

Antisemitism: Origins to the Present

History 2XXX Survey - Fall 2016

TR 9:35-10:50 Phillips 329

Instructor: Robert Isaacson

Email: rbisaacs@gwu.edu

Office: Phillips 334

Office Hours: M 11:00-1:00, and by appointment

Course Description

This course is a thematic and theoretical survey of the history of antisemitism from the late antique period to the twentieth century. Anti-Jewish acts and discourse have left an indelible imprint on the lives of Jews and their neighbors for much of the last two millennia, leading historian Robert Wistrich to term antisemitism “the longest hatred.” From mundane assumptions to murderous binaries, the belief patterns that fall within the rubrics of anti-Judaism and antisemitism have played key roles in shaping the contours of Jewish social, political, economic, and cultural life - and at times, death - in Europe and the Near East. Yet ought we to speak of an enduring and pervasive “Antisemitism,” or a collection of contextually unique “antisemitisms?” How is the antisemitism of today related to the anti-Judaism of yesterday? How have the discourses of antisemitism spread, grown, and mutated, and how has antisemitic thought become antisemitic deed? How have antisemitic discourses adapted to the rise of the State of Israel and a post-Holocaust world, and why do they retain their currency?

This course will answer these questions by charting the origins and development of modern antisemitism from its roots in Christian and Islamic anti-Judaism, contextualize and assess their pre-modern permutations, detour onto the paradoxical road of philosemitism, and analyze the rise of modern essentialist, racial, and ideological antisemitic forms.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be expected to be able to do the following. These outcomes will be evaluated through course assessments.

- Define and differentiate antisemitism and anti-Judaism, explain and contextualize their interrelationship and successive historical permutations, and assess antisemitic instances from both practical and theoretical perspectives.
- Identify significant individuals, institutions, ideas, texts, events, and movements in the history of antisemitism introduced through course readings and lecture, and explain their significance to Jewish and other histories in their original and in our own contexts.
- Explain and participate in discussion on the central theoretical issues of antisemitism, including questions of periodization, definition, modernity, continuity, and memory.

- Analyze primary and secondary evidence critically and in light of their original contexts. Students will be able to assess the relationship between different kinds of evidence, read secondary sources historiographically, assess historical interpretations in light of available evidence, and read primary and secondary sources with an awareness of argument, structure, and bias.
- Write using the scholarly conventions of the historian using appropriate sources, rhetorical forms, and citations, while distinguishing and building upon primary and secondary evidence through the application of an interpretative lens.

Course Requirements

- Research Paper Proposal (10%): Students will prepare a short (2-3 page) formal proposal for their planned research paper. It should identify the project's central analytical questions, discuss the current state of the scholarly literature on the topic, and provide a preliminary bibliography.
- Document Analyses (20%): Over the course of the semester students will prepare two short (2-3 page) document analyses (worth 10% each) of an assigned primary source reading of their choosing. Students should provide an argumentative interpretation of the text, identify and explain key passages, and contextualize the document historically and discursively. Document analyses are due on the date for which the selected document is scheduled.
- Term Paper (50%): The central assignment of this course will be the production of a argumentative analytical paper (approx. 15-20 pages) on a topic of your choosing relevant to the course material, due in class at the last class meeting. You must incorporate a minimum of 5 sources, including at least 2 primary sources and 2 scholarly secondary sources of book or article length.
- Attendance and Participation (20%): This course is a combination of seminar discussion and lecture. Attendance and participation in class discussion are mandatory, and will be recorded daily. Students are permitted absences from class only in university recognized cases, such as documented health concerns and days of religious observance. An excess of three unexcused absences will see a significant deduction from your participation grade. Absent students are required to obtain any missed notes or information from their peers, and to complete any missed assignments. If an absence is anticipated, assignments must be turned in early to avoid late penalties.

