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The New Antisemitism: Jew-Hatred and the Jewish State

Course description: This text and discussion based interdisciplinary seminar is designed to explore the connections, real and imagined, between antisemitism and Israel today. Students will study both key examples of contemporary critiques of Zionism and, in defense of the Zionist project to create and preserve a Jewish and democratic state, critical responses to those anti-Zionist campaigns (including BDS) that seek to delegitimize both actually existing Zionism and the very idea of a Jewish sovereignty. Authors studied include: Paul Berman, Judith Butler, Bernard Harrison, Alan Johnson, Matthias Kuntzel, Cary Nelson, Alvin Rosenfeld, Steven Salaita, Gianni Vattimo, Robert Wistrich, Elhanan Yakira, Slavoj Zizek and others.

Goals: Our purpose is to clarify the issue of contemporary antisemitism by probing some key questions. What form(s) does antisemitism take today? Is anti-Zionism antisemitic? (Sometimes? Always? Never?) What is the difference between legitimate criticism of the state of Israel (criticism of a government) and objections to Jewish nationalism that cross a line into antisemitism (hatred of a country)? How have anti-Zionists sought to delegitimize Israel? What strategies do they use? What ideologies play a role in demonizing Israel? How has anti-Zionism become a cause associated with the Left in particular in the United States and Europe? What role does literary and cultural “theory” (postmodern, postcolonial, post-Marxist) play in academic discourses of delegitimization? How does radical political Islamism factor in to the “new” antisemitism? On the other hand, how can/should Israel—as the only flourishing multicultural liberal democracy in the middle east—be seen as a progressive cause?

Requirements: Students are expected to attend class regularly, coming prepared to engage in conversation about assigned readings (excessive absences will result in a lowered grade and can, in extreme cases, lead to failure). Students should bring the texts with them to class, and have questions for discussion written down to share (I will collect these each week). A final paper of 10-12 pages (minimum), double-spaced, is due the last week of the semester. A one-page outline/summary of the paper you plan to write is due mid-semester (after reading these, I will meet with each student to confirm their topic and offer advice), including enumeration of the texts you mean to engage with, cite, and discuss in your work. All papers must refer to texts appropriately (use quotes) to make their arguments. Outside texts are permissible as sources, with approval of the instructor in advance (at the time of the mid-semester outline/summary), but these are not required or necessary; the assigned texts are sufficient and fully adequate, as sources, in other words. Each student will—time permitting—give a brief oral presentation pertaining to their research during the last weeks of the semester, and help lead discussion that day.

Grades: 50% weekly participation, 30% term paper, 20% oral presentation.

Assigned Texts: All students need to have (purchase and bring to class when needed) the following assigned texts. Please budget for this and plan ahead. Additional PDFs will be provided at no cost, but you are responsible for printing them out. The following are the

mandatory books you need to get and have with you in class (they have been ordered at the student bookstore, for your convenience):

Michael Marder and Gianni Vattimo, *Deconstructing Zionism: A Critique of Political Metaphysics* (ISBN-13: 978-1441105943)

Cary Nelson and Gabriel Noah Brahm (eds.), *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel* (ISBN-13: 978-0-9903316-0-5)

Alvin Rosenfeld (ed.), *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives* (ISBN-13: 978-0253008787)

Steven Salaita, *Israel's Dead Soul* (ISBN-13: 978-1439906385)

Charles Asher Small (ed.) *Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity, Volume IV—Islamism and the Arab World* (ISBN-13: 978-1495237249)

Week I The Israel Fetish: Understanding BDS in Theory (an Overview)

Introduction...

Week II Anti-Jewish Boycotts in Historical and Philosophical Perspective

Assigned readings (remember to please read all assignments before coming to class): (1) Paul Berman, "Preface"; (3) Cary Nelson, "Introduction"; (4) AAUP, "On Academic Boycotts"; (5) Martha Nussbaum, "Against Academic Boycotts": all in *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*

Week III Boycotting the Jews: Is BDS Antisemitic?

Assigned readings: (1) Gabriel Noah Brahm and Asaf Romirowsky, "In Intent, if Not in Effect: The Failure of BDS"; (2) Sharon Ann Musher, "The Closing of the American Studies Mind"; (3) David Hirsh, "The American Studies Association Boycott Resolution, Academic Freedom, and the Myth of Institutional Boycott"; (4) Mitchell Cohen, "Anti-Semitism and the Left that Doesn't Learn"; (5) Kenneth Marcus, "Is BDS Anti-Semitic?": all in *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*

Week IV Israel and the Left: Is Anti-Zionism Antisemitism?

