

Introduction to Modern Jewish History

JEWISH STUDIES/HISTORY 220

MWF 11-11:50am

Classroom: Humanities 1101

Instructor: Dr. Wobick-Segev

Office Hours: Fridays, 10-10:50am and 12:00-1:00pm

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Course Description:

This course is intended to introduce students to the major events, figures and themes of modern Jewish history from 1492 to the post-war era. As such, it explores the political, social, cultural, intellectual and religious history of the Jewish people over 500 years of history. We will pay particular attention to central individuals and their experiences as a way of gaining insight into significant moments in Jewish history. We will also concentrate on the changing temporal and geographic contexts, acknowledging both commonalities and exceptional experiences of various Jewish communities. This course seeks to understand how Jews at times served as the agents of historical change, and at others reacted to changes imposed on them by non-Jewish society. Most importantly, this course seeks to dismantle stereotypes that insist that Jewish history can simply be reduced to a tale of oppression. Instead, we will consider the vibrant and rich cultural legacy of the Jewish people in the modern world. In addition to the course textbook, students will read a wide variety of primary sources, from political and philosophical texts, to religious tracts, autobiographical material, and modern literature.

Required Texts:

(Available at the University Bookstore)

Michael Brenner, *A Short History of the Jews*

The Memoirs of Glückel von Hameln

Puah Rakovsky, *My Life as a Radical Jewish Woman*

Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages*

The remaining readings can be found online at Learn@UW.

Course Requirements:

Essay 1	20%
Essay 2	25%
Midterm	25%
Final Exam	30%

Classroom Behavior:

1. Students are expected to come to class ON TIME, prepared, having read the material thoughtfully.
2. Students will turn off all cell phones, pagers, iPhones, iPods, laptop computers, and all other conceivable electronic devices upon entering the classroom. Laptop computers may be used only if the student has an authorized medical need AND the instructor receives written confirmation to this effect in the first two weeks of instruction.

Introductions

Week 1

Wed, Sept. 4 Course Introduction
Fri, Sept. 6 **NO CLASS – Jewish New Year**

Week 2

Mon, Sept. 9 Ancient and Medieval Precursors

Unit 1 *Establishing Boundaries, Creating New Communities*

Wed, Sept. 11 1492 and the creation of the Sephardi Diaspora
Fri, Sept. 13 A New Home: The Ottoman Empire, the Mahgreb,
and *Eretz Israel*

Readings:

Brenner, 117-136.
(Begin reading *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*.)

Week 3

Mon, Sept. 16 Joseph Caro, the *Shulhan Arukh* and the continued
codification of the *Halakhah*
Wed, Sept. 18 Safed: *Kabbalah* and Jewish mysticism
Fri, Sept. 20 The Jews in Renaissance Europe

Readings:

Brenner, 137-166.
I. L. Peretz, “The Golem”
(Continue reading *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*. You should be about halfway
through.)

Week 4

Mon, Sept. 23 The Reformation and Wars of Religion
Wed, Sept. 25 Court Jews
Fri, Sept. 27 Poland and the Autonomous Community
(ESSAY #1 due today)

Readings:

Brenner, 167-188.
The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln (Finish this week).
Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, 18-20.

Unit 2 **Religious Change**

Week 5

Mon, Sept. 30	Amsterdam, Old Jews and New Christians
Wed, Oct. 2	Messianism and Heresy: Shabbetai Zvi and Sabbatianism
Fri, Oct. 4	Hasidism

Readings:

Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* translated by Bernard Dov Cooperman (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 183-194, 202-213.

Mendes-Flohr, 63-65, 365-368, 369-371.

Hasidic tales.

Week 6

Mon, Oct. 7	Vilna and the Mitnagdim
Wed, Oct. 9	Combatting secularism – the Yeshiva and the Musar Movement (in-class primary source analysis)

Unit 3 **Emancipation**

Fri, Oct. 11	Social mobility and change in the 17 th and 18 th centuries, an overview
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Readings:

Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881* translated by Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 47-57.

