Polin

The place is specially intended for Jews. When the Gentiles had greatly oppressed the exiled Jews and the Divine Presence [Shekhinah] saw that there was no limit and no end to the oppression and that the handful of Jews might, God forbid, go under, the Presence came before the Lord of the Universe to lay the grievance before Him, and said to Him as follows:

How long is this going to last? When You sent the dove out of the ark at the time of the flood, You gave it an olive branch so that it might have a support for its feet on the water, and yet it was unable to bear the water of the flood and returned to the ark; whereas my children You have sent out of the ark into a flood, and have provided nothing for a support where they may rest their feet in exile.'

Thereupon God took a piece of Erets Yisroel [the Land of Israel], which He had hidden away in the heavens at the time when the Temple was destroyed, and sent it down upon the earth and said: 'Be My resting place for My children in their exile.' That is why it is called Poland (Polin), from the Hebrew "poh lin," which means: 'Here shalt thou lodge' in the exile. That is why Satan has no power over us here, and the Torah is broadcast over the whole county. There are synagogues and schools and yeshivas, God be thanked.

And what will happen in the great future when the Messiah will come? What are we going to do with the synagogues and the settlements which we shall have built up in Poland, asked Mendel...
How can you ask? In the great future, when the Messiah will come, God will certainly transport Poland with all its settlements, synagogues and yeshivas to Erets Yisroel. How else could it be?

-- Sholem Asch, Kiddush ha-Shem

We have on the one hand 5,000,000 Jews, Russian subjects, clamoring to be freed from all special restraints, and we have on the other, 85,000,000 Russian subjects clamoring to have the 5,000,000 expelled from the Empire.

What is to be done is such a case?

-- Count Nikolai Ignatev, Minister of the Interior

Where does this youth come from, these numerous young people so blessed with enthusiasm?

-- David Ben Gurion
East European Jewry was once the largest Jewish community in the world and one of the most dynamic and creative in Jewish history. This course explores this community during a period of transformation, upheaval, creation, and crisis, from the partitions of Poland to the eve of World War II.

East European Jewry has left an enduring mark on US Jewry, much of which derives from it, as well as on contemporary Israeli society. We feel that influence in US English and Israeli Hebrew, which abound in Yiddish-isms (shlep, shmuck, mazl tov, shlemiehl, mayven, meshuga). Yiddish, a "murdered language," enjoys a revival, as does klezmer, the music of Jewish eastern Europe.

This course will feature a klezmer event as well as forays into east European Jewish religious, secular, and political cultures; languages (Yiddish; Hebrew); literature; food (yes, we’ll eat); and cinema (yes, there was a Yiddish cinema). We will study the profound social change, including in family structure and gender relations, that occurred in this period. The Jews were a conspicuous, mostly detested, minority in the multi-ethnic Russian Empire and in the chauvinistic Polish state that emerged after World War I. We will study government (Tsarist; Soviet; interwar Polish) policies to the Jewish minority and Jewish reactions, including an array of cultural and political ideologies, parties, and movements.

Topics include: Hasidism, Mitnagdism, and the Musar movement; Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment); traditional women's spirituality; the Jewish family; gender and modernization; the rise of modern, secular Yiddish and Hebrew literatures; varieties of Zionist thought and activism; non-Zionist nationalism; Jewish socialism (the Bund); popular and official Jew-hatred and Jewish reactions; Jews under the Soviet regime and in interwar Poland, as Jews faced escalating antisemitism and the Nazi threat.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

**ATTENDANCE AND INFORMED PARTICIPATION:** All reading (60-70 pages per class, not including notes, illustrations) must be done for the session for which it is assigned. This class combines lecture and discussion. Informed, active participation weighs heavily toward the final grade (see breakdown, below) and deeply affects the quality of everyone’s learning in the course. You are responsible for the doing the reading and obtaining from other students all notes, handouts, assignments, announcements, for any missed class. Attendance will be taken; absence may affect your final grade. Please tell me if you will be unable to attend a class.

If illness or any other situation affects your ability to fulfill this or any course requirement in an ongoing way, please speak to me sooner than later. I will make every effort to work with you but can only do so if you alert me to the need promptly.
If illness prevents your preparing for class but you are able to attend, do so; speak to me.

