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
East European Jewry, 1772-1939

East European Jewry, once the largest Jewish population in the world, was also one of the most dynamic and creative communities 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 abounds in Yiddish-isms (shlep, shmuck, mazl tov, shlemiehl, mayven, meshuga). Yiddish, a “murdered language,” enjoys a remarkable revival here (including at Oberlin), as does klezmer, the music of Jewish eastern Europe.

This course will feature a full klezmer concert (led by a graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory), as well as forays into the richness of east European Jewish literature and religious, secular, and political cultures. We will study the profound social change, including in family structure and gender relations, that occurred in the period studied. The Jews were a conspicuous, mostly detested, minority in the multi-ethnic Russian Empire and in the extremely nationalistic 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, the Mussar movement; Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment); traditional women's spirituality; gender and modernization; the rise of modern 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 early Soviet regime and in interwar Poland, as Jews faced escalating antisemitism and a world under Nazi threat.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and informed participation: All reading (65-70 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 class you miss. Attendance will be taken; absence may affect your final grade. Please tell me if illness or emergency prevents your attendance.

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.

Please note that we will have one makeup class (held on a Sunday with a guest lecturer), and one concert in lieu of a regular class. Both are required.
Whenever PRIMARY SOURCES (e.g., MF/R; Dawidowicz; any fiction, memoirs), are assigned reading, PLEASE BRING THESE TO CLASS.

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 any reading
you do using shelf reserve since you will have limited time with the titles and competition for access.

Ohio Link is another way to obtain readings but be sure to order in sufficient time to receive and do them. If finances are an issue, you may wish to team with other students to buy Required Titles (see list, below).

ERES: readings NOT in "Required" titles, with the exception of encyclopedia articles, should be on erez. You must read encyclopedia articles in Reference.

Should you encounter difficulty obtaining material on any form of Reserve, IMMEDIATELY CONSULT RESERVE ROOM STAFF, PREFERABLY THE SUPERVISOR, JULIE WEIR. If you email me, all I can do is contact them, and I may not read your email right away, nor they read/respond to mine in time for any of this to help. N.B.: some titles on shelf reserve may be on reserve for OTHER COURSES.

When attempting to access eres material, try SEVERAL methods: title of the article, or the book or edition it's in; name of author or editor.

Do not leave reading for the last minute. Allow yourself time to work around possible glitches obtaining it. It is a great idea to obtain reading a week before you anticipate doing it. A little planning can prevent a lot of stress.

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.

The following are REQUIRED TITLES, meaning that there is 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)

Lucy Dawidowicz, ed., The Golden Tradition

Jacob Katz, Tradition and Crisis

Chava Weissler, Voices of the Matriarchs

Sholem Aleichem, Tevye the Dairyman and the Railroad Stories, Library of Yiddish Classics, transl. Hillel Halkin (THIS edition only)

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 main issues or questions, including any difficulties or informed questions you have. To do this (see also below, under Oral Presentation): once you've read, sit back and ask yourself what struck you in the readings, and why; what did you learn? Take notes; this is all this assignment asks. As we proceed, think and comment comparatively. Use your observations during class discussion; hand them in to me at the end of each class. Observation papers will not be graded but their overall quality will count toward the participation element of the grade (see Grading, below). Observation papers must be submitted in the class for which they are due; no late submissions. They need not be polished-- outline form is fine-- as long as I understand your points. Save your work; you may
wish to elaborate on these ideas for the two essay assignments (see below).

**Oral presentation:** Each student will lead off one or more sessions (depending on class size) with a short (5-7 minute, enforced), focused presentation on main issues in the reading and themes and questions for class discussion. Think of this as a spoken version of your observation papers, meant to launch stimulating discussion. Do not recapitulate/summarize the readings; do not simply state reactions to them without analysis. Rather, interpret; analyze; draw comparisons; state conclusions. I will ask in class for each student to sign up for a chosen session or two but it is each student’s responsibility to make sure you are signed up for the agreed number of presentations.

On days we have no presenter, we will begin class by each student contributing a point or two from your observation paper.

**Written work:** There are two required two essays (5-page, double-spaced) based on assigned readings and discussions, from a choice of topics I will announce at least a week before any due date. Submission dates, at roughly one-month intervals, are marked on the syllabus. **There are no exams in this course.**

**Research Paper:** Students will write a paper of 10-12 pages (typed, double-spaced) on a topic of your choice. You MAY (indeed, I encourage you to) expand upon a topic covered on the syllabus and use assigned readings; your work must in addition, use 3-4 additional books (or equivalent in articles; ca. 10 articles = 1 book). You must also use primary sources in the paper; these may include fiction or visual art. I will be happy to help you choose a topic and advise about bibliography; we also have a library session for this, see below.

