

University of Florida

Jews in the Muslim World: Modern Times

JST3930 / ASH3931 / REL3938

Spring 2026

MWF 6 (12:50 PM – 1:40 PM)

Instructor: Yehoshua Ecker

yehoshua.ecker@ufl.edu

381 Dauer Hall (352-273-5555)

Office hours: Wednesday 4:30pm-5:30pm and by appointment

Zoom meeting also available

Course description

Jews in the Muslim World surveys the history of Jews in Muslim societies and under Muslim rule, from the conquests of the 7th century to the dispersions and transformations of the 20th century, using the political history and chronology of the Muslim world as a scaffold for outlining and contextualizing the Jewish experience. The modern period in the Muslim World brought unprecedented changes and shifts that redefined Jewish life and experience. With the rise of European imperialism and colonialism, the modern state, nationalism, competing ideological trends, technological innovations, globalization and international organizations, every aspect of past centuries was challenged and redefined. The course traces this age of change through multiple defining events from the 18th to the 20th centuries, including the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel.

Student learning outcomes

- Students will be familiar with the chronological contours and geographies of Muslim history.
- Students will be familiar with the general dynamics of the modern experience in Muslim states and societies and their impact on Jewish populations.
- Students will be able to:
 - identify the stages and development of Jewish history under Islam, particularly in recent centuries.
 - identify major shifts and changes in Jewish history after 1700.
 - evaluate statements about Jews in the Muslim world and Jewish-Muslim relations in this period.
 - evaluate the impact of past events on modern developments.

Course outline

1	Introductions
2	Outline of Muslim history and Jewish experience – the first millenium

The long 18th Century The Old Order and Early Shifts			
3	The centrality of Ottoman Jews	Geography, demography, stability	Scheindlin, 123-136
		The importance of the Holy Land (Rabbinic innovation, codification, mysticism, messianism, pilgrimage & immigration)	Lehmann, introduction; David, EJ2;
		The growth of intercommunal networks	
4	Communities beyond the Ottomans heartlands & their links to the Ottoman center	Jews in Iran and their diasporas	Meddeb & Stora, part II, ch.3a; Cambridge 7, ch.39 (Moreen)
		Models of interaction in Morocco: Protected inferiors, Courtiers, Agents, Merchants, settlement and culture	Schroeter; Meddeb & Stora, part II, ch.2
		Between Imperial & Local Realities: Tunisia, Algeria, Yemen, Kurdistan, Crimea, Bukhara	Meddeb & Stora, part II, ch.3b-c; Cambridge 7, ch.38 (Parfitt)*; Laskier-Lev, ch.7

From the 19th to the 20th Century New Global Order: From Accelerated Changes in Technology, Culture and Politics to New Imperial Centers European Imperial Networks, Reforms, Emigration, Challenges of nationalism & modern state building			
5-6	The expansion of new empires and Ottoman retreats	Inroads in the Muslim and Jewish worlds: Habsburg and Russian territorial gains; French and British global empires; Churches, hospices, hospitals, missions and schools; Pilgrims & tourists, clerics & missionaries, experts, soldiers & settlers	Stillman 1979, ch.5; Stillman 1991, ch.1-2

		Diminished territories and power: regional independence movements, protection claims of non-Muslim powers, interventions, conquest, colonial rule	
	Modernization, or the impact of accelerated changes in technology, culture and politics	New interactions between Muslim societies and the non-Muslim world: exposure, communications, imitation, adaptation, technological innovation, reforms, external pressures, rejection and selective adoption	Meddeb & Stora, part II, ch.4;
7-10	Political, legal and social upheavals and realignments	Moving towards the all-powerful centralized partially-secularized nation-state model	Stillman 1991, ch.3-4; Meri, ch.2
		Legal, administrative, fiscal, ideological, professional, demographic, educational and cultural shifts	Meddeb & Stora, part III, ch.1a;
		Nationalism, state-building, identities & loyalties – multiple trajectories, new options, new threats	Stillman 1991, ch.5-6; Herf, ch.1; Meddeb & Stora, part III, ch.3d, 5c

	From the 20th to the 21st Century Globalization: Multiple Nations, Diasporas, Exchanges and Interactions A new global perspective: From Jews in the Muslim world to Jewish-Muslim relations		
11-12	Endings and new beginnings – dispersion and restructuring	Waves of migration, adaptations to new political realities, remnants and surviving communities	Stillman 1991, ch.7; Laskier & Lev, ch. 4; Cambridge 8, ch.8 (Tsur)*; Meddeb & Stora, part III, ch.3e, 4*;
		New ideologies, new perceptions	Newby (2003)
13	Jewish-Muslim relations	Global perspectives	
14	Conclusions		

Readings include Chapters from the following:

Main texts

[MS] Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora (eds.), A History of Jewish Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[C] The Cambridge History of Judaism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
Vol. 7 (2017): Jonathan Karp, Adam Sutcliffe (eds.), The Early Modern World, 1500–1815
Vol. 8 (2017): Mitchell B. Hart, Tony Michels (eds.), The Modern World, 1815–2000

[S1] Norman A. Stillman, The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979).

[S2] Norman Stillman, The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991).

Background reading

[E1] Vernon O. Egger, A History of the Muslim World to 1750: The Making of a Civilization, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[E2] Vernon O. Egger, A History of the Muslim World since 1260: The Making of a Global Community, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018).

William L. Cleveland, Martin P. Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East (7th ed., Routledge, 2024) [or any other edition].

