Oberlin College/Spring 2016
Jewish Studies/History 320

The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics, 1848-1948

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

Lectures: Tuesdays, 7:00-9:00 PM (King 321)

Course Description:
An old joke has it that every three Jews have (at least) four different views. Students will come to appreciate the kernel of truth in that joke during the semester, as we will examine the multifaceted spectrum of ideologies, movements, parties, and individuals that constituted the emerging Jewish politics during their formative years. Focusing primarily on three centers – Eastern Europe, the U.S., and the Land of Israel – we will look at how those different movements sought to solve what was called “The Jewish Question”. We will look
at how the various forces on the Jewish street sought to settle that question, where did they
think Jews should live, what language(s) should Jews speak, with which political and
cultural movements in the Gentile world did they empathize, and what political tactics did
they favor.

Moreover, the questions and situations faced by Jewish ideologies and political movements
were often, quite literally, a matter of life or death: among other topics, our discussion would
turn to the fierce internal Zionist debates about the use of force in the increasing Jewish-
Arab conflict in the Land of Israel. Those crucial dilemmas generated profound intra-Jewish
controversies and divisions, some of which have continued to this very day.

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 TWO 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%
Informed participation, preparation, oral report (each student must deliver one report in class and submit a write up), and possible pop quizzes – 25% (combined)

Midterm exam – 20%
Term paper – 20%
Final exam – 25%.

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

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In-Class Intermission:

Since our weekly meetings will be quite long, we will usually have a 5-minute break in the middle of our meeting (around 8:00 PM). Still, I reserve the right to shorten or postpone the break according to the meeting’s circumstances.
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, acknowledgement 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

Arthur Hertzberg (ed.), The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader

Ezra Mendelsohn, On Modern Jewish Politics

Anita Shapira, Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948
All the assigned books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore. There is also a copy of each book on reserve at the Mudd Library. The other readings are available online via Blackboard. **There are no excused failures to obtain the readings.**

# Primary sources (online)

* Secondary sources (online)

## Lectures and Reading

### Week 1 (Feb. 2): Introduction – What Are “Jewish Politics”?


### Week 2 (Feb. 9): The Old Jewish Politics and the Precursors of Jewish Nationalism


* “San Francisco Jewry Appeals to the U.S. Senate to Denounce the Abduction of Edgar Mortara” (1859), Marcus (ed.), *The Jew in the American World*, 288-290.


**Week 3 (Feb. 16): 1881 – The Big Bang?**


Excerpts by Moshe Leib Lilienblum and Leo Pinsker, Hertzberg (ed.), The Zionist Idea, 166-198.

# Judah Leib Levin, “To America or to the Land of Israel?” (1881), the “Am Olam” Movement (1883), and BILU, “Manifesto” (1882), Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 333-335, 377-378, 421-422.


**Week 4 (Feb. 23): Varieties of Zionism**

Shapira, Land and Power, 3-82.


Joseph Hayyim Brenner, “Self-Criticism”, Hertzberg (ed.), The Zionist Idea, 305-312,


**Week 5 (March 1): Varieties of Diaspora Nationalism**

Mendelsohn, On Modern Jewish Politics, 63-91.


**Week 6 (March 8): The Emergence of Orthodox Politics**

# Rabbi Zadok H. Rabinowitz, “The Zionists Are Not Our Saviors” (c. 1900), The Mizrahi, “Manifesto” (1902), and Agudat Israel, “Founding Program” (1912), Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 432-434, 436, 446-447.


**Week 7 (March 15): Revolutionary Upheavals**

Midterm exam on Tuesday, March 15
Shapira, Land and Power, 83-126


# Excerpt from Chaim Nachman Bialik, “The City of Slaughter”


Week 8: Spring Break (March 19-27)

Week 9 (March 29): Creating a “New Jew”


Week 10 (April 7): Interwar Developments
Please note: on this week we will meet on THURSDAY at 7:00 PM instead of Tuesday, location TBA.

Mendelsohn, On Modern Jewish Politics, 115-125.

Shapira, Land and Power, 173-257.
# Yitzhak Gruenbaum, "Why Did We Create the Minorities Bloc?" (1922), Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 442-446.

# Vladimir Jabotinsky, "What the Zionist Revisionists Want" (1926), Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 594-597.

# David Frankel, "Kibbutz Hakhshara: A Memoir" (c. 1935), Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 598-599.

# David Ben-Gurion, "On the Arab Question" (January 7, 1937), Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 603-608.


Week 11 (April 12): The Yishuv Faces the Holocaust

Term Paper is due on Tuesday, April 12

Shapira, Land and Power, 319-342.

# Hannah Senesh, Her Life and Diary (excerpt).
# Hanoch Bartov, The Brigade, 158-162.

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

* Dina Porat, The Blue and Yellow Star of David, 1-2, 239-262.

Week 12 (April 19): American Jewry during the Holocaust

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, “Toward American Jewish Unity” and “American Jewry in War and After”, in Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea, 591-602.
# The American Jewish Conference (January 1943), Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 519-522.


Week 13 (April 26): A Jewish State – The Foundation of the State of Israel

# "Proclamation of the State of Israel" (May 14, 1948); David Ben-Gurion, "Address to the Knesset on the Law of Return" (July 3, 1950); and "The Law of Return" (July 5, 1950), Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 629-633.


Week 14 (May 3): The Creation of Israel – A Look from Abroad


Final Exam: Sunday, May 15 @ 9:00-11:00 AM
No early or late exams will be permitted.