Introduction to Jewish Studies
JWST 200

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Office Hour: Mondays: 12-1pm, NH 214

Jewish Studies is a multidisciplinary and transnational field. This class will take us on a journey through centuries of history, cover several different countries, all in an attempt to understand a group of people held together (but not always closely together) by ethnic identity, cultural heritage, and religious tradition. We will study their dispersion throughout much of the world and analyze how they engaged in a range of negotiations with each other and with the societies in which they lived. We will ask what it means to be a Jew. We will begin in Ancient Israel and end up in the United States today. To assist in our navigation of Jewish global society, history, and culture, we will use primary and secondary sources to try to understand the major social, cultural, political, and religious developments of the Jews that, taken together, form the history of the Jews.

We will study a wide range of topics, beginning with an overview of the ancient and medieval periods in Jewish history. We will also discuss Judaism and some key biblical and religious passages; core philosophical texts; the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, the Sephardic (Spanish) diaspora that formed in its wake; the rise of new Jewish movements such as the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) in Eastern and Western Europe; Emancipation; the engagement of Jews with modern ideologies such as socialism, liberalism, and nationalism; Jewish migration and Jewish separateness from and integration into host societies; Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel; Jewish communities in Mexico and Argentina; the Holocaust and its aftermath; and the history and legacy of the Jewish communities of North America.

This course focuses on reading primary texts and placing them in the appropriate cultural context. Primary texts, for the most part, are statements by individuals expressing a particular point of view about what is going on around them. With any given text we must ask: who is writing this text? Who was he or she speaking for and to whom was she or he speaking?
Required Texts

Raymond P. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People* [HJP]

Sholem Aleichem, *The Adventures Of Menahem-Mendl*

Other Readings:
There will be a number of other short readings circulated via the course Moodle, which will include primary sources and other texts. These readings are indicated on the syllabus following "M:"

Assignments:

**Participation**–Determined by your daily participation, including your timeliness, your demonstrated effort, and your participation in class discussions. Come to class every day, come to class on time, come to class prepared, stay awake during class, and be active.

**Reading Responses**–We will have three reading responses. These are approximately 500 word (2 page) responses to the prompt provided, which will ask you to closely read and analyze one or more primary sources from the previous week's readings. These are ways of helping you hone your analytic skills in preparation of your longer papers. Short Responses are due, in Moodle, before class on the day on which they are due. These are graded 0, if you do not do the assignment on time, 6 if you submit a response but fail to demonstrate that you have done the readings; 8 if you demonstrate that you did the reading, but mostly regurgitate what's in the readings, and a 10 if you have some insight into the readings. Prompts will be posted on Moodle a week before they are due.

**Two Short Papers** (6-8 pages each)–You will be asked to write two short essays. One will be on *The Adventures Of Menahem-Mendl*. The other will focus on a series of primary sources that we will go over in class or in the assigned readings.

**Final Exam**–The final exam will list 3 essay questions, and you will be asked to select and answer two. There will also be identification and short response sections. The final will cover material addressed in class. All course material is testable.

**Grade Breakdown:**

- Participation (5%)
- Attendance & Short Responses (15%)
- First Paper (25%)
- Second paper (25%)
- Final Exam (30%)

**Grading Scale:** A 90-100%; B 80-89%; B- 80-82.9%; C 70-79%; D 60-69%; F <59%

Attendance is mandatory and will be tracked through a sign-in sheet. Participation should occur through asking questions or answering questions in class, and through participation in class group work.

Students who have good attendance but do not participate will get an 85 on this portion of the grade. Students who do participate will get a 90, 95, or 100, depending on quality of participation.
You will not be penalized for up to 2 unexcused absences (they are freebies—apportion them however you want, go hiking, whatever). From the 4th-8th absence, you will lose 5 points off of your attendance and participation grade for each absence. Students with 8 or more unexcused absences will get an F in the course.

Excused absences must be documented.

Being late two times (after the attendance sheet has been passed around) will be counted as an absence for grading purposes. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to find me after class and sign in as late.

Many of you, I understand, work alongside your studies, are involved in sports or other extracurriculars and/or have family responsibilities that demand your attention. You are expected to arrange your schedule such that you can attend every class and complete all assignments.

Please communicate with me clearly if you are having any particular problems with the course. Email is the best way of doing so. I am more than willing to work with you if you show the responsibility to be in touch when appropriate. I am much less flexible when I hear about problems or absences at the last minute or after the fact. I will hold regular office hours but I am also more than willing to meet with any of you at other times. Just let me know, and we can set something up.