Attendance alone does not constitute participation. Remember, you do not have to say something profound in order to participate successfully - questions and comments on your peers' ideas are valid forms of participation as well. There is a significant amount of

assigned reading for this course, which you are expected to have completed by the assigned date; you will not be able to participate effectively if you have not completed the assigned texts. Assigned readings must be brought to class on the day they are due. A student who attends class but does not participate cannot earn more than half of this credit. Students who consistently demonstrate critical/analytical thinking, engagement with course texts, and leadership in classroom discussion are most likely to receive full marks.

Course Policies

- **Course Expectations:** Respectful treatment of all members of the class, at all times, is an absolute expectation. At the same time, by raising an issue in class we open that issue to potential and responsible criticism and debate. It is important to keep in mind that only issues, not individual members of the classroom, may be targets of critique. Students are required to bring to class the assigned texts on the date they are due. The use of laptops, cell phones, or recorders is not permitted in class without documentation from disability services, obtained at the start of the semester. Using your phones in class is disrespectful to your peers and your instructor and will impact negatively on your participation evaluation.
- **Lateness:** Lateness to class is unacceptable, and every two instances of lateness counts as an absence. Late assignments will be penalized half a grade for every 24 hours or portion thereof after the assigned due date. Every day, including weekends, counts towards lateness. You should always submit an assignment by email/Blackboard as early as possible, and then bring a hard copy to class at the earliest opportunity. It is the student's responsibility that a properly formatted and openable copy of an assignment is submitted on time when electronic submission is called for. When in doubt, check - before the due date. It is always better to submit an assignment late than not at all. I am most flexible regarding expected lateness/extensions when approached at least one week before the assignment is due. Late work will not be accepted for any reason following the last day of class.
- **Contact Policies:** I encourage students to attend my office hours, or schedule individual or group appointments at other times, and I make every effort to be available to you as a resource. Please adhere to these contact policies:
 - I communicate primary by email. I will attempt to reply to all emails within 24 hours, however, I do not reply to emails after 10pm. Do not contact me with a problem the day before it will become an issue.
 - I will not reply to any emails/appointments concerning grades for a full 24 hours after the assignment has been returned. If you have a question about a grade, it is best to see me within a week of receiving the assignment back. I do not review assignment grades during finals or the last week of class.

- Special Needs: If you have a disability or special need that will impact your performance or require special accommodations, you must give notice and provide proper documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services as early as possible.
- Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism or cheating, is a serious university offense, and will receive zero tolerance. You should, at all times, credit those whose work you are using or building upon. In this course, all citations are expected to follow the Chicago Manual of Style (15th edition), which is an assigned course text. Be sure to also consult and adhere to the Baruch College Code of Academic Integrity (<http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/facultyhandbook/AcademicIntegrity.htm>).
- **Students are responsible for all information** in this syllabus. It is not the instructor's responsibility to remind students of these policies, inform them of missing work, late penalties they may be receiving, or upcoming due dates (though he often will). This syllabus is subject to change during the semester, however, the instructor will provide notification of any such changes.

Required Texts

The following texts are available for purchase at the university bookstore. Copies have also been placed on reserve at the university library. Numerous other readings and images have been placed on Blackboard (BB).

- Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews: Antisemitism, conspiracy, and the Protocols of Zion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- Christopher Browning. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the final solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).
- Robert Chazan, Jean Hoff, and John Friedman, *The trial of the Talmud; Paris, 1240* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012).
- David Engel, *The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews* (Harlow: Pearson, 2000).
- Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2006).
- Simha Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom*. Trans. Yigal Levin (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2008).
- Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
- Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
- Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths: A Historical and Contemporary Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).
- Pierre-Andre Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck: The New Anti-Semitism in Europe* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004).

- Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

Those students who are new to the study of Jewish history may also want to consider a survey of the broad courses of Jewish history, against the backdrop of which our course is set. Lloyd P. Gartner's 2001 *History of the Jews in Modern Times* is one of many such texts that would fill this roll adequately for our course. Students should also possess a style guide containing the Chicago documentation style. I recommend Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual, Fourth Edition* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2004).

