Introduction to Jewish Civilization II (From 1492 On)

Dr. Gil Ribak

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00-4:00 PM, or by appointment

Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:50 PM (King 321)

[Above from the top left clockwise: Dona Gracia Nasi (1510-1569), Dr. Seuss’s “The Cat in the Hat” in Yiddish, Israeli female soldiers practice during basic training at an IDF base, and Moroccan Jewish girls in the early 1900s]
**Course Description, Major Themes, and Learning Goals**

Throughout most of their history Jews faced Gentile (non-Jewish) majorities, and external influences have always permeated nearly every aspect of Jewish life. The status of Gentiles and their relations with Jews have occupied a central place in Judaism. The *Halakha* (Jewish religious law) set Jews ritually apart in laws governing holiness and purity as well as civil and criminal laws, which prescribed very different rights and obligations for the Jew, the righteous gentile (“son of Noah”) and the idolater.

This course is both a selective survey of Jewish history, culture, and religion since the late 15th century AND a thematic course that focuses on the relations between Jews and their non-Jewish environment. Students will look at the historical, religious, cultural, literary, and political aspects of Jewish life in different cultural and geographical settings, such as Europe, the Middle East, and the Western Hemisphere, among others. Topics include social structure and developments, customs, philosophy, religious reforms, languages and literature, politics and the rise of Jewish nationalism, patterns of immigration, occupations and economic niches, and shifting attitudes toward Gentiles.

No background or prior knowledge is required or assumed. The course would provide students (i.e. those who successfully complete it) with a solid understanding of Jewish life, culture, and identity in the Modern Era. Students will gain a working knowledge of the foundational concepts and terms of the Jewish experience, some of which are still pertinent today. Furthermore, the course will give students a grasp of the patterns of continuity and change in Jewish life over different periods, places, and conditions. Finally, students will learn about contending definitions of Jewishness and how they affected the interactions with the non-Jewish world.

**Course Requirements:**

This class requires attendance, preparation, and active participation.

**Attendance:** Attendance in lecture is required and constitutes 10% of your final grade. I will take attendance each time and any student who misses THREE or more lectures throughout the semester will get an “F” grade (for those 10% of the final grade). Any student who misses **25% or more** of the course’s total number of lectures will FAIL the class. If extenuating circumstances such as illness force a student to miss one or more classes, please email me. The student remains responsible for the material covered during her/his absence. A physician’s note is required in such a case. If a circumstance hinders your ability to attend regularly or fulfill other requirements, please see me as soon as possible. **Tardiness** is disruptive to the class and unacceptable. If a student is tardy (arriving more than TWO minutes after the beginning of class) THREE times, it will constitute one unexcused absence. The same goes for leaving class before it ends.

**Preparation:** I cannot overemphasize the importance of your reading assignments. You are expected to read ALL the assigned materials in advance of class, and be prepared to discuss them. A failure to read the assigned materials will affect your final grade. If a class session is cancelled for any reason, e.g., inclement weather, prepare as usual for that missed class day, and prepare the next class reading for its...
scheduled time: in any case you should stay current with the syllabus. I may examine your level of preparation even unexpectedly (e.g. with a pop quiz).

**Participation:** informed participation in class is required and will affect your grade. I welcome your *informed* input during class, and may call on you.

**Final Grade Breakdown:**

- Attendance: 10%
- Two in-class quizzes on materials from the readings and lectures: 10%
- **Informed** participation in class: 10%
- One short assignment: 15%
- Term paper: 25%
- Final exam: 30%

Please note: late assignments will lose 10 points for every day late.

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Standards of Student Conduct:

The use of computers in class is STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. The ONLY exception would be students who can provide an authorization from the learning disabilities office (http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/documentation/) detailing a learning disability that requires the use of a computer. The use of texting, cell phones and pagers is also strictly forbidden. Students violating these rules will be asked to leave the class for the day, and will have an absence recorded for that date.

Standards of Academic Integrity and the Honor Code:

As all courses in Oberlin, this course operates under the Honor Code, including but not limited to, prohibition of plagiarism. Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to the Code. Information about the Honor Code is available on the College website and the Honor Code committee.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the appropriation and subsequent passing off of another’s ideas or words as one’s own. If the words or ideas of another are used, acknowledgment of the original source must be made through recognized referencing practices. Use of another’s ideas or words must be properly acknowledged as follows:

(1) Direct Quotation: Any use of direct quotation must be acknowledged by footnote citation and by either quotation marks or proper indentation and spacing.

(2) Paraphrase: If another’s ideas are borrowed in whole or in part and are merely recast in the student’s own words, proper acknowledgement must, nonetheless, be made. A footnote or proper internal citation must follow the paraphrased material.

For more information, see http://www.oberlin.edu/library/avoiding-plagiarism.html

Required books:

Lloyd P. Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times

The assigned books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore. They are also available on reserve at the Mudd Library. ALL the other readings are available online via Blackboard. There are no excused failures to obtain the readings.