**Hevruta:** Interactive Text Analysis

We will have spontaneous hevruta group discussions (anywhere from 5-10 minutes) designed to tie the lectures and readings together. These discussions will raise critical questions or quotes for you to think about and discuss. Discussions are not graded, but your participation in and contribution to them will be considered if your grade is a borderline case.

In the first week of classes you will choose a partner who will be your hevruta (study partner). We will discuss this procedure at the beginning of the semester. We will regularly do in class exercises that will require you to read sources closely with your hevruta and answer questions together. Your grades on these questions will be counted as part of your participation grade.

This method is based on the notion that each person has access to a piece of the “truth.” As we talk with each other, we gain closer access to this “truth.” In addition, this approach will give you a greater understanding of the text, your learning style(s), as well as greater insight into texts because you will learn about other approaches and perspectives as you work through each piece with your partner.

For this method to work, you will pick a Hevruta partner (most simply the person sitting next to you), and you will sit with that person throughout the semester. I will post a text for you and your partner to read (out loud, it should be loud when we do Hevruta) and discuss. At the end of each text posted, there will be a set of questions for you and your partner to work through.

**Class Policies**

**Email:** The best way to contact me is through email to the address at the top of the syllabus. I check email regularly and will do my best to respond within 48 hours.

**Written work:** Take-home assignments must be uploaded to Moodle, using an appropriate font (Times, 12 point font is good). I will not accept handwritten work. Papers must be turned in to me personally, or emailed to me before the start of class on the day on which the assignment is due.

**Exam:** The final will be an in-class exam. Please bring a Blue Book and a pencil/pen for the final. All course material is testable. I will not offer a make-up.
Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is the substitution of someone else’s work as your own. It is cheating, and it is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism, whether intentional or accidental, will result in an automatic fail for the assignment in question and a referral to the Office of Student Services for disciplinary action. If you are unsure of what exactly constitutes plagiarism, ask your instructor before you put yourself at risk.

Religious Obligations and Class Conflicts: If there is a scheduling conflict because of religious obligations, please let me know at least two weeks in advance. This will allow us enough time to arrange appropriate accommodations, if need be.

Note on Late Assignments: Unless prior arrangements have been made for a compelling reason, NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS will be accepted. To be clear, the following very common issues will NEVER be grounds to have late assignments excused:

1) Computer problems on your personal computer. You must set up an automatic backup of your work using one of the many cloud-based programs available (Dropbox, Copy, Carbonite, Jungle Disk, iCloud). You should know where computers are located on campus or in your local public library should your own computer fail. Your hard drive should not be the only place your work is saved, and I will not be sympathetic if you lose work because your computer fails. If Moodle is not letting you upload, email the file to me at the deadline just to be safe and then go back and upload it later (if you do so, it will not be marked late).

2) Travel delays. If you are travelling before a deadline, you must submit your work before you get in the car/on the plane. I will not be sympathetic to emails that say that you intended to submit your file when you arrived but your flight/travel was delayed.

Classroom Behavior:
Please turn cell phones off or to silent. Do not text in class. If you have to take a phone call, please quietly leave class and conduct your conversation in the hallway. Laptops are not permitted in class.

Week One:
January 21: Introduction

Week Two: Jewish Studies, Jewishness, Diaspora, & Judaism  
January 26: What is Jewish Studies? How do we "Think Historically" about Jewish Studies?  
Reading: M: AJS Perspectives Section " Jewish Studies as an Interdisciplinary Project; AHA Perspectives, "What Does it Mean to Think Historically?"

January 28: An Introduction to Judaism  
Reading: M: Selections from Introduction to Judaism; Selected Biblical texts; Selections from the Babylonian Talmud-Rabbi bar bar Hannah "on the sale of a ship."