Mendes-Flohr, 368-69, 372-377.

I. L. Peretz, “If not higher”

I. J. Singer, “Repentance”

Week 7

Mon, Oct. 14	The Enlightenment and Haskalah
Wed, Oct. 16	The Century of Enlightenment: From Germany to Russia and beyond
Fri, Oct. 18	MIDTERM

Readings:

Brenner, 189-207.

Mendes-Flohr, 68-72, 90, 360-365, 444-445, 460-463.

S. Ansky, “The Sins of Youth”.

Week 8

Mon, Oct. 21	Emancipation
Wed, Oct. 23	Reform Judaism in Europe
Fri, Oct. 25	Neo-Orthodoxy

Readings:

The Jews: A History, 285-291.

Mendes-Flohr, 123, 126-128, 152-156, 161-167, 173, 175, 445-447, 449-452.

On religion: 182, 187-192, 196-199, 202-11, 220-231.

Unit 4 ***The Politics of Integration and Difference***

Week 9

Mon, Oct. 28	German Jews and the Politics of Liberalism
Wed, Oct. 30	Russia and the Pale of Settlement
Fri, Nov. 1	America: Dreams of Freedom and Political Realities

Readings:

Brenner, 209-254.

Puah Rakovsky, 20-52, 70-106.

Mendes-Flohr, 350-356, 388-91, 393-396, 399-403, 512-514, 532-535, 541-42.

Week 10

Mon, Nov. 4	Jews of the Balkans and North Africa: Between the <i>Alliance</i> and Zionism
Wed, Nov. 6	Palestine and life in the <i>Yishuv</i> : Zionism in practice

Unit 5 ***Assimilation or Renovation: New Jewish Identities***

Fri, Nov. 8	Religious Reform in America
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Readings:

Brenner, 255-286.

Mendes-Flohr, 589-91, 599-603, 616-617, 660, 693-97,

On religion: 521-522, 557-561, 575-76.

Rakovsky, 130-171, 182-196.

Week 11

Mon, Nov. 11	Communist Russia and the New Jew
Wed, Nov. 13	Central Europe and the Return to Jewish Culture
Fri, Nov. 15	The <i>Yishuv</i> and the emergence of Religious Zionism (Essay #2 due today)

Readings:

Brenner, 287-318.

Isaac Babel, "Crossing the River Zbrucz", "Gedali", "The Rabbi's Son"
I.L. Peretz, "The Pious Cat"
Rakovsky, 172-181.
Mendes-Flohr, 411-415, 421-422, 613.

Week 12

Mon, Nov. 18 The birth of ultra-Orthodoxy

Unit 6 *Emancipation and its discontents*

Wed, Nov. 20 The Emergence of modern antisemitism

Fri, Nov. 22 WWI and the rise of Nazism

Readings:

Kafka, "The Animal in the Synagogue"

(<http://zork.net/~patty/oldkafka/ksynagogue.html>)

Mendes-Flohr, 800-801, 837-838, 306-308, 315-319, 328-332.

Week 13

Mon, Nov. 25 WWII and the Shoah

Wed, Nov. 27 The Shoah

Fri, Nov. 29 **NO CLASS, Thanksgiving**

Readings:

Brenner, 319-348.

Mendes-Flohr, 730-731, 737-739, 751-754.

Zapruder, 13-62, 90-159, 226-242, 329-360.

Unit 7 *Coming, Going or Staying: Old and New Centers of Jewish Life*

Week 14

Mon, Dec. 2 Jews in Cold War Europe

Wed, Dec. 4 The Creation of a Jewish State in the Middle East

Fri, Dec. 6 Coming Home? Middle Eastern Jews in Israel

Readings:

Brenner, 349-387.

Reb Kringle, Englander.

Mendes-Flohr, 708-713.

Week 15

Mon, Dec. 9
Wed, Dec. 11
Fri, Dec. 13

Post-war America and the Jews
Contemporary Jewish Culture
REVIEW