The Encoding of Antisemitism in Germany
Spring 2018
Free University of Berlin

Instructor: Matheus Hagedorn M.A.
Course level: Undergraduate
Type of course: Seminar
Department: Otto Suhr Institute for Political Science

Course description
The seminar addresses antisemitism as an integral part of political and social thought in Germany since its foundation. In this perspective, the Holocaust appears as a murderous radicalization of a broadly shared mindset of Germans of all classes and genders. After the German-led annihilation of the European Jews any too openly outspoken Jew-hatred wasn’t an acceptable part of politics anymore in both West and East Germany.

After World War 2, antisemitism seemed to disappear from the political arena in Germany. But it just transformed its look.
The post-National Socialist German societies based on the complicity and connivance of mass murder. Perpetrators and bystanders of the Shoah shifted the antisemitic propaganda into private narration and an encrypted resentment which is widely called ‘secondary antisemitism’.
The ‘taboo’ of antisemitic policy in Germany was rather a response to the universalistic influence of the opponent in the Cold War than a real and reflective progress of re-education. After the reunification of Germany and the end of Allied control over German soil, the taboo of undisguised antisemitism moulders, while the establishing of Israel-related Jew-hatred is encouraged by the ingenious antisemitism a part of Muslim population is bringing into discourse.

The seminar concentrates on hermeneutics and considers theories and methods from political science, history, social psychology, sociology and philosophy.

Course Objectives
• Understanding the deep roots of antisemitism in the common sense of German public since the 1880s
• Learning the impact of ‘redemptive antisemitism’ on the Jewish communities in Europe
• Realizing the shape shifting of antisemitism after World War II into an ‘secondary antisemitism’
• Perceiving antizionism as a phenotype of antisemitism
• Considering Islamic antisemitism as an independent phenotype of anti-Jewish resentment in Germany

Central questions:
• What does it mean to encode antisemitism? When and in which contexts we can observe it?
• What is the method of a theorist? What is his/hers definition of antisemitism? Can we outline the terms which are relevant for the analysis?
• How can this theory be useful to analyze unintended or encoded forms of antisemitism?
• Are the used terms relevant to analyze how antisemitism is prevented to be perceived and combated as such?
Recommended Reading


Weekly topics/themes (including RVL’s)

Week 1: Introduction

- Outlines of a working definition of modern antisemitism
- Presentation of the central questions/methods
- Organisational matters

Week 2: Antisemitism as Common Sense (1):

Week 3: Antisemitism as Common Sense (2):

Week 4: The annihilation of the Jews in Europe (1): Radicalization of Common Sense? ‘Redemptive antisemitism’

Week 5: The annihilation of the Jews in Europe (2): The victims of genocidal antisemitism
Week 6: The ‘soft denial’ of the Shoah among post National Socialist German families

Week 7: ‘Secondary antisemitism’? (1) Antisemitism in the political culture of the Federal Republic of Germany

Week 8: ‘Secondary antisemitism’? (2) Antisemitism in the political culture of the German Democratic Republic

Week 9: Antisemitism and ‘taboo’

Week 10: Israel-related antisemitism as a new common sense?

Week 11: BDS as a radicalization of a new common sense?

Week 12: Antisemitism beyond ‘taboo’? Anti-Jewish resentments among German Muslims

Week 13: Final discussion
- Answers and new questions along the central question
- Feedback
Requirements

Basic attendance certificate:
- Regular and active attendance
- Two Reflection or Response Papers which refer to the required literature (700-900 words)
  or
- Two protocols of the discussions of the previous week (700-900 words).

Performance record:
- Regular and active attendance
- Two reflection or response papers which refer to the required literature (700-900 words)
  or
- Two protocols of the discussions of the previous week (700-900 words).
- An essay of 12-15 pages on a question along one of the weekly topics.