This week, we will discuss the origins of European antisemitism through the survey of history as well as with the assessment of visuals and narratives depicting the past.

**A:** The origins of European antisemitism.

Short videos based on: "The Merchant of Venice"; "The Goya's Ghosts."

**Required Reading:** Hannah Arendt, 1973, "Part I: Antisemitism," in: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

**B:** Antisemitism in 19th c. Europe, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, *The Pale of Settlement*.

**Required Reading:** Hannah Arendt, 1973, "Part I: Antisemitism," in: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

#### **Week 4:** *nazism*

**Objectives:** This week, we will discuss the ideology of nazism, its polity, and the machine of discrimination and extermination.

**A:** The Weimar Republic, nazism, and The Third Reich.

**B:** Holocaust

**Required Reading:** Art Spiegelman, 1980, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*, Random House Inc.  
*Debrief Session*.

#### **Week 5:** *Perpetrators, Heroes, and the Holocaust*

**Objectives:** This week, we will assess who is a hero and who is a villain? As well as, we will look at case studies of heroes and perpetrators while continuing the discussion on the Holocaust.

**A:** Hero vs. Villain

Individuals and their choices: Oscar Schindler, Anne Frank, Irena Sendler, and Janusz Korczak.

**Required Readings:** Christopher Browning, 1992, *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: Harper Collins: pp. 55-77. (Chapter 7: Initiation to Mass Murder: The Józefów Massacre; Chapter 8: Reflections on a Massacre); Joseph Brodsky, *Bosnia Tune*.

**B:** Holocaust cont.

**Required Reading:** Art Spiegelman, 1992, *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*, Random House Inc.

**Action:** A postcard to Survivor.

*Debrief Session*.

**Action** (extra credit): A trip to Lincoln Holocaust Memorial.

#### **Week 6:** *Israel*

**Objectives:** This week, we will discuss the creation, history, issues, and controversies surrounding the state of Israel

**A:** post-1945 Jewish reality, Israel

**B:** Israel cont.  
*Debrief Session*

### **Week 7: *The New World Order***

**Objectives:** This week, we will discuss the post-Second World War global reality as well as look at legal enshrining of genocide and human rights

**A:** UN and Human Rights

**Required Reading:** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

**B:** Genocides

**Required Readings:** *The Genocide Convention*; John Cooper, *Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for the Genocide Convention*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.  
*Debrief Session*

### **Week 8: *Discrimination***

**Objectives:** This week, we will assess what does it mean to discriminate and modern-day antisemitism.

**A:** Legal prevention of Discrimination.

**B:** Antisemitism in today's world.

### **Week 9: *Antisemitism in the United States***

**Objectives:** This week, we will discuss the history and current occurrences of antisemitism in the United States of America.

**A:** antisemitism in the United States.  
*Debrief Session.*

**B:** *Skokie, Invaded but not Conquered.*

**Required Reading:** Donald Alexander Downs, 1985, *Freedom, Community, and the First Amendment*, University of Notre Dame Press.

**Week 10: *SPRING BREAK* (no classes), enjoy the freedom, and use it wisely!**

**Week 11:** *Antisemitism in the United States cont.*

**Objectives:** This week, we will debate the decision of Illinois ACLU to protect the rights of neonazis to march in Skokie as well as discuss occurrences of antisemitism in Nebraska.

**A, Action:** The Oxford-style Debate:

Imagine you were the director of The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Illinois back in 1977. Issue two briefs, one recommending and another rejecting your branch protection of the neonazis intending to march in Skokie. Justify your decision. We will debate it in class.

**B:** Nebraska, Malcolm X, Praierfuhrer, and anti-apartheid.

**Required Readings:** Carson Vaughan, “The Farm Belt fuhrer: the making of a neo-Nazi,” in: *The Guardian*, Jul. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017, available from:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/06/neo-nazi-gerhard-lauck-nebraska-antisemitism>.

*Debrief Session.*

**Week 12:** *Civil Disobedience*

**Objectives:** This week, we will assess the meaning of civil disobedience, its examples, and stories of inspiring upstanders.

**A:** From Thoreau to Greta.

**Required Reading:** Henry David Thoreau, 1954, *Walden Pond*, Charles E. Goodspeed & Co.

**B:** “We shall overcome”: together for civil rights. What can I do to “be the change I wish to see in this world”?

**Week 13:** *Action Academy*

**Objectives:** This week, we will learn about different off- and on-line forms of taking a stand against antisemitism and discrimination.

**A:** How to become an upstander?

**B:** Slacktivism.

**Week 14:** *Work in progress*

**Objectives:** This week, students will work on their action projects and receive feedback from peers and instructors.

**A:** Consultation Sessions.

**B:** Consultation Sessions.

Week 15: ~~The End~~ | the beginning...

**Objectives:** This week, we will present our Final Projects – *Good Luck!*

**A:** Presentations.

**B:** Presentation *cont.*

Course Evaluation. Ideas and Goals for the Future.

***ENJOY YOUR SUMMER!***  
*while being upstanders*



(Source: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com>)