

CET Syllabus of Record



Program: CET Prague

Course Title: Jewish Life in Contemporary Europe

Course Code: PR/JWST 362

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

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

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites/Requirements: None

Description

The main aim of this course is to encourage debate and reflection on the relevance of the Jewish experience in and for contemporary Europe. Zygmunt Bauman famously described the Jews as “the pioneers of the postmodern condition”, whose most significant contribution to current European culture was exposing all the contradictions and ambiguities that currently shape the life of all Europeans.

Jewish diaspora is often perceived as an archetypal diaspora and Jews as a perennial minority. For millennia, European Jewish culture has represented “the other” for Europe, necessary for Europe’s self-definition. At the same time, however, in the narrower sense of Judaism, and in the broader dimension of Jewish culture, Jews were at the birth and development of the modern European cultural sphere as we know it today. This phenomenon of the dual position of the Jewish minority in relation to the majority, which is not entirely unusual for Jewish Diaspora communities, manifested itself most distinctly on the European continent.

This unique Jewish experience of ambiguous position of insider/outsider may provide valuable views on contemporary European reality and identity crises. During the course, main common denominators of contemporary Jewish life, such as an intense confrontation with the heritage of the Holocaust and unrelenting anti-Semitism on the one hand and on the other hand, high recognition and appreciation of traditional Jewish learning and culture by the majority of European society, will be discussed. This discussion will bring about the following questions: how does the European Jewish minority differ from other Jewish diasporas outside of Europe in the sense of belonging? Is there an emerging European Jewish identity on the backdrop of particular national identities or do European Jews nowadays rather perceive themselves as global citizens? Are members of minority groups in general, Jews in particular, the most persuaded supranational Europeans? To what extent are relations between the Jewish minority and the non-Jewish majority nowadays “normalized”? To what extent are Jews and non-Jews inclined to share a culture and politics of memory regarding World War II and the Shoah? The course will explore these questions by focusing on selected countries of Europe.

CET Syllabus of Record

This course is designed for Jewish Studies, Religion, History, and Sociology students as well as those interested in questions of nationalism, racial prejudice, and inter-faith relations in a European context.

Objectives

In this course students

- Gain an understanding of the complex and multifaceted Jewish experience in contemporary Europe
- Understand the interactions between Jewish and non-Jewish communities
- Learn the ways in which these various communities create a multilayered sense of “European identity”

Course Requirements

- Attendance and active participation in class is required
- Students prepare short presentations on the readings with each student responsible for introducing the readings (average 20 pages per reading per week) to the class and initiating the group discussion
- Students also have to follow news on Jewish life in Europe throughout the semester, keep a running media journal and present one such theme to the class
- Students write a final paper that contextualizes contemporary Jewish life in Europe
- Students are expected to abide by CET’s Attendance Policy.

Methods of Evaluation

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Enthusiastic class participation | 30% |
| • Oral presentation on the readings | 20% |
| • Oral presentation on the news and media journal | 20% |
| • Final paper | 30% |

Primary Texts

Ben-Moshe, Danny and Segev, Zohar. Israel, the Diaspora, and Jewish Identity, Sussex Academic Press, 2007.

Ben-Rafael, Eliezer, “New Jews in Europe”. In Becoming Jewish: New Jews and Emerging Jewish Communities in a Globalized World, Parfitt, Tudor – Fisher, Netanel (eds.). Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, pp. 120-138.

DellaPergola, Sergio “Jewish Demography in the European Union – Virtuous and Vicious Paths.” In Being Jewish in Central Europe Today, Porat, Dina – Holý, Jiří – Fireberg, Haim – Zoufalá, Marcela (eds.). Jüdische Kultur: Studien zur Geistesgeschichte, Religion und Literatur. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2017. Upcoming volume.

CET Syllabus of Record

Gebert, Konstanty "Post-Communist Europe: Twenty-Five Years after the Collapse of the Ancien Régime," Israel Journal Of Foreign Affairs Vol. 8, Iss. 2, 2014.

