Modern Antisemitism: An Introduction

Note: This syllabus provides a framework for instructors teaching introductory courses on modern antisemitism. The course offers an overview of debates on the history and theory of modern antisemitism through readings in relevant primary and secondary material. The syllabus may be used and modified for educational purposes.

Course Description:

What is antisemitism? Why has animosity toward Jews persisted in the modern West even after the inclusion of Jews in the nation-state? This course will offer students an historical and theoretical overview of modern antisemitism. Beginning with a discussion of Jewish emancipation in eighteenth-century Europe, the class will explore a series of prominent antisemitic incidents over the course of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. At the center of the course are four exemplary trials, in which antisemitism has featured as a major question and theme. In following this history, students will have a chance to read and debate some of the theoretical perspectives that scholars have used to understand the phenomenon of antisemitism in its varied geographical and temporal manifestations.

Learning Objectives:

- Familiarization with the history of modern antisemitism in Europe and the United States
- Introduction to major terms, debates, and theoretical frameworks in the study of antisemitism
- Close reading, interpretation, and written and oral analysis
- Awareness of the ways that antisemitism intersects with important questions in contemporary global politics

Required Texts:


Course Readings and Schedule:

**Week I: What is Antisemitism?**


*Thursday:* --Beller, *Antisemitism*, chs. 5-7

**Week II: The Medieval and the Modern**

*Tuesday:* --Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (1980), chap. 26 (pp. 318-328)

*Thursday:* --Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (1990), Introduction (pp. 1-17)

**Week III: Enlightenment and Emancipation (Germany)**

*Tuesday:* --Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (1973), chap. 1 (pp. 1-8) and chap. 5 (pp. 57-79)

--David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries* (2019), Introduction (pp. 1-16) and chapter 3 (pp. 42-60)
Thursday:  --Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, “Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews” (1781), in JMW
    --Moses Mendelssohn, “Response to Dohm” (1782), in JMW
    --Joseph II, “Edict of Tolerance” (1782), in JMW

Week IV: Enlightenment and Emancipation (France)
Tuesday:  --Katz, Out of the Ghetto, ch. 10 (pp. 161-175)
    --David Sorkin, Jewish Emancipation, chap. 5 (pp. 72-79) and chap. 7 (pp. 91-101)

Thursday:  --“Declaration of the Rights of Man of the Citizen” (1789), in JMW
    --“The Emancipation of the Jews of France” (1791), in JMW
    --Napoleon Bonaparte, “Imperial Decree Calling for an Assembly of Jewish Notables” (1806), in JMW
    --Count Molé, “Napoleon’s Instructions to the Assembly of Jewish Notables” (1806), in JMW

Week V: Enlightenment and Emancipation (Russia)

    --Nicholas I, “Delineation of the Pale of Settlement (April 1835),” in JMW, pp. 354-355

Week VI: The Dreyfus Affair (Trial 1)
    --Maurice Samuels, The Right to Difference: French Universalism and the Jews (2016), chap. 4 (pp. 95-116)


Week VII: The Beilis Trial (Trial 2)

Thursday:  --“Papal Edict Condemns Ritual Murder Accusation (Document #1),” in Blood Libel in Late Imperial Russia: The Ritual Murder Trial of Mendel Beilis (2014), pp. 75-76
    --“Ritual Murder Described in Detail (Document #11),” in Blood Libel, pp. 87-88
    --“The Government Response (Document #15),” in Blood Libel, pp. 91-92
Week VIII: The Frank Case (Trial 3)

Tuesday:
--Tony Michels, “Is America ‘Different’?: A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism,” in American Jewish History 96, no. 3, pp. 201-224
--Jeffrey Melnick, “‘The Night Witch Did It’: Villainy and Narrative in the Leo Frank Case,” in American Literary History 12, nos. 1-2, pp. 113-129

Thursday:
--“Article 3—No Title,” in Chicago Defender, January 2, 1915
--“Frank Lynched After 100-Mile Ride,” New York Times, August 18, 1915
--W. Allison Sweeney, “The South Has Always Been Backward,” Chicago Defender, August 21, 1915
--Jonah Wise, in The American Israelite, November 20, 1913
--The Jewish Advocate, December 12, 1913
--The American Israelite, August 21, 1915
--The American Israelite, April 30, 1914

Week IX: Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Tuesday:
--Norman Cohn, Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (1967), chs. 1-3

Thursday:
--“The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” in Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts (1991), ch. 15

Week X: Nazism

Tuesday:
--Saul Friedländer, Nazi Germany and the Jews: Vol. 1, The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939 (1997), chap. 3 (pp. 73-112)
--Timothy Snyder, Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning (2015), Prologue (pp. xiii-xv), Introduction (pp. 1-10), and chap. 1 (11-28)

Thursday:
--Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (1925), vol. 1, chap. 2 (pp. 19-65)

Week XI: Holocaust Denial (Trial 4)

Tuesday:
--Deborah Lipstadt, Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory (1993), Preface to the Paperback Edition (pp. xi-xviii) and chap.1 (pp. 1-30)

Wednesday:
--Denial (dir., Mick Jackson, 2016)

Week XII: Zionism

Tuesday:

**Week XIII: Anti-Zionism**

*Tuesday:*  
--Edward Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims,” in *Social Text* 1 (1979), pp. 7-58

*Thursday:*  
--Omar Barghouti, “Two Degrees of Separation: Israel, its Palestinian Victims, and the Fraudulent Use of Antisemitism,” in *On Antisemitism*  
“Appendix I: JVP Statements on Antisemitism,” in *On Antisemitism*

**Week XIV: Recent Trends**

*Tuesday:*  
--Jonathan Weisman, *((Semitism)): Being Jewish in America in the Age of Trump* (2018), Introduction (pp. 1-32)

*Thursday:*  