**ORAL PARTICIPATION: PRESENTATION**

Each student will lead off one session with a short (5-7 minute, enforced), focused presentation on a FEW main issues in the reading and themes and questions for class discussion. Think of this as a partial spoken version of your observation papers (see below), meant to launch informed discussion. **Do not report on the readings, nor simply state unanalyzed reactions.** Do not try to “cover” the readings. Comment; interpret; analyze; draw comparisons; state conclusions, **SELECTING 2-3 points, tops!** I will ask each student to sign up for a chosen session but it is each student’s responsibility to make sure you have one. **It is crucial that you rehearse your presentation before class AND TIME YOURSELF: 5 minutes goes very fast.** You will have opportunities during class to put out other points.

On any session with no presenter, we will begin class by each student contributing a point from observation papers (see below). Should we have a session with more than one presenter, **DO NOT DIVIDE the reading between you; BOTH do the assignment exactly as stated, above, and touch base with each other before class to choose different points to present. Each will have UP TO 5 minutes.**

**READING:**

**ALL ASSIGNED READING, including material on eres, (except encyclopedia articles) IS ON SHELF RESERVE AT MUDD.** This is the default option for doing the reading. Leave plenty of time for doing reading using shelf reserve since the titles may already be out and circulate for only a few hours. **Do not rely on this for main readings (see below, “Required Titles”).**

Some Required Titles have been ordered in the Bookstore; see below.

Ohio Link is another way to obtain readings but be sure to order sufficiently in advance to receive and do them. If finances are an issue, consider teaming with other students to buy Required Titles (see list, below).

ERES: readings NOT in "Required" titles have been ordered on eres.

N. B.: Some titles on shelf reserve may be on reserve for other courses. When trying to locate books or eres material, try several ways: title, author, editor. If you have trouble obtaining material on any form of Reserve, **ASK RESERVE ROOM STAFF, PREFERABLY THE SUPERVISOR, MICHAEL PALAZZOLO, IMMEDIATELY. Emailing me is not an effective way to get assistance and will not excuse failure to obtain or do readings; do tell me about any problem your efforts do not resolve (same with the Bookstore).**
Obtain readings well in advance. Do not leave reading for the last minute.

However you do it, it is each student’s responsibility to obtain readings for the session they are assigned and to come to class prepared. There are no excused failures to Obtain readings. If illness or other extraordinary circumstance prevents you from doing them, come to class anyway, if you are able, and speak with me.

Whenever primary sources (e.g., MF/R; Dawidowicz; any fiction, memoirs), are assigned, please bring these to class.

* The REQUIRED J. Benjamin text has tips on how to read and take notes effectively, as well as write essays and papers. Read that sooner than later, even if you’ve taken history courses previously, but especially if you haven’t!

The following are REQUIRED TITLES, meaning we have substantial readings in them, that you are expected to have your own copy-- they have been ordered at the bookstore-- and that READINGS IN THESE TITLES ARE NOT ON ERES. The Bookstore holds ordered copies for a limited time after the semester begins.


Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., The Jew in the Modern World (second edition)

Israel Bartal, The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881

Lucy Dawidowicz, ed., The Golden Tradition

Jacob Katz, Tradition and Crisis

Chava Weissler, Voices of the Matriarchs

OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

There will be a klezmer concert and presentation, day and time TBA, attendance at which is required. Several films are a required for assigned sessions, as on the syllabus. We are most fortunate that a marvelous exhibit on wooden synagogues will be in Mudd for the first half of the semester. There will be a talk by the architects and builders of the scale model at 4:30 on Wed., 9/2, in Mudd 113, as well as a guest speaker in conjunction with this exhibit; our class will attend these events, further details TBA.

WRITTEN:

One-page observation papers:
For each class, prepare ONE page (typed, double-spaced-- do not exceed this limit) of informed observations, giving several considered reflections on the readings, identifying several main issues or questions, including any difficulties or informed questions you have. To do this (see also under Oral Presentation): after you've read, ask yourself what struck you in the readings and why; what you learned. Note and comment; that is all this assignment asks. As we proceed, comment comparatively. Use your observations during class discussion; hand them in to me at the end of each class; no late submissions. I will not grade observation papers individually but their overall quality will count toward the participation element of the grade (see Grading, below). They need not be polished-- outline is fine-- as long as I understand your points and, if handwritten, can read them (typed preferred). Save your work; you may wish to elaborate on these ideas for essay assignments (see below).

