History of the Jews from 1492 to the Present

NEJS 35a
(Preliminary Syllabus)

Alexander Kaye
Mandel Center for the Humanities Room 317
akaye@brandeis.edu
Office hours TBA
MW 3.30-4.50pm

Course Description

This course investigates modern Jewish history from the dawn of modernity to the present. In it we will examine the social, economic, political, and intellectual forces that shaped Jewish experiences across the globe, including in Europe the United States, Latin America, and the Middle East.

The history of the Jews raises many questions about what it means to be an individual in modernity. How do we understand our relationship to our families, our communities and the states in which we live? How do we deal with situations in which we are made to feel like an outsider, or worse? What is our stance towards cultural, religious or other traditions that we may have inherited from our families or communities? This course will examine the very many ways in which Jews have answered these questions in the past three centuries with an eye to pushing all of us to examine our own responses to these existential challenges of modernity.

All required readings will be in English.

Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance, Preparation and Reading Responses (QTQs)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft of Final Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A passing grade is required in all of the above categories in order to pass the course.

**Office Hours**

[Times TBA]

I encourage every student to come to see me at least once during the semester. I also ask that you make an appointment before coming to see me. If you do not make an appointment, I may not be there. Students unable to come during regular office hours should contact me to make an appointment at another time.

**Class Conduct**

Attendance and active participation is expected from all students. Except in the case of officially documented emergencies (such as a medical emergency accompanied by a doctor’s note,) more than two absences will result in a reduced grade. Note that pop quizzes might be issued in-class. There will be no opportunity to make up a grade for a missed quiz, except in the documented case of a valid absence. The same goes for the mid-term which will be given in-class. Failure to take an exam will result in a failing grade for that exam.

*The study of history entails grappling with big ideas about human thought, belief, behavior, and practice. Therefore, any course in history is bound to be the site of different opinions. Collegial debate is welcome, but aggressive behavior has no place in our classroom. Please exercise respect for your colleagues.*

**Detailed Course Overview**

*The following is a provisional outline of the units of the course. The instructor will be as responsive as possible to the interests of the participating students and, to that end, readings and topics might be changed.*

**Required Texts**

Two books are required for the course:


Please bring *The Jew in the Modern World* to every class. We will be reading from it regularly.

Other readings will be assigned through Latte.

All readings and assignments must be completed *before* the first class in the week for which they were assigned. (“Readings” may include watching a film or reviewing other material.)

Class sessions will include presentations from the instructor and extensive discussion of the readings. You are expected to attend all scheduled classes and to come prepared for class discussion. This includes completing all required readings prior to the start of class, bringing copies of them with you to class, and thinking about any discussion posted in advance. Our ability to analyze texts critically depends on having our reading materials in front of us. Failure to bring assigned readings to class may have a negative impact on your participation grade.

**Technology policy**

*Cell phones and other electronic devices are never permitted in class.*

The evidence increasingly suggests that most students produce better work and receive higher grades when taking notes by hand rather than using a laptop, and that sitting near students using laptops and other electronic devices has a negative effect on your grades *even if you are not using such devices yourself*. For these reasons, I strongly encourage everyone to leave laptops packed away.

Email is the best way that I have to communicate with you outside of class. Even if email is not your usual mode of communication, please make sure that you check it every day in case I need to get in touch with you. Similarly, please make check Latte frequently so that you are aware of announcements about the course.

**Credit Hours**

Success in this 4 credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.)

**Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me
immediately.

**Academic Integrity**

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

**Lectures and Readings**

_The following is a provisional outline of the units of the course. The instructor will be as responsive as possible to the interests of the participating students and, to that end, readings and topics might be changed._

**Unit 1. Introduction and Pre-modern Jewish History**

**Introduction. What do we mean by “modernity”?**

**Jews in the Middle Ages**

Gartner 1-25 (Also relevant for next session)

**Expulsion, Migration and Changing Identities**

Gartner 47-55

Documents

- Edict of the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain (Carmen)
- The Writ of Excommunication Against Baruch Spinoza, JMW: II.1

**Unit 2. Changes of the 18th Century**

**Global Networks and Economic Change**

Gartner 35-46
Documents

- Emperor Leopold, “The Appointment of Samson Wertheimer as Imperial Court Factor” (1703), JMW: 18-20.
- Peter Stuyvesant, "Petition to Expel the Jews from New Amsterdam (1654). JMW: IX.1.
- Reply to Stuyvesant’s Petition (1655). JMW: IX.2.

Hasidism

Gartner 74-83

Documents


The Enlightenment and the Jews

Gartner 83-94

Documents

- Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (Carmen)
- Moses Mendelssohn, “The Right to be Different” (1782), JMW: 73.
- Johann David Michaelis, “Arguments Against Dohm” (1782), JMW: I.10.
Unit 3. Revolution and Reform

Revolutionary Promises

Gartner 94-127

Documents

- Hebrew Cong. of Newport, “Message of Welcome to Washington” (1790), JMW: 507.

Religious Reform its Opponents

Gartner 138-147

Documents

- "These of are the Words of the Covenant (1819), JMW: IV.3.
- Reform Rabbinical Conference, “Question of Messianism” (1845), JMW: 207-209.

Eastern Europe

Gartner 162-190

Documents

Sefardic Jewry and Globalization in the 19th Century

Gartner 191-201

Documents

- Alliance Israélite Universelle, “Appeal to all Israelites” (1860), JMW: 292-293.

Anti-Semitism and the Limits of Emancipation

Gartner 213-242

Documents

- Karl Eugen Duehring, “The Question of the Jew is a Question of Race” (1881), JMW: 308.
- “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” (c. 1902), JMW: 339-342.

Unit 4. Jewish Options at the Dawn of Nations

Migration

Gartner 201-212; 258-266

Documents

- Judah Leib Levin “To America of to the Land of Israel?” (1881), JMW: 393-394.
- Material from the Tenement Museum, NYC (Carmen)

Socialism and Cultural Autonomy

Gartner 243-248

Documents

- Simon Dubnow, “Cultural Autonomy” (1901), JMW: 397-399.
- “Czernowitz Conference of the Yiddish Language” (1908), JMW: 404-405.
Movie: The Dybbuk

Zionism

Gartner 248-258

Documents

- Theodor Herzl “A Solution of the Jewish Question” (1896), JMW: 599-603.
- Max Nordau, “Jewry of Muscle” (1903), JMW: 616-617.

Unit 5. Global War and the Shoah

World War I

Gartner 267-80

Documents


Interwar Period


WWII and Holocaust

Gartner 347-382

Documents

- “Protocols of the Wannsee Conference” (1942), JMW: 751-754.

Unit 6. Post-War Judaisms

State of Israel

Jews in Arab Lands and their Exodus

- Movie: *The Dove Flyer*
- Balfour Hakak, “Galut” (Carmen)

Jewish-African Diaspora


Post-War America

Gartner 409-420

Documents

- Nostrae Aetate
- Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, “I Am My Brother’s Keeper”

Movie: *Crossing Delancey*

Unit 7. Conclusions

Varieties of Jewish Identity Today

Final Discussion