

*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/HIST/SOC 450/850

Antisemitism: History, Reality, Prevention

Spring 2021

Instructor: Prof. Ari Kohen (akohen2@unl.edu)

Teaching Assistant: Łukasz Niparko (lniparko2@husers.unl.edu)

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.¹ It might sound little, but 18 persons, with their families, friends, and communities were stricken.² What is more, compared to the other states in the Great Plains Region, Nebraska had the highest number of antisemitic crimes.³ Furthermore, the largest distribution source of neo-nazi printed materials has been located for many years in Beatrice, Nebraska, and the capital city, Lincoln.⁴ 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! *Mazel Tov!*

¹ 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>).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ 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.

You may expect that **academic dishonesty will not be tolerated**. The notion of “academic honesty” will be explained during the first course meeting.

If you consider yourself a person with a disability and **need accommodation**, you may expect the instructors’ full cooperation. Please see one of your instructors (or both) as soon as possible to discuss the accommodation needed.

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.”

Required Readings:

1. John Rawls, 1971, Chapter I and Chapter VI, in: *A theory of justice*. Oxford, pp. 3-46, 293-346.
2. Conrad Phillip Kottak, 2016, Chapter 1; Chapters 4-6; Chapter 17; in: *On being different: diversity and multiculturalism in the north American mainstream*. McGraw-Hill, pp. 1-8, 45-106, 294-306.

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).

Required Readings:

1. David N. Myers, 2017, *Jewish history: a very short introduction*. Oxford.
2. David M. Crowe, 2008, “Jewish History,” in: *The Holocaust: roots, history, and aftermath*. Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 5-39.

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

Required Reading:

1. Norman Solomon, 2014, *Judaism: a very short introduction*. Oxford.

C: Action (extra credit): Abrahamic Service.

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 Readings:

1. David M. Crowe, 2008, “Jews, the Enlightenment, Emancipation, and the Rise of Racial Anti-Semitism...,” in: *The Holocaust: roots, history, and aftermath*. Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 41-78.
2. Simone Gigliotti, 2008, “Anti-Semites,” in: *The Holocaust: a reader*. Malden: Blackwell, pp.1-43.

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

Required Readings:

1. Karl Marx, 1843, *On the Jewish question*.
2. 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.

Required Readings:

1. David M. Crowe, 2008, Chapters 3 & 4 in: *The Holocaust: roots, history, and aftermath*. Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 79-148.
2. Simone Gigliotti, 2008, Chapters 2-5 in: *The Holocaust: a reader*. Malden: Blackwell, pp.44-123 and pp. 143-166.

B: Holocaust

Required Readings:

1. Art Spiegelman, 1980, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*, Random House Inc.
2. David M. Crowe, 2008, Chapters 5 & 6 in: *The Holocaust: roots, history, and aftermath*. Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 149-223.

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:

1. David M. Crowe, 2008, "The Final Solution..." in: *The Holocaust: roots, history, and aftermath*. Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 225-282.
2. Christopher Browning, 1992, Chapter 7: Initiation to Mass Murder: The Józefów Massacre; Chapter 8: Reflections on a Massacre, in: *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: Harper Collins.

B: Holocaust (cont'd).

Required Readings:

1. Art Spiegelman, 1992, *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*, Random House Inc.
2. Primo Levi, 2008, *The Drowned and The Saved*. London: Abacus.
3. Joseph Brodsky, *Bosnia Tune*.

Action: A postcard to The 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

Required Reading:

1. David M. Crowe, 2008, "Liberation..." in: *The Holocaust: roots, history, and aftermath*. Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 383-442.

B: Israel (cont'd).

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, Human Rights, and Genocides

Required Readings:

1. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948.
2. Simone Gigliotti, 2008, Part VI, in: *The Holocaust: a reader*. Malden: Blackwell, pp.389-462.

B: UN, Human Rights, and Genocides (cont'd).

Required Readings:

1. *The Genocide Convention*.
2. 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 and antisemitism.

Required Readings:

1. Rhona K. M. Smith, 2018, "Equality and non-discrimination," in: *Textbook on international human rights law*. Oxford, pp. 195-216.
2. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, 2013, *Resurgent antisemitism global perspectives*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

B: Antisemitism in today's world.

Required Reading:

1. Michael Berenbaum, 2008, *Not your father's antisemitism: hatred of the Jews in the twenty-first century*. St Paul, MN: Paragon House.

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.

Required Reading:

1. Leonard Dinnerstein, 1995, *Antisemitism in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Debrief Session.

B: *Skokie, Invaded but not Conquered.*

Required Reading:

1. 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'd)

Objectives: This week, we will debate the decision of Illinois ACLU to protect the rights of neo-nazis 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 neo-nazis intending to march in Skokie. Justify your decision. We will debate it in class.

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

Required Reading:

1. Carson Vaughan, "The Farm Belt führer: the making of a neo-Nazi," in: *The Guardian*, Jul. 6th, 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.

Action: Groups of Students present Civil Disobedience Heroines and Heroes: Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Chipko Movement, Harvey Milk, Malala Yousafzai, and Greta Thunberg.

Required Reading:

1. Henry David Thoreau, 2009, "Civil Disobedience" in: *Walden, Civil disobedience and other writings*. W.W. Norton and Company, pp. 227-246.

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

Required Readings:

1. Paulo Freire, 1970, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
2. Samantha Power, "A complicated hero in the war on dictatorship", *TEDTalk*, Available from: https://www.ted.com/talks/samantha_power_a_complicated_hero_in_the_war_on_dictatorship/transcript?language=en#t-90692 .
3. Saffiyah Khan, "Be active, not an activist," *TEDTalk*, Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpAwj7B4Uqc> .

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?

Required Reading:

1. Saul David Alinsky, 1989, *Rules for radicals: a practical primer for realistic radicals*.

B: Slacktivism.

Required Readings:

1. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, 2008, "Introduction" and "A Propaganda Model" in: *Manufacturing consent: the political economy of the mass media*. London: The Bodley Head, pp. xi-35.
2. Jill Walker Rettberg, 2014, "Citizen Journalists?" in: *Blogging*. Cambridge: Polity, pp. 84-110.

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'd).

Course Evaluation. Ideas and Goals for the Future.

C: Potluck Social (please let us know in advance if you have any dietary restrictions).

*ENJOY YOUR SUMMER!
while being upstanders*



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