

Naya Lekht

Varieties of Anti-Semitism

Course Description:

This course examines the manifestations of anti-Semitism in order to familiarize students with common tropes, images, and language used and recycled both in the past and in the present. As we explore the proliferation of anti-Semitism throughout history, we will pause to ask why and how particular types of anti-Semitism flourished in certain parts of the world. Because the course curriculum approaches the phenomenon of anti-Semitism via a diachronic analysis of anti-Semitic language, we will examine contemporary forms of anti-Semitism in relation to their former expressions.

Required Texts:

1. *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred*, Robert S. Wistrich
2. *Those Who Forget the Past: The Question of Anti-Semitism*, edited by Ron Rosenbaum
3. *If I Am Not For Myself: The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews*, Ruth R. Wisse
4. *The Definition of Anti-Semitism*, Kenneth L. Marcus

Assignments:

1. Weekly Readings
2. Weekly Reading Responses
3. Article Write-Up
4. Research Project: Digital Exhibit

Topic 1: What, Why, and How: The Many Definitions of Anti-Semitism

Readings: "The Uncomfortable Question of Anti-Semitism," Jonathan Rosen; "Politics, Power, and Anti-Semitism," Ruth Wisse ([Jerusalem Post](#)); "The Anti-Semitic Disease," ([Commentary Magazine](#))

Watch: "Anti-Semitism and Why It Matters," Ruth Wisse

Topic 2: Semiotics: An Introduction to Symbols and Why They Matter

Readings: *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics*, pp. 3-14; Introduction, pp. 1-33 from *The Definition of Anti-Semitism*, Kenneth L. Marcus

Assignment: Using the rhetorical triangle worksheet, choose an image and deconstruct its meaning (1 page précis).

Topic 3: Blood Libel and Medieval Europe: Christianity and Anti-Judaism

Readings: “The Origins of Blood Libel,” ([The Nation](#)); “Anti-Semitism and Anti-Judaism: The Modern Debate,” John G. Gager, from *The Origins of Anti-Semitism*; “Church and Synagogue”; “The Medieval Legacy,” pp. 13-43 from *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred*, Robert S. Wistrich

Assignment: In your written response, identify key images, tropes, icons used in the Blood libel myth. Find a contemporary example of anti-Semitism that recycles one of the images, tropes, icons (2-3 pages).

Topic 4: The Dreyfus Affair: Anti-Semitism in France

Readings: “Modern Secular Anti-Judaism” (pp. 43-54); “Napoleon’s Long Shadow: Morality, Civilization, and Jews in France and Algeria, 1808-1879,” *French Historical Studies* 30.1 (Winter 2007) “France: From Dreyfus to Len Pen” (pp. 126-145); “Emancipation and the Liberal Offer,” *Paths of Emancipation*, eds. Peirre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson

Assignment: What social and political context gave rise to modern anti-Semitism in France? In your written response, be sure to use and identify the form of anti-Semitism in the case of the Dreyfus Affair (2-3 pages).

Topic 5: The Jews of the Russian Empire: Russian Form(s) of Anti-Semitism

Readings: *The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, Benjamin Nathans (pp. 1-82); “Ghetto and Emancipation,” Salo Baron from *The Menorah Journal* 14, June 1928 (pp. 515-526); “Anti-Semitism for Popular Conception: Selections from the Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” from *A Rumor About the Jews* (pp. 11-33); “The Blood Libel Trial,” ([Slate](#)).

Assignment: How does Russian Imperial Anti-Semitism differ from its Western European counterpart? In your written response, identify why the Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a case of anti-Semitism and find contemporary examples of this type of anti-Semitism.

Topic 5: Nationalism and Anti-Semitism: Central and Eastern Europe

Readings: “Anti-Semitism in Central Europe” (pp. 54-66); “East European Nationalisms” (pp. 145-157) from *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred*

Watch: Vladimir Lenin Addresses [Anti-Semitism](#)

Assignment #1: Lenin framed the problem of anti-Semitism by employing a Marxist approach to history. Identify the reasons that Lenin gives for anti-Semitism and the solution that he offers to this age-old disease.

Topic 6: Why Soviet Jews Get Anti-Semitism: The Fashioning of Anti-Zionism in the USSR

Readings: “Redefining the Jewish Question from Lenin to Gorbachev: Terminology or Ideology?” Naomi Blank from *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union* (pp. 51-67); “The Doctor’s Plot: Stalin’s Solution to the Jewish Question,” Iakov Etinger, from *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union* (pp. 103-127); “Anti-Semitism and the Soviet Anti-Zionist Campaign,” [David Davies](#); “The Soviet Disunion,” *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred* (pp. 171-195); “Empowerment, Defiance, and Demise: Jews and the Blood Libel Specter Under Stalin,” Elissa Bemporad from *Jewish History* Vol. 25 (pp. 343-361).

Assignment: Find a Soviet Anti-Zionist propaganda poster and explain what anti-Semitic tropes are used. Can you find the extension of Soviet language in contemporary forms of anti-Zionism?