See dates for submission of your preliminary topic and bibliography to me on the syllabus; you will also send a revised version of this to the reference librarian doing our library session. The research paper is due on or before the date set by the Registrar for a final exam for this course. Submit your papers TO MY MAILBOX (make sure it is my box), unless you and I have made specific alternative arrangements.

**Standards for written work:** ALL writing must be clear, coherent, substantive, and grammatical, and use correct spelling. Your imagined audience is intelligent but uninformed; your writing therefore, must be self-sufficient: someone with no independent knowledge of your subject must be able to understand based on what you alone say. Avoid passive tense, jargon, 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; same for "who's/ whose. Drafts/ re-writes are essential

HELP: Writing assistance is available in the College and I urge you to use it. Do see me for assistance with this or any course requirement. If you give me drafts at least two weekdays prior to a deadline, I will be happy to read and comment on them.

Your two essays need not have a formal bibliography and do not necessarily need notes. Your paper needs both. You MUST use the required Benjamin book for ALL written work for guidance about organization, composition, substantiated argumentation, and expression; for the paper, follow its guidelines for citation conventions.

**LATENESS PENALTY:** Work must be submitted when due except in case of documented significant illness or emergency. Essays and the paper will be reduced 1/3 of a grade per day of lateness (an A becomes an A-, a B+, a B etc.). It is your responsibility to attend to all technicalities (printers working, etc.), well in advance of deadlines. DO REMEMBER TO SAVE ALL WORK FREQUENTLY.
NO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF ANY WRITTEN WORK. HARD COPY ONLY.

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

HONOR CODE: This course, as all in Oberlin, operates under the College Honor Code, information about which is on the College website under Honor Code and which students are responsible for understanding and upholding. If you have any questions about proper attribution of material, including oral and electronic, or other areas covered by the Code, staff in Mudd Library are well versed and eager to help, as are any members of the Honor Code Committee and am I. By College rules, all written work must have a signed Honor Code declaration to be graded; be sure to submit one on your essays and final paper. Written work is to be a solo affair. HOWEVER, YOU MAY (and indeed I encourage you to) work with other students on observation papers and your leadoff presentation/s; JUST ACKNOWLEDGE THIS.

EAST EUROPEAN JEWRY, 1772-1939

1. Introductory 9/6

2. Partitions of Poland, Jewish-Gentile Relations, Jewish Community at the Outset of Tsarist Rule 9/8

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, major towns and cities.

Lucy Dawidowicz, Golden Tradition: study the maps at the front of the book, refer to them as needed

Salo Baron, The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets, chp.2, pp.13-25


Jacob Katz, Tradition and Crisis, chps. 3-5, 9-10, pp.18-42, 79-102

3. Hasidism 9/13

Presenter:
Simon Dubnow, "The Beginnings: The Baal Shem Tov (Besht) and the Center in Podolia," "The Maggid of Miedzryzecz," 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, pp.93-106

MF/R, pp.387-390
4. Hasidism, continued, and Its Challenge to Kehillah Authority 9/15

Presenter:

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)

Katz, Tradition, chp. 21, pp.225-244

5. Haskalah: Jewish "Enlightenment" and Tsarist Manipulation 9/20

Presenter:

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

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

6. Haskalah, continued: Culture Wars, Maskilic Self-Appraisals 9/22

Presenter:

Stanislawski, chps.3 (rest)-4, pp.59-122


MF/R, pp.400-403

7. Mithnaggdism: Religious Opposition to Hasidism and Haskalah 9/27

Presenter:

Immanuel Etkes, Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement, chps. 2-3, pp.17-56

Mordechai Wilensky, "Hasidic-Mitnagdric Polemics in the Jewish Communities of Eastern Europe: The Hostile Phase," in Hundert, ed., pp.244-271

MF/R, pp.390-395

8. Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement 9/29

PRELIMINARY PAPER TOPICS and BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE IN CLASS TODAY. Each student will speak BRIEFLY (1-2 minutes) about her/ his topic/ research interest. Continue to revise and refine your ideas and interest; do come see me during office hours, I am glad to help. But you MUST email your topic/ bibliography to the Reference Librarian who will be doing session # 10 with us BY 10/6 AT THE LATEST.

