Course description and goals
This class will survey major trends in Jewish life in Russia and the Soviet Union since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. We will start with the discussion of the affinity between the Jews and socialism and then explore changing policies of the Soviet government towards the Jews, Jewish migrations from shtetl to metropolis, the role of the Jews in the arts and sciences, the resurgence of antisemitism, the rise of the Zionist movement, the peculiar Soviet Jewish identity tied not to religion but to more general cultural practices, and the ultimate emigration of the majority of the Soviet Jews as the USSR was coming to an end. We will examine what was “Jewish” and what was “Soviet” in the Soviet Jewish experience, as well as how it differed from the 20th century experience of Israeli and American Jews. This class will also provide a window into life in a state-socialist society more generally.

Required texts
All three books will be available on reserves at College Library. Additional required readings are posted on Canvas.

Course requirements, assignments, and grades
This is an intermediate undergraduate class, and I aim for an even mixture of lecture and seminar-style discussion. Everybody is expected to contribute to the discussion in each class in a way that is informed by the readings. Therefore, please do the readings before class. The readings are listed in the order I recommend doing them.

Obviously, if you aren’t in class, you can’t contribute to the discussion and receive participation credit. Therefore, I expect everyone to attend all classes (to be on time and stay for the duration of class) unless there are serious extenuating circumstances, of which you should inform me right away.
To prepare for meaningful and productive classroom discussion of the readings, you will complete 10 reading journals throughout the semester. Ideally, you should do one journal entry a week, but you’re of course free to spread them out as fits your schedule. These journals should be based on one day’s readings (not entire week’s). I will provide some general guidance as to what those journals should focus on. The journals entries should be submitted on Canvas no later than 10 AM of the class for which you’re reading. Each journal entry will count as 1.5 points toward final grades (15 points in total).

In addition to these regular reading notes, you will complete several more formal (and formally graded) assignments. Specific instructions for each will be distributed 2–3 weeks prior to due dates. Assignments will be fairly short: 5–7 pages. They are:
1) oral histories/interviews with Jews from the former Soviet Union (I can help you with finding and contacting interviewees);
2) analysis of coverage of the Jewish life in the Soviet Union by Western media;
3) a poster (or multimedia) presentation of a “room in a museum of Soviet Jews”;
4) “catalogue notes” to accompany the “museum room.”

Grade breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading journals</td>
<td>15 (10 x 1.5)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral histories/interviews</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>October 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media analysis</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>November 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project presentations</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>December 7, December 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project write-up</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>December 18</td>
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Late work is accepted at my discretion; under no circumstances will extensions be given post factum, i.e. after due date passes.

Classroom community

We come to the classroom with varied experiences and sources of information. This is one of our greatest resources, but it can also present challenges. In the spirit of an inclusive pedagogy, I request the following of you as well as myself:

1) Respect the experiences of everyone in the classroom. Our gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, social class, etc. intersect to impact how we are treated by society as well as what we have learned in our lives.
2) Work to identify misinformation in a humane way. We can argue about the merits of an idea, but let’s not attack each other for holding such ideas.
3) With #2 in mind, we do have an obligation to correct misinformation, to actively combat myths and stereotypes, and to pursue an end to injustice.
4) Maintain confidentiality when asked.
Office hours and email
I hold regular office hours and will also be happy to see you by appointment at other times if you
cannot make the office hours. You are welcome to come talk to me about the readings,
assignments, sociology in general, or any other things I can be helpful with.

You also can use email to communicate with me (please DO NOT communicate with me
through Canvas). I will try to respond to messages promptly, but you should always allow 24
hours (and up to 48 during weekends) for my replies. Therefore, do not wait till the last minute
with a pressing question or an important concern! Emails should be limited to questions of
clarification that can be answered in a sentence or two. For anything requiring a detailed
response or a back-and-forth dialogue, please attend my office hours.

Peer communication
For some types of questions (like due dates or how to use the course website) or to obtain notes
for a missed class it is often best to check with a peer first. (And I am always happy to step in if
fellow students can’t answer your questions.) Please exchange contact information with two
students sitting near you on the first day.

Electronics
I do not allow audio or video recording of lectures without my written permission. Under no
circumstances can students post audio or video recordings on the internet. Furthermore, the use
of computers, tablets, or phones is not permitted in class, unless you do your readings
electronically. However, even in this case all note taking should be by hand. Make sure your
phones are ON SILENT (not vibrate) and PUT AWAY.

Academic honesty
I consider plagiarism and cheating more generally to be very serious offenses; academic
misconduct of any sort will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about what constitutes
academic misconduct, you must consult http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/.
University’s Writing Center has a lot of helpful information regarding plagiarism, in particular:
http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html. You are expected to be familiar with
these guidelines before you submit any written work in this course; lack of familiarity with these
rules in no way constitutes an excused for acts of misconduct. Any instance of misconduct will
be dealt with strictly according to university policy.

All written assignments will be run through Turnitin.com to check for
originality/plagiarism.

Special considerations
Students who require special accommodations for in-class exams or any other assignments due
to disabilities, religious observances, or sports-team events need to let me know about them as
early as possible, preferably before the end of the second full week of the semester.

Sexual harassment and misconduct
Professional conduct and appropriate behavior are critical to create a safe learning environment
for students and instructors alike. Here is a statement about sexual harassment from the
University:
What Is Sexual Harassment?
Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:
• submission to such conduct is a condition of employment, academic progress, or participation in a university program; or
• submission to or rejection of such conduct influences employment, academic or university program decisions; or
• the conduct interferes with an employee’s work or a student’s academic career, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work, learning, or program environment.