Assigned readings: (1) Alan Johnson, "Intellectual Incitement: The Anti-Zionist Ideology and the Anti-Zionist Subject"; (2) Sabah Salih, "Islam, BDS, and the West"; (3) Richard Landes, "Fatal Attraction: The Shared Antichrist of the Global Progressive Left and Jihad": all in *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*

Week V The Great Satan and the Little Satan: American and Israeli Contexts

Assigned readings: (1) Cary Nelson, "The Problem with Judith Butler"; (2) Tammi Rossman-Benjamin, "Interrogating the Academic Boycotters of Israel on American Campuses"; (3) Ilan Troen, "The Campaign to Boycott Israeli Universities: Historical and Ideological Sources"; (4) Ilan Troen, "The Israeli-Palestinian Relationship in Higher Education: Evidence from the Field": all in *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*

Week VI Hating Israel in Academic Research and on Twitter: The Strange Case of Steven Salaita

Assigned reading: Steven Salaita, *Israel's Dead Soul* (selections, TBA)

Week VII Ethnic Studies Cleansing: Kicking Israel Out of Multiculturalism?

Assigned reading: Steven Salaita, *Israel's Dead Soul* (continued; selections, TBA)

Week VIII Deconstructing the New Anti-Zionist Antisemitism

Assigned readings: (1) Gianni Vattimo, "How to Become an Anti-Zionist"; (2) Marc H. Ellis, "Notes on the Prophetic Instability of Zionism": both in Gianni Vattimo and Michael Marder (eds.), *Deconstructing Zionism*

Week IX From Postmodernism to Post-Zionism

Assigned readings: (1) Judith Butler, "Is Judaism Zionism? Or, Arendt and the Critique of the Nation-State"; (2) Slavoj Žižek, "Antisemitism and Its Transformations": both in Gianni Vattimo and Michael Marder (eds.), *Deconstructing Zionism*; (3) Gabriel Noah Brahm, "The Philosophy Behind BDS," <http://fathomjournal.org/the-philosophy-behind-bds-a-review-of-deconstructing-zionism-a-critique-of-political-metaphysics/>

Week X What's New About The "New Antisemitism"?

Assigned readings: (1) Gunter Jikeli, "Antisemitism Among Young European Muslims"; (2) Bruno Chaouat, "Antisemitism Redux: On Literary and Theoretical Perversions": both in Alvin Rosenfeld (ed.), *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives*

Week XI The Meaning of Global Antisemitism Today: Cognitive and Moral Dimensions

Assigned reading: (1) Bernard Harrison, "Anti-Zionism, Antisemitism and the Rhetorical Manipulation of Reality"; (2) Elhanan Yakira, "Antisemitism and anti-Zionism as a Moral Question": both in Alvin Rosenfeld (ed.), *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives*

Week XII Resurgent Antisemitism: the Return of Jew-Hatred as a Political Force

Assigned readings: (1) Matthias Kuntzel, "The Roots of Antisemitism in the Middle East: New Debates"; (2) Jamsheed K. Choksy, "Antisemitism's Permutations in the Islamic Republic of Iran": both in Alvin Rosenfeld (ed.), *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives*

Week XIII Israel and the New Antisemitism: What Difference Does a Jewish State Make?

Assigned readings: (1) Ilan Avisar, "The Israeli Scene: Political Criticism and the Politics of Anti-Zionism"; (2) Robert Wistrich, "Anti-Zionist Connections: Communism, Radical Islam and the Left": both in Alvin Rosenfeld (ed.), *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives*; (4) Edward H. Kaplan and Charles A. Small, "Anti-Israel Sentiment Predicts Anti-Semitism in Europe" (pdf)

Week XIV Antisemitism, Islamism, and Modernity

Assigned readings: Charles Asher Small (ed.), *Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity, Volume IV—Islamism and the Arab World* (selections, TBA)

Week XV Student Presentations

Assigned readings: TBA

Week XVI Conclusion: Catch-Up/Wrap-Up

Assigned readings: TBA