

## **History 374: Modern Political History of the Jews: Socialism, Liberalism, Nationalism**

Humanities 1651  
Tuesday & Thursday: 1:00-2:15

Professor Tony Michels  
office: 4103  
office hours: Tuesday, 3:00-5:00  
office phone: 265-2521  
e-mail: [aemichels@wisc.edu](mailto:aemichels@wisc.edu)

### **Course Description**

In the late nineteenth century, Eastern European Jews and Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the United States, Ottoman-ruled Palestine, and other countries began to form political movements in response to a host of problems from poverty to anti-Semitism to cultural assimilation. These movements—socialist, liberal, and nationalist in character—differed greatly in how they understood what was then called “the Jewish Question” and how to solve it. Should Jews emigrate from Eastern Europe or stay put where they lived and struggle for change there? If emigration, then to which country should they go: Palestine, the United States, or someplace else? Should Jews form alliances with non-Jewish political parties and movements? Or should they eschew autonomous Jewish movements altogether in favor of non-Jewish movements? Which goals should Jews seek to achieve: civil and political equality in their countries of residence, communal self-governance, or a Jewish homeland? Should they struggle for gradual reform or social revolution? Should Jews seek to assimilate into the dominant culture or develop their own, distinct culture in the Yiddish or Hebrew languages? These and other, related questions provoked enormous debates on both sides of the Atlantic, starting in the nineteenth century and continuing for more than a century.

This course explores the rise and development of Jewish political movements on three continents—Europe, Palestine/Israel, and the United States—from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. Although these movements met with greater or lesser success (and we will examine the reasons for this), they together transformed modern Jewish life and had a major impact on national politics and international relations. The history of modern Jewish politics had profound implications beyond the Jewish world from which it arose.

### **Course Requirements**

You are required to attend all lectures. One unexcused absence is permitted. All additional unexcused absences will be deducted from your overall course grade. *Each such absence will result in a deduction of 5 points out of a total of 100 for the semester* (see grade scale below).

**Note: class is cancelled on March 13. You are required to attend the Center for Jewish Studies' Ettinger Lecture on March 14: Pnina Lahav, "Golda Meier: Woman and Leader." The lecture will take place at 7:00 p.m. at the Pyle Center, Vandenberg Auditorium, 702 Langdon St.**

**Note: classes are cancelled on April 17 and 19 for the day long symposium, "The Question of Zionism: The Left and Its Relationship to Israel." You are required to attend two of the four sessions. Details can be found here:**  
<http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/events/symposium/>

Although this course does not have discussion sections, it will have regular in-class discussions. Participation in class discussions is required of everybody and will affect your overall course grade.

The assigned reading should be completed during the week for which they are assigned.

## **Assignments**

You will be graded on a 100-point scale divided between the following assignments:

first assignment: 3-page paper due on Feb. 14 (30 points)  
second assignment: 6-page paper due on March 29 (30 points)  
final assignment: 10-page paper due on May 10 (40 points)

## **Course Readings:**

The following books can be purchased at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative (426 West Gilman). There will also be a course packet for sale from the university copy center, located on the first floor of the Humanities Building, directly across from 1651.

Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993).

Puah Rakovsky, *My Life as a Radical Jewish Woman: Memoirs of a Zionist Feminist in Poland*, edited with an introduction by Paula Hyman, (Indiana Univ. Press, 2003).

## **Lectures and Readings**

### **Unit 1: The Road to Modern Jewish Politics**

#### **Week 1 (Jan. 24-26): Introduction and Background**

Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, pp. vii-62.

#### **Week 2 (Jan. 31-Feb.2): The Politics of Emancipation**

course packet

\*Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 11-57, 84-159.

### **Week 3 (Feb. 7-9): The Crisis of 1881: Pogroms and Their Aftermath**

#### course packet

\*Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 49-132.

#### documents

#The Bilu Manifesto (1882).

#Leo Pinsker, "Auto-Emancipation" (1882).

### **Unit 2: From Revolution to Revolution**

### **Week 4 (Feb. 14-16): The Rise of Jewish Socialism in the U. S. and Russia**

(First assignment due on Feb. 13, beginning of class.)

#### course packet

\*Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2005), pp. 1-68.

\*Ezra Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers' Movement in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 27-125.