Week Three: Antiquity and the Pre-modern period & an Introduction to Jewish philosophy  
February 2: Ancient & Medieval Jewish History (Jews under Christianity; Jews Under Islam)  
Reading: HJP: Scan Chapters 1-5

M: Christianity Objects to the Sabbath and to the Jewish Dating of Easter, years 189- 381 CE (Jew in the Medieval World, 115-118) “The Accusation of the Ritual Murder of St. William of Norwich,” 1144 (Jew in the Medieval World, 135-140)
February 4: Jewish philosophy: Spinoza, Mendelssohn, and Buber
Reading: M: Selections from Spinoza, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Moses Mendelssohn, Jerusalem, and Martin Buber, I/Thou

Week Four: Expulsion from Spain and the Global Sephardi Diaspora
February 9: Jews of Spain after 1492: Port Jews and the Western Sephardi Diaspora
Reading: HJP: Chapter 6
JMW: Declaration Protecting the Interest of Jews Residing in Holland (15 - 16); Act of Suriname (16 – 17); The Writ of Excommunication Against Baruch Spinoza (62); Petition to Expel the Jews from New Amsterdam (501); Reply to Stuyvesant’s Petition (502); Rights of the Jews of New Amsterdam (503)

February 11: Jews and the Ottoman Empire: Sephardim and Mizrahim
Reading: M: Pact of Omar (13); Shabbetai Zevi, False Messiah (261 – 268); Turkish Jewry (411 – 417); Selections from Sephardi Lives - A Calamitous Earthquake Hits Izmir (1688); A Rabbi in Istanbul Interprets the Bible for Ladino Readers (1739); A Kosher Kitchen in the Ottoman Imperial Medical School (1847); When A Jew Can Work During the Sabbath (1890/1891)

Readings Response #1 Due

Week Five: Early Modern Europe
February 16: Court Jews in Central Europe
Reading: M: Salo Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall we revise the Traditional View?” (1928); Readmission of Jews into Brandenburg; Glikel of Hameln, "The Tale of a Pious Jew"
JMW: The Appointment of Samson Wertheimer as Imperial Court Factor (18-19); The Charter Decree for the Jews of Prussia (21-25)

February 18: New Forms of Religiosity: The Rise of Hassidism
Reading: JMH: The New Hasidim (365-368); How I Became a Hasid (369-371); Excommunication of the Hasidim (368-369)

Week Six: Modern European Jewish History: The Enlightenment and Emancipation
February 23: Debates in Germany
Reading: HJP: Chapter 7

February 25: Debates in France: The French Revolution
Reading: HJP: Chapter 7
JMH: Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (123); Debate on the Eligibility of Jews for Citizenship (123 - 125); Decree Recognizing the Sephardim as Citizens (126); The Emancipation of the Jews of France (127 – 128); Letter of a Citizen to His Fellow Jews (128 – 130); Imperial Decree Calling for an Assembly of Jewish Notables
Napoleon’s Instructions to the Assembly of Jewish Notables (149-150); Answers to Napoleon (152 - 156)

Week Seven: New Denominations & The Rise of modern Antisemitism

March 2: The Rise of Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism

Reading: JMW: Constitution of the Hamburg Temple (182); These Are the Words of the Covenant (187 – 189); A Reply Concerning the Question of Reform (189 - 192); Hebrew as the Language of Jewish Prayer (202 - 205); On Changes in Judaism (217); Religion Allied to Progress (220 - 224); Scholarship and Emancipation (254 – 255); Jewish Scholarship and Religious Reform (259 - 260)

March 4: The Rise of Modern Antisemitism

Reading: JMH: The Jewish Problem (297); Jewry in Music (302 - 305); The Victory of Judaism Over Germandom (306 - 307); The Question of the Jew Is A Question of Race (308); Jewish France (315-316); The Racists’ Decalogue (327); J’Accuse (328 - 332); Protocols of the Elders of Zion (339 - 342); Awaiting a Pogrom (388); The Massacre of the Jews at Kishinev (389); City of Slaughter (390 - 391); The Beilis Trial (392 - 393); On the Latest Wave of Emigration (395 - 396); Henry Adams, The Jews Make Me Creep (1896, 1901, 1914), 528-529; Henry Ford and the international Jew; Sephardi Lives - Salonican Jewish Students in Paris Respond to the Dreyfus Affair

Week Eight: Latin American Jewish History and Culture

March 9: Jews in Argentina


March 11: Jews in Mexico

Reading: M: Selections from Yiddish South of the Border - Isaac Berliner, "Churches," and Jacobo Glantz, "Holiday in the Streets: The First Anti-Semitic Demonstration;" Ladino newspaper "why Sephardim should settle in Mexico," selections from Anita Brenner; Selections from Sephardi Lives - A Sephardi Doctroal Student in Mexico Issues a Plea for the Study of Ladino

Paper # 1 Due - Based on Primary Sources from weeks 1-7

Week Nine: Spring Break

March 16: No Class
March 18: No Class

Week Ten: Sholem Aleichem & The Rise of Yiddish Culture

March 23: The Rise of Yiddish Culture

Reading: HJP: Chapter 8, p 173-187

M: Sholem Aleichem, “If I Were Rothschild”

