

## **The History of Antisemitism**

EUH 4930, Section

Wednesday 1:55-4:55

Professor Mitchell Hart

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Office Hours: Monday and Friday, 3-4 pm., and by appointment

This seminar explores the history of anti-Jewish discourse and images, mainly in Europe. It is largely a course in intellectual and cultural history, focused on the production of ideas and their role in the construction of individual and collective notions of the self. What role did anti-Semitism play in the self-conception of ancient Greeks and Romans, early and medieval Christians, modern Europeans and Americans? We will begin in the ancient period and end in the early twentieth century. The course will not deal with Nazi Germany and the Holocaust directly, but certainly serves to familiarize students with the themes directly relevant to a study of the 1930s and 40s. Readings will consist of primary source material and secondary scholarly monographs.

### **Required Books:**

*Antisemitism: A History*, edited by Albert Lindemann and Richard Levy

Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*

William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Antisemite and Jew*

Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor About the Jews: Antisemitism, Conspiracy, and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

These texts should be purchased as part of the course requirement. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* is available online for free.

There will also be articles that are part of the required reading assignments. These have been uploaded onto the Canvas website for this course.

### **Seminar Requirements:**

1) Attendance at the weekly seminar meetings is mandatory. You will be allowed to miss one seminar without penalty; anything beyond that will affect your final evaluation and grade.

2) Everyone, each week, is expected to come to class having read the week's assignment, prepared to engage in discussion and debate.

**Every week each student is expected to bring at least TWO discussion questions to the seminar meeting drawn from the week's reading(s). We will use these questions to prompt the discussions. I will randomly call on students to offer a question, so during any week you may be called upon to read out your question.**

A seminar is not a lecture class. The latter is by definition more passive, as you sit and listen to the instructor impart information. A successful seminar depends upon your active engagement with the material and your desire and willingness to engage in discussions and debates. At times I will "lecture," but my hope is that the majority of our time in class will be taken up with discussion.

Note (especially if you have not previously been enrolled in a seminar such as this): your final grade depends in part on the impression you make in the seminar meetings. This is not readily quantifiable, but it is nonetheless the case that over the course of the semester your performance is being evaluated. The criteria for success are not merely participation, but intelligent and constructive participation, based on your reading of assigned material and considered reflection upon it.

**3) Research Paper:** Each member of the seminar must complete a research paper (length around 15-20 double-spaced pages). This paper will count significantly towards your final grade.

This research paper is intended to allow you to delve more deeply into a specific aspect of the topic that interests you.

Note: Within the first three weeks of the semester (no later than January 23), you **must** come speak with me in my office about your paper topic and get it approved. I also want a 1-2 paragraph précis of your paper, which you must email to me in the following week or so. These are requirements. If you do not consult with me and get your research paper topic approved, your paper will not be accepted.

While I will not require that you show me drafts of your paper, I strongly suggest that you show me your written work along the way. I will read anything—from an outline to a full draft—that you bring to me, comment on it, and then return it to you for revision.

The final draft of your essay will be **due no later than April 19 (though I will of course accept final drafts before that date)**. It must be typed, double-spaced, 12

pt. type, regular margins. *Grammar and spelling count*. So, too, does your adherence to the rules of historical writing, the skills learned in your historical practicum (e.g., proper footnoting).

**Important Note:** In writing papers, be certain to give proper credit whenever you use words, phrases, ideas, arguments, and conclusions drawn from someone else's work. Failure to give credit by quoting and/or footnoting is PLAGIARISM and is unacceptable. Copying sentences, paragraphs, entire pages of someone else's writing is plagiarism. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the seminar immediately and more serious punishment may follow.

This is a serious infraction of the University's rules of academic conduct, so do avoid making this mistake. If you are uncertain at all about what constitutes plagiarism, come and speak with me and/or see the University's policy in your student handbook.

**IN ADDITION:** Each of you will be required to give a presentation (twenty minutes or so) summarizing your research sometime during the last weeks of class. This presentation will count as part of your final grade. More information will be provided as the time approaches.

**Seminar Schedule:** The seminar is divided into sections. After the "introduction" we will proceed from the ancient to the modern period, spending as much time on each section as necessary. If you are attending the seminar on a regular basis and paying attention, you should have no trouble knowing where we are and what you should be reading. I will announce the readings on a weekly basis. If you are uncertain at any time what you are supposed to be reading for any given upcoming session, please just email me and ask.

## **Introduction:**

Readings:

Lindemann, "The Jewish Question," in *Antisemitism: A History*

Shulamit Volkov, "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code" (pdf file in Canvas)

## **1: The Ancient World**

Readings:

Benjamin Isaac, "The Ancient Mediterranean and the Pre-Christian Era," in *Antisemitism: A History*

Readings in the folder “Antisemitism Antiquity” in Canvas

## **2: The Beginnings of Christianity**

Readings:

Rosemary Ruether, excerpt from *Faith and Fratricide* (Xeroxed handout)

Philip Cunningham, “Jews and Christians from the Time of Christ to Constantine’s Reign,” in *Antisemitism: A History*

Readings in Canvas folder “Early Christianity”

## **3. The Middle Ages**

Readings:

Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*

Alex Novikoff, “The Middle Ages,” in *Antisemitism: A History*

Optional: Canvas reading in folder “Middle Ages”

## **4. The Reformation and Early Modern Period**

Readings:

Excerpt from Christopher Probst, *Demonizing the Jews* (chapter 2, pdf file in Canvas)

Ralph Keen, “Antisemitism in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods,” in *Antisemitism: A History*

William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (available online)

Reading in Canvas folder “Ren. And Reformation”

## **5. Modernity: Enlightenment, Emancipation and Counter-Emancipation, Nationalism, Racism**

Readings:

Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor About the Jews*

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*

*Antisemitism: A History*, chapters 6-15 and conclusion (pages 94 on)

Readings in Canvas folder "Modernity"