Presenter:

Etkes, Rabbi Israel Salanter, chps. 7-8, 10-11, pp.91-113, 135-174

Dawidowicz, pp.171-185
9. Yeshiva, Mussar, continued: Personal and Family Repercussions 10/6

FIRST ESSAY DUE IN CLASS TODAY.

MAIL TOPICS/ BIBLIOGRAPHY TO REFERENCE LIBRARIAN BY 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 great 20th century Yiddish writers and mussar yeshiva drop out)

10. RESEARCH METHODS AND SOURCES 10/11

No Presenter today

Session to be held in Mudd with Reference Librarian, to whom you must have mailed your preliminary paper topics and bibliography BY 10/6.


For the observation paper: note what you have learned from this reading, what you will take from it for your writing for this course.

NO CLASS Thurs. 10/13 YOM KIPPUR COLLEGE HOLIDAY

NO CLASS TUES. 10/18 MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR MAKEUP CLASS, SUN. 11/20

11. Traditional Women's Spirituality and Ritual 10/20

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...)

FALL BREAK 10/22-10/31

REVISED TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE AFTER BREAK
12. Gender, "Enlightenment," and Modernity: Or, Do Women and Men Have the Same History? 11/1

SUBMIT YOUR REVISED TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY TODAY IN CLASS

Presenter:


13. Gender, continued 11/3

Presenter:


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

Dawidowicz, Golden, 206-209, 388-393


SECOND ESSAY DUE IN CLASS TODAY

KLEZMER CONCERT and lecture NOV. 9 REQUIRED further details TBA

Presenter:

ChaeRan Freeze, Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia, chp. 3, pp.131-200

15. Demographic and Economic Transformation; Era of Reforms; 1881, Reaction, Pogroms 11/10

Presenter:

Baron, Russian Jew, chps. 3 (selections), 4-6, pp.39-98

David Vital, The Origins of Zionism, 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?)
16. Rejecting Russia for Zion 11/15

Presenter:

David Vital, The Origins of Zionism, chps.5-6, pp.109-186 (this is longer reading than usual; next time's is shorter)

17. Pinsker; Bilu; Ahad Ha-Am 11/17

Presenter:

"Ahad Ha-Am," EJ, 2:440-448

Vital, chp. 7, pp.187-200

Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea, pp.179-198, 247-277

MF/R, pp.532, 541-543, 548-549

18. Birth of Modern Yiddish Literature; Sholem Aleichem * 11/20

THIS CLASS WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, ROOM AND TIME TBA, AND WILL BE CO-TAUGHT BY PROFESSOR KATHERINE HELLERSTEIN, SCHOLAR OF YIDDISH LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. This session is our makeup for the session missed in Oct. It is required.

Presenter:


MF/R, pp.400, 403, 404


Irena Klepfisz, Introduction to : Found Treasures, Stories by Yiddish Women Writers, pp.21-57


Presenter:

Guest lecturer today, Ms. Nili Adler, Director of Hebrew Language at the Siegal College of Jewish Studies

Readings: to be assigned

A Treasury of Yiddish Stories, ed. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg, pp. 118-148, 223-242
11/24 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING


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?)

21. The Bund, continued 12/1

Presenter:

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

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

Dawidowicz, pp.405-422, 426-434

22. Simon Dubnow and Diaspora Nationalism 12/6

Presenter:

"Simon Dubnow," EJ, 6:252-256


23. Russian Jews During World War I; First Decades of Communism 12/8

Presenter:

Zvi Gitelman, A Century of Ambivalence, chp 1 (selection), chp.2, pp.55-114


24. After World War I: Jews and Minority Rights in Reborn Poland 12/13

Presenter:

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

MF/R, 437-438, 440-446

Dawidowicz_Golden, pp.482-492
25. Polish Jewish Culture Between the Wars; Course Conclusions 12/15

Presenter:

For today, view two films: "The Dybbuk," and "Image Before My Eyes" and come to class prepared to discuss them, your observation papers to be on the films.

Both films are reserved for our class. There is no individual check out of either film; I will help you arrange for group viewing/s. "Image" is available from the Public Library system; you may obtain individual copies that way.

Please also peruse the photos in the following books:

Roman Vichniac, *Polish Jews, A Pictorial Record*

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

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