

## HIST-245 MODERN JEWISH CIVILIZATION



“Over Vitebsk” by Marc Chagall. (1915-1920). Museum of Modern Art, New York.

On the night of June 7-8, 2001, at a cocktail reception at New York’s Jewish Museum, Chagall’s 1914 eight-by-ten-inch “Study for Over Vitebsk” was stolen. A few days later the Museum received a ransom letter from the hitherto unknown International Committee for Art and Peace demanding peace between the Israelis and Palestinians in return for the painting. In February 2002, a Topeka, Kansas postal employee unwrapped a package marked undeliverable and discovered a painting. Seeing museum stickers on the back, the employee searched the F.B.I.’s website for stolen art, and identified the painting. It was then returned to the Jewish Museum in Manhattan where Chagall’s granddaughter Bella Meyer, an expert in his work, certified its authenticity. From there it was returned to its home in St. Petersburg’s Russian Museum. The painting’s theft inspired the 2006 novel *The World to Come* by Dara Horn.

The paragraph above reflects some of the major themes of the modern Jewish experience which we will study this semester. When our course opens, in 1500, the major Jewish communities in the world lived in the Turkish Empire and in Poland. There, while Jewish men prayed three times a day and scholars studied Talmud, their wives watched over their kosher kitchens as they nursed the new babies they gave birth to every year or two. In 2010, in the largest Jewish communities in the world, America and Israel, only a tiny percentage of Jews follow these historic patterns. This course, *Modern Jewish Civilization*, explores the dramatic changes of the modern Jewish experience.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

1. Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Slave*
2. Paul Mendes-Flohr, Jehuda Reinharz, eds. *The Jew in the Modern World*, 2d ed.
3. Eli Barnavi. *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*.
4. Michael Brenner, *Zionism: A Brief History*

Recommended: Raymond Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. Class attendance and participation, 10 percent of final grade.  
*If you are not in class, you cannot participate. More than 6 absences constitute grounds for failure. If you do not keep up with the readings, your participation grade will reflect this.*
2. Voices of Terezin Project. See assignment. Reaction papers due on a rolling basis. 15 percent of final grade.
3. One midterm examination, tentatively scheduled for February 22nd, 20 percent of final grade.
4. One semester paper. Assignment to follow, 30 percent of final grade. Paper topics are due March 1st. Papers are due April 22nd.
5. Final exam, 25 percent of the final grade, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 to 11:00 a.m.

**OFFICE HOURS:** Battelle-Tompkins 155; Mondays 11:15-4:15, and Thursdays 11:15-12:15.

**PHONE and VOICE MAIL:** 202-885-2425. **E-mail:** [pnadell@american.edu](mailto:pnadell@american.edu)

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you acknowledge your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the Academic Integrity Code in general or as it relates to our course.

**TECHNOLOGY DURING CLASS:** I am, as much as anyone, a fan of the new technologies and welcome appropriate use during class. I define appropriate use to mean that you may use a laptop to take notes, to access documents on e-reserves, and, AT MY REQUEST, to retrieve information from the web. I define inappropriate use to include, but not be limited to, the following: using a cell phone at any time during class, reading e-mail, writing on friends' Facebook walls, watching YouTube, chatting on IM, or surfing the web.

**If you wish to use a laptop during class, you must sign a contract granting this privilege. I may, at my discretion at any time, inform you that you may no longer use the laptop in class.**

**If, at any time, I see your cell phone out during class, you will be marked absent for that day.**

**UNIVERSITY RESOURCES:** If you experience difficulty in the course, please consult with me. In addition, the University offers a wide range of services to support your efforts to succeed. These include:

**Academic Support Center** (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities.

**Writing Support** is available either in the Academic Support Center Writing Lab or in the Writing Center in Battelle 228.

**Counseling Center** (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

**Disability Support Services** (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical, or psychological disabilities.

### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site ([www.prepared.american.edu](http://www.prepared.american.edu)) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.

***SHOULD THE UNIVERSITY CLOSE!:*** *The university has asked all faculty to determine how best to meet their classes, should the university be forced to close, as many schools were last spring, because of the flu pandemic. If the university closes, we will convene on Blackboard during our regularly scheduled class time. Log into Blackboard and link to Discussion Forum. I will use the forum to take attendance and also to hold class during our regular time. We may spend the class period on Discussion Board or I may give you an assignment which will be due via email by the end of the hour. In any event, if the university is closed, I expect to convene our class on Blackboard.*

### **History Department Goals**

**Historical Literacy:** Students will gain an understanding of the scope, breadth and richness of historical studies.

**Critical Thinking:** Students will learn to apply historical methods to evaluate critically the record of the past and how historians and others have interpreted it.

