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

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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!

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\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid.

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:**

**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:**

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

**Required Reading:**

**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:**


**Required Readings:**
1. Karl Marx, 1843, *On the Jewish question*.
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:

B: Holocaust

Required Readings:

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:

B: Holocaust (cont’d).

Required Readings:
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:**

B: Israel (cont’d).

*Debrief Session.*

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**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:**

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

**Required Readings:**
1. The Genocide Convention.

*Debrief Session.*

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**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:**

B: Antisemitism in today’s world.

**Required Reading:**
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:

Debrief Session.

B: Skokie, Invaded but not Conquered.

Required Reading:

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:

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:

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:**

**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:**

B: Slacktivism.

**Required Readings:**

**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).

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

*ENJOY YOUR SUMMER!*

while being upstanders

![Image: Be an upstander, not a bystander](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com)