Woolf Institute, Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations: A Timeline, Online:
<http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/uploads/timeline%20-%20jcm.pdf>

Additional texts

Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries [original title: The Jews of the Balkans] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Abraham David, "Sheluhei Erez Israel", Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd Ed., Vol.18 (2007), pp. 446-452.

Judah David Eisenstein, Moise Franco, (Gotthard Deutsch, ed.), "Pilgrimage", Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. 10 (1905), pp. 35-38. Online:
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12149-pilgrimage>

Jeffrey Herf, Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009).

H.Z. Hirschberg, A History of the Jews in North Africa, 2nd ed., English translation (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

Michael M. Laskier, and Yaakov Lev (eds), The Divergence of Judaism and Islam: Interdependence, Modernity, and Political Turmoil (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), Ch.7: Bat-Zion Iraqi Klorman, "Yemen: Muslim and Jewish Interactions in the Tribal Sphere", pp. 125-142.

Matthias B. Lehmann, Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

Matthias B. Lehmann, Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Ottoman Sephardic Culture (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006).

Avigdor Levy, "Ottoman Empire", in: Judith Baskin, ed. Cambridge Dictionary of Judaism and Jewish Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 465-468.

Avigdor Levy, ed. The Jews of the Ottoman Empire (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1994).

Bernard Lewis, The Jews of Islam, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Josef Meri (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations (London and New York: Routledge. 2016).

Gordon D. Newby, "Judaism and Islam", in: Richard C. Martin, ed., Encyclopedia of Islam & the Muslim World, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), pp. 380-384.

Nissim Rejwan, The Last Jews in Baghdad: remembering a lost homeland (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), Appendix A: "The Jews of Iraq: A Brief Historical Sketch", pp. 209-217.

Aron Rodrigue, "The Ottoman Diaspora: The Rise and Fall of Ladino Literary Culture", in David Biale, ed., The Cultures of the Jews: A New History (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), pp. 863-885.

Raymond P. Scheindlin, A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Daniel J. Schroeter, "Jewish Communities of Morocco: History and Identity," in: Vivian B. Mann, ed., Morocco: Jews and Art in a Muslim Land (London: Merrell, in association with The Jewish Museum, New York, 2000), pp. 25-54.

* Original documents and additional short texts will be incorporated in class discussions.

Grading

Attendance and active participation: 36

Weekly assignments: 36

Take-home Midterm and Final: 36+36

(Extra points for excellent contributions and work)

Weekly assignments

Weekly assignments will be discussed in class and a list will be available on Canvas.

Please submit by Tuesday. Detailed instructions for the assignments will be provided in class / on Canvas.

Midterm and Final

Detailed instructions and dates will be provided in class and on Canvas.

Syllabus Changes

The syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced in advance as much as possible. Changes and adjustments are to be expected.

Class Policies

Attendance: Attendance is required and will be taken at every class meeting: please write your name and sign the attendance sheet. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams,

assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation. Read the university attendance policies here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. *When possible, please let me know in advance if you will not be attending a class session.* You are allowed up to 3 undocumented absences, after which any unexcused absence will affect your grade. Excused absences include documented medical emergency, family crisis, military service, university sanctioned or official activities.

Email: As a matter of policy, UFL related communications are delegated to your UFL email. Information concerning the course, especially changes in venue, readings, assignments, etc., will be disseminated via Canvas announcements. Please make sure that your contact information is updated and that you are signed up to receive notification of course announcements. Email or Canvas messages are the preferred form of communication (I am usually away from the phone). I will usually see your message within 2 working days.

Turning in assignments: Students are required to provide all assignments in digital form, by the date and time they are due (extra time in case of documented emergencies or extreme circumstances will be considered).

Late Papers and Tests: Tests and papers will not be accepted late without medical documentation or review of specific circumstances.

Electronic devices: All electronic devices are allowed, as long as you use them for class purposes or for other necessary purposes (emergency calls and updates, essential time sensitive communications). Please make sure they do not interfere with the class or disturb other students, do not emit high volume sounds, and are set to reasonably silent mode.

Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code: The University of Florida holds its students to the highest standards. Students are encouraged to read the University of Florida Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (Regulation 4.040), so they are aware of these standards. The University principles address respect for people and property, for fairness, for Laws and Regulations, and for academic integrity. Any

violation of the Student Honor Code will result in a referral to the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution and may result in academic sanctions and further student conduct action.

The University of Florida Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (UF Regulation 4.040) can be found at these links:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

<https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/>

<https://policy.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UF-Regulation-4.040.pdf>

The processes of applying the codes can be found at the Dean of Students Office website:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-honor-code/>

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Students commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Student Honor Code. Any Student who becomes aware of a violation of the Student Honor Code is encouraged to report the violation to the appropriate University Official. Click the links above to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: "A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another person or Entity." To avoid plagiarism students must give proper attribution to any source used or consulted (oral or written materials, published or unpublished), and clearly mark and attribute direct quotes. Students should follow their faculty's policy on collaboration, should understand how to properly cite sources, and should not give nor receive an improper academic advantage in any manner through any medium. Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a failing grade.

Grading Policies and Scale

Current university grades and grading policies are explained here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

The grading scale used for this class:

	A	93-100+	A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+	68-69	D	63-67	D-	60-62
F	<60				

UF academic policies and resources

<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

Technical issues

To resolve technical issues visit the UF helpdesk website: <https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/>, or call 352-392-4357.