**Communication Skills:** Students will learn to organize and express their thoughts clearly and coherently both in writing and orally.

**Original Research:** One of the stepping stones towards an original research project is learning to judge and to reflect upon primary sources. The semester paper for this class emphasizes developing these skills.

### **GENERAL SOURCES:**

David Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*

John Efron, Steven Weitzman, Matthias Lehmann, and Joshua Halo, *The Jews: A History*

*Encyclopedia Judaica* (16 volumes) – ON-LINE DATABASE through Aladin

*Jewish Encyclopedia*. This historic encyclopedia, with 15,000 entries, written early in the twentieth century is now on line; <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/index.jsp> . (Its articles have also been incorporated into Wikipedia.)

*Jewish Virtual Library*, on-line encyclopedia; <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/index.html>

Robert Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*

Raymond Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*

A Time Line is available under Course Information on Blackboard

# SYLLABUS

## I. Introduction to the Course

*I-11* A. The Jewish worlds of 1500 and 2010

## II. Medieval/Early Modern Jewries, 1500-1780

*I-14* A. The Sephardic Diaspora in the Ottoman Empire & Sabbatianism  
Renee Levine Melammed, "Sephardi Women in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 128-49, on e-reserves  
Eli Barnavi, *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, 120-21, 130-31, 132-33, 144-45, 148-49.

*I-21* B. The Sephardic Diaspora in Western Europe: Amsterdam  
Yosef Kaplan, "Bom Judesmo: The Western Sephardic Diaspora," in *Cultures of the Jews*, edited by David Biale, pp. 639-49, 652-55 on e-reserves  
*Atlas*, 138-39, 140-41.  
How Profitable the Nation of the Jews Are, *The Jew in the Modern World (TJMW)*, 10-13  
Declaration Protecting the Interest of Jews Residing in Holland, *TJMW*, 10-13, 17-18  
The Writ of Excommunication Against Baruch Spinoza, *TJMW*, 57.

*I-25* C. Polish Jewry: 1500-1648 and Life under the Law  
*Atlas*, 118-19, 122-23, 134-35  
Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Slave*, all  
A reading guide for *The Slave* is on Blackboard under Course Information

D. Polish Jewry: The Trauma of the Deluge (1648-60)  
*Atlas*, 146-47.

*I-28* Polish Jewry: The Rise of Hasidism  
*Atlas*, 162-63  
Lucy Dawidowicz, ed., *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe*, 93-96, e-reserves  
Martin Buber, *The Legend of the Baal Shem*, "Hitlahavut," 17-23, e-reserves

## IV. The Emancipation of Western European Jewry, 1780-1900

*2-1* A. Background: The Ghetto and the Image of the Jew  
Amos Elon, *Founder: A Portrait of the First Rothschild and His Time*, pp. 19-58,

on e-reserves

Derek Penslar, *Shylock's Children*, 11-49 on e-reserves

- 2-4 B. The Enlightenment, the *Haskalah*, and Emancipation  
Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870*, pp. 42-56  
Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews; *TJMW*, 28-36  
Joseph II, Edict of Toleration, *TJMW*, 36-40  
Moses Mendelssohn, Excerpts from *Jerusalem*, *TJMW*, 96-99  
*Atlas*, 158-59  
The Emancipation of the Jews in France, *TJMW* 112-18
- 2-8 C. Emancipation: Advances and Challenges  
Imperial Decree Calling for an Assembly of Jewish Notables, *TJMW*, 123-24  
Napoleon's Instructions to the Assembly of Jewish Notables, *TJMW*, 125-26  
Answers to Napoleon, *TJMW*, 128-33
- D. Jewish Responses: Tortured Drifting  
Documents on conversion by Joseph von Arnsteiner, Abraham Mendelssohn, Heinrich Heine, Rahel Varnhagen, *TJMW*, 256-59, 260-61  
Deborah Hertz, "Emancipation through Intermarriage in Old Berlin," in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, edited by Judith Baskin, 193-207, e-reserves
- 2-11 E. **Guest Lecture, Nina Spiegel**, AU Schusterman Teaching Fellow in Jewish Studies  
Jewish Responses: New Judaisms  
Constitution of the Hamburg Temple, *TJMW*, 161; Documents on Reform Judaism by the Reform Rabbinical Conference at Frankfurt, Samuel Holdheim, Aaron Chorin, *TJMW*, 178-88.
- 2-15 F. Jewish Responses: Wissenschaft des Judentums  
The Science of Judaism: A Society for the Preservation of the Jewish People, Statutes, *TJMW*, 211-14.
- G. Jewish Responses: Gendered Transformations  
Marion Kaplan, "Tradition and Transition: Jewish Women in Imperial Germany," in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Judith Baskin, pp. 227-47, on e-reserves
- 2-18 I. Discontent with the New Society: The New Political and Racial Antisemitism  
Readings from the major anti-Semitic theorists, *TJMW*, 327-34, 339-40, 343-46, 360-67  
*Atlas*, 186-87  
Michael A. Meyer, *Jewish Identity in the Modern World*, 33-58, e-reserves