Gitelman, Zvi Y. – Kosmin, Barry Alexander - Kovács András (eds.) New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond, Central European University Press, 2003.

Gitelman, Zvi Y. Religion or Ethnicity? Jewish Identities in Evolution. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2009.

Glöckner, Olaf - Fireberg, Haim (eds.) Being Jewish in 21st-Century Germany, Series: Europäisch-jüdische Studien – Beiträge 16, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015.

Glöckner, Olaf "Europe, Israel, the Jewish Communities, and Growing Antisemitism". In Handbook of Israel: Major Debates, Ben-Rafael, Eliezer - Schoeps, Julius H. - Sternberg, Yitzhak - Glöckner, Olaf (eds.). Series: De Gruyter Reference, 2016.

Gruber, Ruth Ellen Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe, An S. Mark Taper Foundation Book in Jewish Studies, 2002.

Judt, Tony "From the House of the Dead: An Essay on Modern European Memory." In Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945, Penguin Books, 2006, pp. 803-835.

Khanin, Vladimir (Ze'ev) "Russians," "Sephardi" and "Israelis": The Changing Structure of Austrian Jewry. In Being Jewish in Central Europe Today, Porat, Dina – Holý, Jiří – Fireberg, Haim – Zoufalá, Marcela (eds.). Jüdische Kultur: Studien zur Geistesgeschichte, Religion und Literatur. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2017. Upcoming volume.

Porat, Dina. "The International Working Definition of Antisemitism and Its Detractors," Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs V: 3, 2011.

Roberman, Sveta "Haunting images: stereotypes of Jewishness among Russian Jewish immigrants in Germany". East European Jewish Affairs Vol. 42, Iss. 3, 2012.

Rosner, Shmuel – Ruskay, John Exploring the Jewish Spectrum in a time of fluid identity, Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI), 2016.

Shain Yossi – Fainberg, Sarah "French Jewry and the Israelization of Judaism". In Handbook of Israel: Major Debates. Ben-Rafael, Eliezer - Schoeps, Julius H. - Sternberg, Yitzhak - Glöckner, Olaf (eds.). Series: De Gruyter Reference, 2016.

Wasserstein, Bernard Vanishing Diaspora: The Jews in Europe since 1945, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

CET Syllabus of Record

Webber, Jonathan (ed.) Jewish Identities in the New Europe, Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994.

Zoufalá, Marcela “Being Jewish in Europe in the 21st Century: Jewish Identity and Contemporary Antisemitism,” in: Zoufalá, Marcela (ed.): Jewish Studies in the 21st Century: Prague – Europe – World. Jüdische Kultur: Studien zur Geistesgeschichte, Religion und Literatur. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2014, pp. 213-223.

Outline of Course Content

WEEK 1

Course overview and introduction
Europe in the 21st century: current state of affairs

WEEK 2

Historical background: Jewish communities in Europe after WWII till today.
Main differences between West and East. Post-Communist Transition in Central and Eastern Europe.

WEEK 3

Demographic and sociological overview: Contemporary Jewish population trends in the European diaspora. Intermarriage, conversion, “cultural corrosion” etc.
Image of “the Other”.

WEEK 4

Exploring the term of Jewish identity(ies) and identification
The Fluidity of Jewishness

WEEK 5

Self-perception of European Jews: an ethnic group, a religious minority, or “just” a members of European societies?

WEEK 6

Jews in Germany and Austria
“Performing Jewishness”

WEEK 7

Jews in Hungary

WEEK 8

North African and Ashkenazi Jews in France
Cultural “Israelization” of Judaism – Case of France

CET Syllabus of Record

WEEK 9

European Jewish Communities and Growing Antisemitism

WEEK 10

Relations with other Minority Groups

WEEK 11

Israel and Diaspora: "Center of the Jewish world" vs. "Jewish periphery"

Curious phenomenon: Israelis in Berlin

WEEK 12

"Contemporary Prospects for European Jews: Between Assimilation, Integration and 'Jewish Renaissance'"

New Jews: Globalizing Jewishness

WEEK 13

Summary of the discussed topics

Final paper