Schedule of Classes

- Week 1.A **Introduction - Why Study Antisemitism?**
- Week 1.B **A (very) Brief Survey of Jewish Civilization**
- Week 2.A **Towards Definitions of Antisemitism and anti-Judaism**
- Week 2 readings: Gavin Langmuir, *Towards a Definition of Antisemitism*, (all); Engel, "Away from a Definition of Antisemitism" (BB); Salo Baron, "Ghetto & Emancipation" (BB)
- Week 2.B **Periodizing and Theorizing Antisemitism**
- Week 3.A **Hellenic and Roman Attitudes towards Jews**
- Week 3 readings: Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism*, selections (BB); Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*, selections (BB); Documentary selections (BB)
- Week 3.B **The Christian Gospels**
- Week 4.A **Early Christian Anti-Judaism**
- Week 4 readings: Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths*, ch.1-4; Documentary selections (BB); Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (all); David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, selections (BB).
- Week 4.B **Medieval Antisemitism: Tropes and Practices**

- Week 5.A **The Crusades**
- Week 5 readings: Robert Chazan, Jean Hoff, and John Friedman, *The trial of the Talmud; Paris, 1240* (all); Documentary selections (BB);
- Week 5.B **Texts on Trial**
- Week 6.A **Pre-Modern Islam and the Jews**
- Week 6 readings: Documentary selections (BB); Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, (all).
- Week 6.B **Dhimmitude: Tolerance or Subjugation?**
- Week 7.A **Iberian Policy on the Jews**
- Week 7 readings: Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths*, ch. 5-7; Documentary selections (BB); Miriam Bodian, “In the Cross-Currents of the Reformation: Crypto-Jewish Martyrs of the Inquisition, 1570-1670.”
- Week 7.B **Writing and Researching Historically - A Workshop**
- Week 8.A **Luther and the Jews**
- Week 8 readings: Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths*, ch. 8-9; Simha Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom*, (all), Documentary Selections (BB).
- Week 8.B **Jewish Responses to pre-modern Anti-Judaism**
- **Term Paper Proposal Due**
- Week 9.A **Enlightenment: Posing the Jewish Question**
- Week 9 readings: Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths*, ch. 10-12; Paul Mendes-Flohr, *The Jew in the Modern World*, selections from chapters 2, 3, and 6 (BB)
- Week 9.B **The Jewish Question: Posing Answers**

- Week 10.A **Towards Racial Antisemitism**
- Week 10 readings: Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths*, ch. 13-16; Robert Isaacson, “Antisemitism and Catholic Colonial Algeria in the Time of Dreyfus” (BB); Paul Mendes-Flohr, *The Jew in the Modern World*, selections from chapter 6 (BB)
- Week 10.B **Dreyfus: Republicanism in Crisis**
- Week 11.A **Popular Antisemitism and the Mass Media**
- Week 11 readings: Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews: antisemitism, conspiracy, and the protocols of Zion* (all); Engel, *The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews*, 1-49, 88-95; Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, vol 1; The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, selections (BB); Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths*, ch. 17-22; David Gerber, “Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Gentile Relations in American Historiography and the American Past,” (BB).
- Week 11.B **Nazism in Germany**
- Week 12.A **The Shoah: Causes and Practices**
- Week 12 readings: Engel, *The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews*, 50-87, 96-111; Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (all); Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the final solution in Poland*, (all); A.D. Moses, "Structure and Agency in the Holocaust: Daniel J Goldhagen and His Critics," (BB).
- Week 12.B **The Shoah: Collaboration and Memory**
- Week 13.A **Postwar Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial**
- Week 13 readings: Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths*, ch. 23-30; Jeffrey Herf, ed., *Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism in Historical Perspective*, selections (BB); Documentary Selections (BB).
- Week 13.B **Anti-Zionism and Modern Islamic Antisemitism**

Week 14.A

A New Antisemitism?

- Week 14 readings: Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck* (all);
Documentary Selections (BB)

Week 14.B

Contemporary Antisemitism

- **Term Paper Due**