Tangible Action or Quid Pro Quo (This for That) Sexual Harassment and Hostile Environment Sexual Harassment are both illegal and unacceptable.

Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights
The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the department chair, 8128 Social Science (jraymo@ssc.wisc.edu).

Departmental learning objectives
Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content this course covers, I have designed it to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of Sociology:
• Conduct research and analyze data (quantitative or qualitative). Although professional-quality research requires graduate-level training, we expect that all undergraduate students taking sociology courses will be able to conduct small-scale research in which they formulate a research question, collect data, analyze results, and draw conclusions.
• Critically evaluate published research. Students in sociology classes will be able to read and evaluate published research.
• Communicate skillfully. In sociology classes students write papers and make oral presentations that build arguments and assess evidence in a clear and effective manner.
• Critically think about society and social processes. Students taking sociology courses can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the “why” and “how” of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.
• See things from a global and historical perspective. Sociologists learn about different cultures, groups, and societies across both time and place. They are aware of the diversity of backgrounds and experiences across space and time. They understand the ways events and processes in one place and time are linked to those happening in other places and times. Additionally, the course meets the following learning objectives set forth by the Center for Jewish Studies:
• expanded knowledge of Jewish history, culture, philosophy, arts, religious practice, and politics in both the past and present;
disposition of increased appreciation for diverse world views, value systems, and interactions between Jews and non-Jews, minorities and majorities, on campus, in Wisconsin, the U.S., and across the globe.

I reserve the right to make any changes to the syllabus as deemed necessary over the course of the semester, with proper advance notice, of course.

Class Schedule

SEPT 7 – no class

Sept 12 – Introduction to the course; Soviet Jews in historical and comparative perspective
S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Jewish Historical Experience in a Comparative Perspective* (SUNY Press, 1992), selections (pp. 249–259)

Sept 14 – Who/what makes a Jew?
Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (Schocken Books, 1965), selections (59–141)
Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), selections (pp. 1–13)

Sept 19 – Identities, groups, boundaries

Sept 21 – no class (Rosh Hashanah)

Sept 26 – Individual memory and collective remembering
James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), selections (pp. 4–24, 30–66)

Sept 28 – Individual memory and collective remembering (continued)

Oct 3 – The appeal of socialism
Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton University Press, 2004), selections (pp. 144–188)

**Oct 5 – Jewish education/education of Jews in the Soviet Union**
Elias Shulman, *A History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union* (Ktav Publishing House, 1971), chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 67–96)

**Oct 10 – From the Pale of Settlement to collective farms**

**Oct 12 – Yiddish language and culture**
David Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture 1918–1930*, chapter 5 (pp. 134–178)
Benjamin Harshav, *The Moscow Yiddish Theater: Art on Stage in the Time of Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2008), selections (pp. 90–98, 132–160)

**Oct 17 – WWII and the Holocaust**

**Due: oral histories/interviews, by 10:00 AM on Oct. 19**

**Oct 19 – WWII and the Holocaust (continued)**
Lev Simkin, “The Holocaust Began in Ukraine,” Kennan Institute/Wilson Center, June 20, 2016

Oct 24 – Film: Commissar (1967)
Zvi Y. Gitelman, A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present, chapter 5 (pp. 144–173)

Oct 26 – Film: Commissar (1967) (continued)

Oct 31 – Jewish life at work
Anna Shternshis, When Sonia Met Boris: An Oral History of Jewish Life under Stalin (Oxford University Press, 2017), chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 111–158)

Nov 2 – Jewish life at home
Anna Shternshis, When Sonia Met Boris: An Oral History of Jewish Life under Stalin (Oxford University Press, 2017), chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 34–74)
Anna Shternshis, “Humor and Russian Jewish Identity,” in In A Club of Their Own: Jewish Humorists and the Contemporary World, edited by Eli Lederhendler and Gabriel N. Finder (Oxford University Press, 2016), (pp. 101–112)

Nov 7 – Soviet Jews and religion
Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, Doubly Chosen: Jewish Identity, the Soviet Intelligentsia, and the Russian Orthodox Church (University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), chapter 1 (pp. 3–32)
Mordechai Altshuler, Religion and Jewish Identity in the Soviet Union, 1941–1964 (Brandeis University Press, 2012), chapter 14 (pp. 183–191)

Nov 9 – Antisemitism

Nov 14 – Soviet Jews as seen from behind the Iron Curtain
Elie Wiesel, The Jews of Silence
Nov 16 – The Jewish revival movement

Nov 21 – Refuseniks

Nov 23 – no class (Thanksgiving)

Nov 28 – Growing up Jewish and coming of age in late Soviet Union
Anya von Bremzen, *Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking* (Crown Publishers, 2013), (pp. 147–197)
Maxim D. Shrayer, “The Only Jewish Kid in His Moscow Class,” *Forward*, November 29, 2013

Due: media analysis, by 10:00 AM on Nov. 30

Nov 30 – The experience of immigration

Dec 5 – Post-Soviet Jews on three continents
+ at least one of the following two:
+ optional

**Dec 7 – presentations of final projects**

**Dec 12 – presentations of final projects**

**Due: final project – museum catalogue notes, by 12:30 PM on Dec. 18**