**Essays:**

There are two essay assignments (6-7 page, double-spaced), based on assigned readings and discussions, from a choice of topics I will announce at least a week before a due date. Submission dates, at roughly one-month intervals, are marked on the syllabus.

**Research Paper:** Students will write a 12-15 page (typed, double-spaced) paper on a topic of your choice in lieu of a final exam. You MAY (indeed, I encourage you to) expand upon a topic on the syllabus; you must in addition, use 4-5 additional books (or equivalent in articles; ca. 10 articles= 1 book). You must use primary sources in the paper; these may include fiction or visual art. You must meet with me and get approval for your topic, methodology, and bibliography. You must have a preliminary topic, methodology, and bibliography by our return from Fall break, see syllabus/class announcements for further details.

The paper is due on or before the date set by the Registrar for a final exam for this course; instructors have no say in this deadline, any extension to which must be processed through the Registrar. Submit your papers TO MY MAILBOX (make sure it is my FACULTY box).

Your paper must have a thesis or central question. Your writing must be clear, coherent, substantive, analytical, and grammatical, and use correct spelling. Your imagined audience is intelligent but uninformed: your writing must be self-sufficient. Avoid passive tense, jargon, verbosity, and complicated sentence structure: write simply and directly. "Impact" is a noun, not a verb; unless you mean "collision," say "affect," or "influence." "It's" is a contraction for "it is;" "its" is the possessive. Drafts/ re-writes are essential, which means treating research and writing as a process, requiring time.

HELP: See and use the chapters in Benjamin on reading, note taking, and writing in History projects. Use writing tutors available in Mudd. I am happy to see you about this or any course requirement. I will read and comment on drafts submitted at least two weekdays before a deadline.
Essays do not need extensive Notes (abbreviated citation is fine, more details in class), or a Bibliography. Your paper needs both, prepared according to proper citation conventions, as listed in Benjamin, which you should use for ALL written work for guidance about organization, composition, substantiated argumentation, and expression.

LATENESS: Except in case of documented significant illness or emergency, there will be 1/3 of a grade reduction per day of lateness in submission of written work (an A becomes an A-, etc.). It is your responsibility to handle technicalities (printers, paper, etc.), in advance of deadlines. Remember to save your work frequently!

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK IN HARD COPY ONLY.

GRADING:

Participation (overall; presentation; observation papers): 30%
First essay: 15%
Second essay: 25%
Research Paper: 30%

There are no exams in this course. Successful completion of this course gives JWST, HIST, GSFS, CD, and Wr credit.

HONOR CODE: This course, as all in Oberlin, operates under the College Honor Code, which students are responsible for understanding and upholding: see the College website. For questions about attribution of material or other areas covered by the Code, ask Mudd Library staff; members of the Honor Code Committee; me. By College rules, all written work must have a signed Honor Code declaration to be graded.

This syllabus contains much information, for which you are responsible. If you lose your hard copy, the syllabus is on the JWST and HIST websites.

Welcome to the course!

Shulamit S. Magnus

EAST EUROPEAN JEWRY, 1772-1939

1. Introductory 9/1

About this course; document/image study. Prof. T. Hubka speaks about the wooden synagogues of East Europe.
N.B.: Opening talk by Rick and Laura Brown, Handshouse Studio, on the wooden synagogues of eastern Europe: TOMORROW, Wed. 9/2, Mudd 113

2. Beginnings of Modernity in Jewish Eastern Europe: Partitions of Poland; Jews at the Outset of Tsarist Rule  
PRESENTER:

Mendes-Flohr (henceforth, MF/R), pp.375-377; study the map on unnumbered page between pp.379-380; refer to it as needed during the course to situate regions, towns and cities. N.B.: the Notes to the documents in this book are incredibly good and useful. Always read them!

Lucy Dawidowicz, Golden Tradition: study the maps at the front of the book and her Key to Maps; refer to them, too, as needed.


