

Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Prague

Course Code / Title: (PR/JWST 350) Modern History of the Jews in East Central Europe

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Jewish Studies / History, Central European Studies

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

This course focuses on Jewish experience in the Habsburg monarchy, its successor states, and parts of Eastern Europe from 1772 to 1917. Beginning with Joseph II's reforms, it explores government policies toward Jewish populations, internal developments within Jewish communities, and the complexities of Jewish-Gentile relations. The course examines Jewish life before WWI and the status of Jewish minorities in the new post-war states. Through comparisons of developments in the East and West, it addresses questions of Jewish emancipation, acculturation, communal life, and nationalist politics, challenging cultural stereotypes using recent critical scholarship. In its exploration of the complexity of Jewish communities in the region, the course questions the validity of even speaking about Jewry as a whole.

Content warning:

At times, this course intentionally invites students to engage with readings and content that are controversial. Students might find this disturbing. The intention is not to endorse perspectives, but rigorously engage with them. If certain material is emotionally challenging, students can discuss with the professor before or after class. Students may also leave the classroom without academic penalty, if the discussion becomes too emotionally challenging. Students are, however, responsible for all missed material, and so should arrange to get notes from another student or see the professor individually.

Objectives

During this course, students:

- Achieve understanding of the causes behind the governmental policies toward the Jews during the era in question
- Examine the acculturation of Jews, comparing the processes in the Habsburg monarchy to Western Europe and Imperial Russia
- Question how the communal and political life of the Jews during the era in question was shaped by the political and cultural factors of the time
- Compare the pace of acculturation and progress of Jewish nationalist politics in various post-WWI nation states
- Learn to integrate various sources of information from multiple perspectives and debate opinions different from their own, using important and contested vocabulary of the Jewish studies related to religion, culture, war, and peace

Syllabus of Record

- Analyze connections between religious texts and current political conflicts in the Middle East

Course Requirements

Participation

A portion of each class is devoted to discussion of the issues and students are expected to participate in discussion actively.

Participation is essential for the final grade. Students are required to complete each reading assignment and come to class with ideas, insights, or questions. The class thrives when everyone is prepared, open to others' ideas, and bases their arguments on a thorough understanding of the material.

Class Participation Grading Rubric

	A – 90-100% Exemplary	B – 80-89% Proficient	C – 70-79% Developing	D – 60-69% Unacceptable	F – 0-59% Missing
Frequency of class participation	Actively contributes 2+ times per meeting	Actively contributes at least 1 time per meeting	Actively contributes at least half of the time during term	Actively contributes less than half of the time during term	Does not contribute
Quality of class participation	Contribution is always insightful and constructive	Contribution is mostly insightful and constructive	Contribution is somewhat insightful and constructive	Contribution is rarely insightful and constructive	Does not contribute
Level of class preparation	Always fully prepared and on task	Mostly prepared and on task	Somewhat prepared and on task	Rarely prepared and on task	Consistently unprepared and not on task

Participation for mandatory excursions and Traveling Seminar sessions

Participation is required for the day-long excursion and all Traveling Seminar sessions associated with this course – this includes the Traveling Seminar predeparture information sessions and guest lecture. Absences for these events do not fall under the CET Attendance Policy but are factored into the Participation grade for the course.

Syllabus of Record

Presentation

Readings average 40 to 70 pages per session. During the semester, each student will prepare one short presentation on weekly reading and individual secondary sources research. Length of the presentation is 15-20 minutes + 5 minutes for questions.

Midterm paper

As a midterm paper, students submit a review of a scholarly book dealing with the topic which must be approved by the instructor in advance. The book must be related to their Final paper. Length of the review is about 3 to 5 pages. For the book reviews, students must read book and present in lucid and cogent writing a discussion and evaluation of its thesis. Use of other secondary sources is encouraged.

Traveling Seminar Assignment

CET Prague's Traveling Seminar is a required, credit-bearing, field study course component. Students are expected to participate in all components of the travel and complete required assignments (readings, written, oral) related to the Seminar, which are factored into the final grade as outlined below. Students are required to study the readings before each of the two components of the Traveling Seminar. After the Seminars, students submit a written reflection on specific parts of the Seminar and are expected to present their insights orally during class.

Final Paper

Students complete a final paper that comprises an essay of 10-12 pages. For this assignment, use of secondary sources is required and students should not only assess the book but also elaborate on their own ideas about the topic in question. Students should prove their analytical thinking and ability to synthesize content.