#### documents

Abraham Cahan, excerpts from his autobiography (1926), pp. 311-329.

### **Week 5 (Feb. 21-23): Syntheses of Jewish Nationalism and Socialism**

Rakovsky, *My Life as a Radical Jewish Woman*, pp. 1-118.

#### Documents

\*Chaim Zhitlowsky, "The Jewish Factor in My Socialism" (1935).

\*The Bund, Decisions on the Nationality Question (1899-1905).

\*Ber Borochov, "Program for Proletarian Zionism" (1906).

\*V. I. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question" (1913).

### **Week 6 (Feb. 28-March 1): Socialist Zionism versus Revisionist Zionism**

#### course packet

\*Mitchell Cohen, *Zion & State: Nation, Class, and the Shaping of Modern Israel* (Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 85-160.

#### Documents

#Nachman Syrkin, "The Jewish Problem and the Socialist-Jewish State (1898).

#Aaron David Gordon, “Logic for the Future” (1910), “People and Labor” (1911), “Some Observations” (1911).

#Yitzhak Epstein, “The Hidden Question” (1907).

#Achdut Haavodah, “Proposal to the General Assembly of the Workers of Eretz Israel” (1919).

#Vladimir Jabotinsky, “What the Zionist-Revisionists Want” (1926).

### **Week 7: The Bolshevik Revolution (March 6-8)**

#### course packet

\*Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 49-137.

#### documents

#Jewish Red Army Soldiers, “Appeal to Jewish Workers and Toilers” (1920).

#Joe Rapoport, “War and Revolution,” (oral history, 1981).

### **Unit 3: The Inter-War Period**

#### **Week 8 (March 13-15): Independent Poland**

Note: class cancelled on March 15. You are required to attend the lecture on March 14 by Pnina Lahav, “Golda Meier: Woman and Leader.” The lecture will take place at 7:00 p.m. at the Pyle Center, Vandenberg Auditorium, 702 Langdon St.

Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, pp. 63-139.

Rakovsky, *My Life as a Radical Jewish Woman*, pp. 119-196.

\*Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Indiana Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 11-84.

#### **Week 9 (March 20-22): American Jews in the New Deal Order**

#### course packet

\*Henry L. Feingold, *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920-1945* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 189-224.

\*Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 201-232.

\*Beth Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression* (Yale Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 103-135.

#### **Week 10 (March 27-29): Arab Nationalism and Zionism**

(Note: second assignment due on March 29, beginning of class.)

#### course packet

\*Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (Stanford Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 219-352.

## **Week 11 (April 3-5): Spring Break**

### **Unit 4: Catastrophe and Recovery**

## **Week 12 (April 10-12): The Establishment of the State of Israel**

### course packet

\*Benny Morris, *1948: The First Arab-Israeli War* (Yale Univ. Press, 2008), pp. 1-74, 392-420.

### documents

#The Arab Case for Palestine: Evidence Submitted by the Arab Office, Jerusalem (1946)  
#Ha-shomer Ha-zair, "The Case for a Bi-National Palestine" (1946)  
#Moshe Shertok, "Bi-Nationalism is Unworkable" (1947)

## **Week 13 (April 17-19): Classes Cancelled for "The Question of Zionism: A Symposium on the Left and Its Relationship to Israel."**

See the following link for details: <http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/events/symposium/>

## **Week 14: (April 24-26): American Jews during the Cold War**

### course packet

\*Stuart Svonkin, *Jews against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 113-193.

### documents

#Louis Harap, "How Shall We Fight McCarthyism?" (1953)  
#Louis Harap, testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (1953)

### **Unit 5: The Wages of Power**

## **Week 15 (May 1-3): The Six-Day War and Its Aftermath**

### course packet

\*Amnon Rubenstein, *The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunism and Back* (Schocken Books, 1984), pp. 76-167.

\*Rafik Halabi, *The West Bank Story: An Israeli Arab's View of Both Sides of a Tangled Conflict* (Harcourt Brace Javonovich, 1982), pp. 138-166, 202-231.

### documents

\*The Likud Party Platform (1977)

## **Week 16 (May 8-10): The Rise of the Political Right in Israel and the United States** (Note: third assignment due on May 10)

Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, pp. 141-145.

course packet

\*J.J. Goldberg, *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment* (Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1996), pp. 133-162, 197-304.