3. Traditional Jewish Community: Jews and Jews; Jews and Others  
PRESENTER:

Jacob Katz, Tradition and Crisis, part 1, chps. 2-8, pp. 11-75

4. Traditional Jewish Community, continued  
PRESENTER:


5. Hasidism: Ideas, Personalities; Movement  
PRESENTER:

Find major locations on maps: see session 2, above

Simon Dubnow, "The Beginnings: The Baal Shem Tov (Besht) and the Center in Podolia," "The Maggid of Miedzryczecz," in Essential Papers on Hasidism, ed. Gershon Hundert, pp.25-85 (N.B.: 11 of these pages are notes)

Lucy Dawidowicz, ed., The Golden Tradition (pagination on this syllabus in 1967 ed.), Early Hasidism, segments 1-4, pp.93-106  BRING TO CLASS
PRESENTER:

6. Hasidism, continued, and Its Challenge to Kehillah Authority  9/17

PRESENTER:

Music and Hasidic/ mystical communion with/ through the tsaddik to God: in class

Louis Jacobs, "Hasidic Prayer;" Aaron Wertheim, "Traditions and Customs in Hasidism," in Hundert, ed., Essential Papers, pp. 275-330 (N.B.: 15 of these pages are notes)

Arthur Green, “Teachings of the Hasidic Masters,” in Back to the Sources, ed. Barry Holtz, pp.361-399 only

Norman Lamm, Hasidic Thought, pp

7. Forces of Disintegration: Hasidism’s Threat to Traditional Authority; Haskalah/ Jewish "Enlightenment"; Tsarist Manipulation  9/22

PRESENTER:

Katz, Tradition, part 3, chps. 20-22, pp. 213-244

Bartal, chp. 8, pp. 90-101

Michael Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews, chps.1-3 (selections), pp.13-59

8. Haskalah, continued: Culture Wars, Maskilic Self-Appraisals  9/24

PRESENTER:

First Essay choices to be distributed

Make an appointment to see me during office hours about your paper topic selection. Preliminary topic statement and bibliography due right after Fall Break.

Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas, chps.3 (selection)-4, pp.59-85, 97-122

MF/R, pp.377-379, 381-385 (incl.), 400-403


PRESENTER:

Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas, chp. 5, pp.123-154

Immanuel Etkes, Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement, chps. 2-4, pp.17-67

MF/R, pp.390-395

10. Israel Salanter and the Musar Movement  10/1

PRESENTER:

First essay due in class today.

Etkes, Rabbi Israel Salanter, chps. 7-8, 10, 12, pp.91-113, 135-152, 177-199

Dawidowicz, pp.171-185

MF/R, pp.396-397

11. Yeshiva, Musar, continued: Personal and Family Repercussions  10/6

FIRST ESSAY DUE IN CLASS TODAY.

PRESENTER:

Immanuel Etkes, "Marriage and Torah Study Among the Lomdim in Lithuania in the Nineteenth Century," in David Kraemer, ed. The Jewish Family, pp.153-178

"Chaim Grade," EJ, 7:843-844

Chaim Grade, The Yeshiva, Curt Leviant, trans., vol. 1, part 1, chps. 1-8, pp.3-94 only (epic novel by one of the greatest 20th century Yiddish writers and mussar yeshiva drop out)

12. Women’s Spirituality and Ritual  10/8

PRESENTER:

Chava Weissler, Voices of the Matriarchs, chps. 1-2, 4, pp.3-50, 66-75

The Merit of Our Mothers, A Bilingual Anthology of Jewish Women’s Prayers, trans. Tracy Guren Klirs, pp.12-45, 84-88, 100-102, 108-110, 116, 114 (N.B.: half these pages are in Yiddish; required reading: English only...)

PRESENTER:


14. Gender, continued 10/15

PRESENTER:


Paula Hyman, Gender and Assimilation, pp.50-92

Dawidowicz, Golden, 206-209, 388-393

FALL BREAK 10/17-10/25 PAPER TOPIC STATEMENT AND PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY, USING PROPER CITATION CONVENTIONS, AS IN BENJAMIN BOOK, DUE NEXT SESSION

15. Stable Jewish Family? 10/27

Paper topic statement and Bibliography due today

PRESENTER:

ChaeRan Freeze, Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia, chp. 3, pp.131-200 there is much detail here; get the gist and important particulars that establish the gist

16. Era of Reforms; 1881, Reaction, Pogroms 10/29

Distribution of second essay choices; essay due 11/12

PRESENTER:

Bartal, chps. 9-10, 12, 13, pp. 102-123, 134-156

Zvi Gitelman, A Century of Ambivalence, pp.17-27

David Vital, The Origins of Zionism, chp. 3, pp.49-62

MF/R, pp.408-411, 472-3, 705 study these figures and maps. What story do they tell, what conclusions do you draw?