# Primary or literary sources (online)

* Scholarly sources (online)

**Lectures and Reading**

**Tuesday, Feb. 2: Introduction – Approaching the Study of Jewish Civilization**

**Thursday, Feb. 4: The Bedrock of the Jewish Community – the Kehillah**


**Tuesday, Feb. 9: Jewish Life and Society in the Ottoman Empire**


**Thursday, Feb. 11: Jewish Life and Society in Eastern Europe**


# “The Council of Four Lands and the Lithuanian Council (about 1582-1764), in Marcus (ed.), The Jew in the Medieval World, 205-211.


**Tuesday, Feb. 16: Spiraling Messianic Expectations**


# An account of Sabbatai Zvi’s behavior, in Gershom Scholem, Sabbatai Zvi: The Mystical Messiah, 396-399.


**Thursday, Feb. 18: Dawn of a New Age? Jewish Life and Society in Western Europe up to 1700**

[Short paper is due on Thursday, Feb. 18]


**Tuesday, Feb. 23: The Rise of Hasidism**


# Two Hasidic tales in Raphael Patai (ed.), *Gates to the Old City*, 671-672, 729.


**Thursday, Feb. 25: The Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) Movement**


Tuesday, March 1: The French Revolution and Napoleonic Rule

Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times, 104-121.


Thursday, March 3: Emancipation in 19th-century Central and Western Europe

Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times, 128-133, 147-161.


# Heinrich Heine, “A Lone Fir-Tree”, Songs of Love and Grief, 19.
Tuesday, March 8: Religious Reforms and Jewish Scholarship in the 19th Century

Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times, 134-147.


Thursday, March 10: The Eastern European Crucible to 1881

Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times, 162-190.


Tuesday, March 15: The Emergence of Jewish Nationalism – Zionism, Autonomism, and Territorialism

Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times, 213-258.


Thursday, March 17: Jews under Islam in the 19th Century and Early 20th Century

Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times, 191-201.


March 19-27: Spring Break

Tuesday, March 29: New Promised Lands? Jewish Emigration to the United States and Other Destinations

Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times, 126-127, 201-212, 258-266.


Thursday, March 31: The Language Question and Modern Yiddish Culture


# Sholem Aleichem, “Dreyfus in Kasrilevke”, in Irving Howe and Ruth R. Wisse (eds.), The Best of Sholem Aleichem, 111-114.


# Yehoash, “Lynching”


Tuesday, April 5: The Great War and Its Aftermath


# S. An-ski, “The Destruction of Galicia”, in Joachim Neugroschel (ed. and trans.), The Enemy at His Pleasure: A Journey through the Jewish Pale of Settlement during World War I, 3-10.


Thursday, April 7: The Creation of the “New Jew” and Its Discontents


# Yonatan Ratosh, “A Letter to the Hebrew Youth (1943)” (excerpt).


Tuesday, April 12: The Soviet Experience – Under the Shadow of Stalinism


Thursday, April 14: The Interwar Period

[Term paper is due on Thursday, April 14]

Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times, 294-333.


Tuesday, April 19: Khurbm – The Holocaust


# Jacob Glatstein, “Smoke”, in Aaron Kramer and Saul Lishinsky (eds.), The Last Lullaby, 210; and “Good Night, World”, in Jules Chametzky (ed.), Jewish American Literature, 373-374.


Thursday, April 21: The Road to a Jewish State – The Foundation of the State of Israel


# Vladimir (Zeev) Jabotinsky, “The Iron Wall” (1923), in Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), Israel in the Middle East, 41-43.

# Yitzhak Sadeh, “My Sister on the Beach” (1945), in Ronit Lentin, Israel and the Daughters of the Shoah, 207.

Tuesday, April 26: Silent Exodus – the Expulsion of Jews from the Arab World

* Ya’akov Meron, “The Expulsion of the Jews from the Arab Countries”, in Malka Hillel Shulewitz (ed.), The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands, 83-125.


Thursday, April 28: The Post-Holocaust Jewish World


Tuesday, May 3: A Light onto the Nations or Yet Another Kehillah – the State of Israel

Gartner, History of the Jews in Modern Times, 421-437.

# Lea Ben-Dor, “The Black Panthers” (1971), in Rabinovich and Reinharz (eds.), Israel in the Middle East, 234-237.

# Amos Oz, “The Tender among You, and Very Delicate”, In the Land of Israel, 87-100.


# Yehuda Amichai, “God Has Mercy on Kindergarten Children”, in Esther Raizen (ed.), No Rattling of Sabers, 36.

Thursday, May 5: Israel and the Diaspora – toward a Jerusalem and Yavneh Model?


Final Exam: Saturday, May 14 @ 9:00-11:00 AM

No early or late exams will be permitted.