Continue to read The Adventures Of Menahem-Mendl

March 25: Film: Laughing at Darkness & Class discussion of The Adventures Of Menahem-Mendl
Reading: Finish reading *The Adventures Of Menahem-Mendl*

**Week Eleven: World War I & The Interwar Period**

March 30: World War I and the Jews  
**Reading:** JMW: Isaac Babel, “How It Was Done in Odessa”; Sigmund Freud, “Address to the Society of Bnai Brith” (833 - 834); Franz Rosenzweig, “Jewish Learning and the Return to Judaism” (837 - 838); Bertha Pappenheim, “The Jewish Woman” (841 - 843); *Sephardi Lives - A Stowaway's Journey from Istanbul to Marseille*

April 1: The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Interwar Europe  
**Reading:** JMW: No Room in My Heart for Jewish Suffering (809); My Father’s Bourgeois Judaism (800 - 801); Jewishness Is an Inalienable Spiritual Sensibility (827-828)

**Readings Response # 2 Due**

**Week Twelve: World War II and The Holocaust**

April 6: The Rise of Nazi Germany  
**Reading:** M: Selections from *Inside Nazi Germany*

JMW: A Letter on the Jewish Question (716); Mein Kampf (717 - 719); First Racial Definition (722); Decrees Excluding Jews from German Cultural and Public Life (723 – 726); Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor (730 -731); The Reich Citizenship Law (731); *Kristallnacht – A Preliminary Secret Report to Goering* (735-736); The Operation Against the Jews (Nov. 9 – 10) (737); Decree Regarding Atonement Fine of Jewish State Subjects (738); Public Response to the *Kristallnacht* (739); Decree for the Elimination of Jews from German Economic Life (740); A Prophecy of Jewry’s Annihilation (742 - 743); *Sephardi Lives - "Aryans of Mosaic Belief"*: A Defense of the Sephardi Jews of Paris

April 8: The Origins of the Holocaust  
**Reading:** M: Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Selections)

**Week Thirteen: The Holocaust and its Aftermath**

April 13: The Final Solution  
**Reading:** HJP: Chapter 9

JMW: “We Must Finish with the Jews” (750 - 751); Protocols of the Wannsee Conference (751 - 754); A Warsaw Ghetto Diary (755 - 757); Call to Resistance (762 - 763); Anielewicz’s Last Communication as Ghetto Commander (763 - 764); Ringelblum’s Last Letter from Warsaw (764 -767); A Secret Speech on the Jewish Question (777 – 778); Commandant of Auschwitz (779 – 782); Estimated Number of Jews Killed by the Nazis (787)

April 15: After the Holocaust

**Paper # 2 Due on The Adventures Of Menahem-Mendl**

**Week Fourteen: Sunshine and Holocaust Representations**

April 20: NO CLASS - This week, watch *Sunshine* and *Europa Europa* on film reserves

April 22: *Sunshine* and *Europa Europa* discussion & Holocaust Representation
Reading: Internet: http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam033/2002023793.pdf
Read the Introduction, "The Hollywood Version of the Holocaust."

Week Fifteen: Zionism and the birth of Modern Israel

April 27: History of Zionism
Reading: HJP: Chapter 10

M: Selections from Adam Rovner, *In the Shadow of Zion: Promised Lands Before Israel*; Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion*

JMW: A Letter to Theodor Herzl (483 – 484); Iraqi Zionists Complain of Lack of Representation (485 - 486); An Iraqi Jewish Notable Expresses Reservations on Zionism (488 – 489); Zionist Manifesto Issued After the Balfour Declaration (661 – 662); Churchill White Paper (667 - 670); On the Arab Question (686 - 690); Peel Commission Report (693 - 694)

April 29: The Birth of modern Israel

Readings Response #3 Due

Week Sixteen: American Jewish History: A Case of Exceptionalism?

May 4: Early Encounters & Migrations
Reading: HJP: Chapter 8, p 187-197

JMH: Portrait of a Jew (846 - 848); The Non-Jewish Jew (813 - 814); Why I Choose to be a Jew (856 – 860); A Convert’s Affirmations (871 – 874)

May 6: Assimilation, Acculturation, and Separation in America (Watch an episode of *The Goldbergs* [1949-1951] in class)
Reading: HJP: Chapter 11


Final Exam: Monday, May 11 11:00-12:50