17. Rejecting Russia for Zion: East European Zionisms and Zionists 11/3

The bulk of the reading for today is primary material. What are the ideas and proposals that Smolenskin, Lilienblum, and Pinsker put forth? What are their “diagnoses” of the “Jewish problem” and its solutions? In what ways is Zionism modern? In what ways is it an outgrowth of Jewish tradition, without which, it could not have emerged? How does east European Jewish experience—religious and political—inform Zionism there, as opposed to central or western Europe?

PRESENTER:

Shlomo Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism, Introduction, chp. 7, pp.3-13, 73-82


18. “Love/ Lovers of Zion;” Ahad Ha-Am 11/5

PRESENTER:

Avineri, chp. 11, pp. 112-124

Vital, chp. 7, pp.187-200

Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea, pp. 262-269

Ahad HaAm, “Slavery in Freedom,” in Selected Essays of Ahad Ha’am, tr. Leon Simon, pp.171-194

MF/R, pp.532, 541-546, 548-549

PRESENTATION:


*MF/R, pp.400, 404*


Today: brainstorming our food and society offering (see next class).

20. Yiddish, continued; *Birth of Modern Hebrew Language and Literature 11/12*

SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE

PRESENTER: suggestion: pick from among your impressions of these three authors and speak about that; make some comparisons

*Feeding the Yiddish belly*: food today! Volunteer to research the diet of East European Jews and help organize a food fair for today’s class. Extra credit (you’ll get more to eat than others; to what strata of East European Jewish society do you correspond? Which strata of society ate what? Representative foods of wealthy; middle; poor; destitute Jews).

*Hertzberg, Zionist Idea*, pp.159-165

*MF/R, pp.403*

Chaim Nachman Bialik, Shaul Tchernichovsky:

readings in:

*The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself*, eds., Stanley Burnshaw, T. Carmi, Ezra Spicehandler, pp.18-43


PRESENTER:

Nora Levin, While Messiah Tarried: Jewish Socialist Movements, 1871-1917, chps.2-4, 14, pp.20-62, 219-235

MF/R, pp.405-406

The Samurai of Vishogrod: The Notebooks of Jacob Maratek, chps.7-9, pp.51-78 (great memoir, fun read—but what can we learn from it? How does it add to what we learn from Levin?)

22. The Bund, continued    11/19

PRESENTER:

Levin, chps.15-17, pp.236-279

MF/R, pp.419-423, 428-432

Dawidowicz, pp.426-434 (recommended: 405-422)

23. Simon Dubnow and Diaspora Nationalism    11/24

PRESENTER:

The readings for today are largely essays by Dubnow. Google him and read the Wikipedia entry on him. After reading his essays, compare him to Ahad Ha’Am. How are they similar; how different? How do Dubnow’s ideas emerge from a peculiarly east European Jewish context? Can they have applicability in any other context?


THANKSGIVING    11/26    NO CLASS

24. Russian Jews During World War I; First Decades of Communism    12/1

PRESENTER:

*MF/R*, pp.428-436, 439-440, 446-448

25. After World War I: Jewish Politics and Culture in Reborn Poland 12/3

**PRESENTER:**

Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, pp.11-83

26. Polish Jewry Between the Wars; Course Conclusions 12/8

**PRESENTER:**

Requirements for this class are: some reading; viewing film; looking though photographic albums:

Memoirs and memories of eastern Europe:

*MF/R*, 437-438, 440-446

Dawidowicz, *Golden*, pp.482-492


For this session view the films: “Image Before My Eyes,””Five Towns.” Come to class prepared to discuss them, your observation papers to be on the films.

“Image” is reserved for our class; group viewing arrangements TBA. For additional options, both films may be available from the Public Library system. “Five Towns” is available for viewing online from [http://www.spielbergfilmarchive.org.il](http://www.spielbergfilmarchive.org.il).

Please also peruse the photos/ illustrations in the following books for class:

Roman Vichniac, *Polish Jews, A Pictorial Record*

*Image Before My Eyes, A Photographic History of Jewish Life in Poland, 1864-1939*

Toby Knobel Flueck, *Memories of My Life in a Polish Village, 1930-1949*

27. Conclusions 12/10
View the film, “The Dybbuk” for class discussion and course wrap up. This film is on reserve for our class; viewing TBA. Food today!