Final Presentation

Students are required to present their final paper in an academic manner. They will need to prepare a 20-minute presentation, followed by a 5-minute discussion, and create an appropriate PowerPoint presentation.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

Participation in class	15%
Presentation	15%
Midterm paper (book review)	15%
Traveling Seminar assignment	10%
Final paper	30%
Final presentation	15%

Syllabus of Record

Readings

Boyarin, Jonathan and Boyarin, Daniel. *Powers of Diaspora. Two Essays on Relevance of Jewish Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, 2002. pp. 35-101.

Brenner, Michael. *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. pp. 42-71.

Brumberg, Abraham. "Anniversaries in Conflict: On the Centenary of the Jewish Socialist Labour Bund" in *Jewish Social Studies* 5 (3), 1999. pp. 196-217.

Butler, Judith. *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. Columbia University Press, 2012.

Čapková, Kateřina and Kieval, Hillel J. *Prague and Beyond: Jews in the Bohemian Lands*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021. pp. 22-60.

Dubin, Lois C.: "The social and cultural context: eighteen-century Enlightenment." In Frank, Daniel H., Leaman, Oliver (Eds.). *History of Jewish Philosophy*. London/New York, 1997. pp. 636-659.

Ellenson, David H. Traditional reactions to modern Jewish Reform: the paradigm of German Orthodoxy. In Frank, Daniel H., Leaman, Oliver (Eds.). *History of Jewish Philosophy*. London/New York, 1997. pp.732-757.

Michal Frankl et al., Present and Absent: Exploring the Holocaust of Jews in Prague Using a Mobile Application.

https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a59c/9e65e6c39deeb3c971ffde52c35e1a90fb3d.pdf?_ga=2.261739021.1057650168.1661327909-783259712.1661327909

Heitlinger, Alena. *In the Shadow of the Holocaust and Communism: Czech and Slovak Jews Since 1945*. Piscataway: Transactions Publishers, 2006. pp. 67-105.

Katz, Jacob. *Jewish Emancipation and Self-Emancipation*. Philadelphia, 1986. pp. 89-103.

Katz, Steven T. 19. Katz, S. T., "The Shoah." In Frank, Daniel H., Leaman, Oliver (Eds.): *History of Jewish Philosophy*. London/New York, 1997. pp. 854-873.

Kieval, Hillel. *The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia, 1870-1918*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. pp. 36-63.

Krimstein, Ken. *The Three Escapes of Hannah Arendt. A Tyranny of Truth*. London, 2018.

Levy, Ze'ev. "Jewish Nationalism." In Frank, Daniel H., Leaman, Oliver (Eds.): *History of Jewish Philosophy*. London/New York, 1997. pp.761-775.

McCagg, William. *A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670-1918*. Bloomington, 1992. pp. 47-64.

Mendelsohn, Ezra. *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*. (Indiana University Press, 1983).

Mendelsohn, Ezra. *On Modern Jewish Politics*. Oxford University Press, 1993. pp. 3-36.

Syllabus of Record

Nathans, Benjamin. *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*. University of California Press, 2002. pp. 23-44.

Presner, Tod S. *Muscular Judaism. The Jewish body and the politics of regeneration*. Routledge, 2007. pp. 1-23.

Slezkine, Yuri. *The Jewish Century*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Snyder, Timothy: *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*. New York, 2015. pp. 58-76.

Volkov, Shulamit. Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany. In *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, Vol. 23, Issue 1. (1978), pp. 25-46.

Outline of Course Content

Topic 1 – European Jews in Pre-Emancipation era

- Diaspora
- Jewish life in Ghettos

Topic 2 – Enlightenment and Emancipation

- Emancipation in Eastern Europe
- Emancipation in Western Europe
- Social mobility, migration and integration

Topic 3 – Jews in Bohemia and Moravia

- Emancipation of the Jews
- Social mobility, migration and integration of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia

Topic 4 – Traditional and Modern Religious Movements in Judaism

- Reform Judaism
- Foundation of Orthodoxy, Ultra-orthodoxy

Topic 5 – Modern Jewish Politics, Modern Antisemitism

- Blood Libels
- Anti-Judaism vs Modern Antisemitism

Topic 6 – Jewish Nationalism

- Zionism
- Territorialism
- Body Politics

Syllabus of Record

Topic 7 – Jews in Interwar Eastern Central Europe

- Demography
- Common characteristics
- Nationalist politics and the Jews

Topic 8 – Democracy on the Edge

- Jews in Late 30s in Czechoslovakia
- Jewish refugees

Topic 9 – Dealing with the Holocaust

- Holocaust
- Jews in Europe after 1945

Topic 10 – Jewish Life under Communism

- Israel and Czechoslovakia
- Foundation of Israel

Topic 11 – Jewish Identity in 21 Century

- Diaspora Identity
- Post-Zionist Debate
- New Antisemitism