Topics 7: The Holocaust: Particularism vs. Universalism

Readings: “Universality and Particularity,” Kenneth L. Marcus (pp. 106-120); “After Auschwitz: The German Response” from *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred* (pp. 78-88); “On Ignoring Anti-Semitism,” Ruth Wisse from *Those Who Forget the Past* (pp. 189-211); “Elie Wiesel Warns Against Universalizing the Holocaust,” ([Haaretz](#));

Assignment: The Nuremberg Trials sought to bring justice to the crimes against humanity during the Holocaust. The U.S. State prosecutor at the time purposefully argued that.... Holocaust survivor and prolific writer Elie Wiesel, however, takes a very different stand. Wiesel states that “Jews were not killed because they were human beings. In the eyes of the killers, they were not human beings, they were Jews.”

Topic 8: Inclusion for All, Except the Jews: The History of Anti-Semitism in Academia

Readings: “Jewish Identity and the Figural Jew” from *The Definition of Anti-Semitism* (pp. 120-146); “Interrogating the Academic Boycotts of Israel on American Campuses,” Tammi Benjamin from *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel* (pp. 218-235); “Liberalism For and Against the Jews” and “The Ultimate Test of Liberalism,” Ruth Wisse from *If I Am Not For Myself* (pp. 21-43; pp. 173-193); “Intersectionality Excludes and Includes,” ([Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#)) or “When Jews Intersect Intersectionality,” ([The Atlantic](#)).

Assignment: Based on this week’s readings and discussion, explain what major factor led to the exclusion of Jews from being recognized as a minority at American universities.

Topic 9: Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism

Readings: “The New Anti-Semitism,” Melanie Phillips from *Those Who Forget the Past* (pp. 251-258); “The Old-New Anti-Semitism,” Robert S. Wistrich from *Those Who Forget the Past* (pp. 71-91); “Is Anti-Zionism Anti-Semitism,” Jonathan Freedland from *Those Who*

Forget the Past (pp. 422-438); "The Charge of Anti-Semitism: Jews, Israel, and the Risks of Public Critique," Judith Butler (pp. 438-453); "Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism," Kenneth L. Marcus from *Definitions of Anti-Semitism* (pp. 146-191).

Assignment: Prepare for debate

Topic 10: The 3-D Test: Delegitimization, Double Standard, Demonization

Readings: "3-D Test of Anti-Semitism: Delegitimization, Double Standard, Demonization," Natan Sharansky from *Jewish Political Studies* Vol. 16 (Fall 2004); "Road Testing Natan Sharansky's 3-D Anti-Semitism," Shai Franklin from *Huffington Post*; "The Demonization of Israel," Ruth Wisse from *If I am Not For Myself* (pp. 117-143)

Assignment: Choose a contemporary case of anti-Semitism and apply the 3-D Test. Does it satisfy all three elements of Sharansky's test? If not, explain why not.

Topic 11: Jews in Islamic Lands: The Origins of Islamic Anti-Semitism

Readings: "Between Moses and Mohammed," in *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred* (pp. 195-252); "Muslim Anti-Semitism," Bernard Lewis from *Those Who Forget the Past* (pp. 549-563); "Interreligious Dialogue," Tariq Ramadan from *Those Who Forget the Past* (pp. 571-592); "It's Back," David Brooks from *Those Who Forget the Past* (pp. 28-31).

Topic 13: Between Race and Religion: America's Jews and Anti-Semitism

Readings: "The Blessings of Assimilation in Jewish History," [Gerson Cohen](#); "Diaspora Jewish Nationalism and Identity in America, 1914-1967," Noam Pianko from Yale University Dissertation, 2004 (chapter 1); "Race and Religion," Kenneth L. Marcus from *Definitions of Anti-Semitism* (pp. 56-85); "On the 'the' in 'the Jews'," Berel Lang from *Those Who Forget the Past* (pp. 63-71); "The Vanishing American Jew," Alan D. Dershowitz from *The New York Times*; " 'Intersectionality' is a code word for anti-Semitism," Alan D. Dershowitz ([The Washington Examiner](#)); Pew Report on American Jews and Israel

Assignment: Write a letter to an imaginary American Jew. Build a profile of who this person is. Based on that, write a letter urging him/her to participate in Jewish life. What role, if any, will anti-Semitism play in your attempt to convince him/her to become more active.

Topic 14: Anatomy of Anti-Semitism Revisited

Readings: "Prologue: Letter to an Israeli Jew," Ruth Wisse from *If I am Not For Myself*; "Conclusion," Kenneth L. Marcus from *Definitions of Anti-Semitism* (pp. 191-216); "[Letter](#)

from Mother to Son,” Vasily Grossman from *Life and Fate*; “Casting Zionism as ‘White Nationalism’ is Anti-Semitism,” Noah Baron ([Huffington Post](#)); “Anti-Semitic Stereotypes in Zionism: The Nationalist Rejection of Diaspora Jewry,” ([Commentary Magazine](#))

Listen: Podcast from [The Tikvah Fund](#) (Ruth Wisse on Sartre and Anti-Semitism)