**2-22 Midterm Exam**

**2-25 J.** The Dreyfus Affair  
"J'Accuse," *TJMW*, 351-56; *Atlas*, 160-61

The Modernization of Jews in Islamic Lands  
Yosef Tobi, "Challenges to Tradition: Jewish Cultures in Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Bukhara, in *Cultures of the Jews*, ed. David Biale, pp. 930-74

**V. The Crisis in Eastern Europe, 1881-1914**

**3-1 Guest Lecture: Jerzy Mazur**, Schusterman Teaching Fellow in Jewish Studies, University of Maryland at Towson  
"From Shtetl to the Promised Land. On the East European Roots of Mea Shearim"  
Readings to be assigned

**3-5 A.** The World of East European Jews  
David Biale, "A Journey between Worlds: East European Jewish Culture from the Partitions of Poland to the Holocaust," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, edited by David Biale, 799-862, on e-reserves  
*Atlas*, 176-77

**B.** Pogroms  
Awaiting a Pogrom, *TJMW*, 408  
The Massacre of the Jews at Kishinev, *TMJW*, 409  
Haim Nahman Bialik, "The City of Slaughter," *TJMW*, 410-11  
The Beilis Trial, *TJMW*, 412-13  
An Expert Opinion in Support of the Ritual Blood Accusation, *TJMW*, 367-71  
*Atlas*, 190-91  
Isaac Babel, "The Story of My Dovecot," in *Jewish-American Stories*, ed. Irving Howe, 26-36, e-reserves

**3-15 Guest Lecture: Maurice Roumani**, AU Schusterman Visiting Professor of Israel Studies, "Jews from Arab Lands"  
Norman Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 47-92

**3-18 C.** New Options: The Great Migration  
Jewish Immigration into the United States: 1881-1948, *TJMW*, 472-73  
Abraham Cahan, The Russian Jew in America, *TJMW*, 472-76  
*Atlas*, 194-95.

- D. Socialism, Diaspora Nationalism, and the Rise of Yiddish Culture  
 Decisions on the Nationality Question *TJMW*, 419-23  
 The Jews are Not a Nation, *TJMW*, 430-32  
 Mendele Moykher Sforim, "My Soul Desired Yiddish, *TJMW*, 404-05  
 Simon Dubnow, Autonomism, *TJMW*, 417-19  
*Atlas*, 196-97.
- 3-22 E. New Options: The Zionist Dream  
 Documents on Zionism, *TJMW*, 532-41, 563-65, 567-68  
*Atlas*, 198-99, 202-03  
 Michael Brenner, *Zionism: A Brief History*, 1-124
- 3-25 F. America! America!  
 Hutchins Hapgood, *Spirit of the Ghetto: Studies of the Jewish Quarter in New York*, 1-70, 177-98, on e-reserves  
*Atlas*, 204-05

## VI. World War I and Its Aftermath: 1914-1939

Jonathan Frankel, "An Introductory Essay—The Paradoxical Politics of Marginality: Thoughts on the Jewish Situation during the Years 1914-21," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry: An Annual*, volume IV: *The Jews and the European Crisis, 1914-21*, pp. 3-21, e-reserves

### 3-29 Eve of Passover, no class

- 4-1 A. Western Europe: Germany and the Rise of the Nazis  
 Documents on Nazi Germany, *TJMW*, 636-53  
*Atlas*, 210-11, 226-27.

### 4-5 No class: eighth day of Passover

- 4-8 B. Palestine: A New Jewish Society  
 Documents on Zionism, *TJMW*, 580-84, 593-97, 613-17  
 Michael Brenner, *Zionism*, 125-154  
 Tom Segev, *One Palestine Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate*, 314-27, e-reserves

- 4-12 C. Eastern Europe: The Bolshevik Revolution  
 Emancipation by the March Revolution, The Liquidation of Bourgeois Jewish Institutions, Birobidzhan: Jewish Autonomous Region, *TJMW*, 432-36, 446-48  
*Atlas*, 214-15  
 Joseph Sherman, "Introduction," to *The End of Everything* by David Bergelson, vii-xviii

- D. The Midpassage of American Jewry  
Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, 208-71, on e-reserves

## **VII. The Holocaust**

- 4-15** *Atlas*, 232-33  
Arnost Lustig, "The Lemon," in *When Night Fell: An Anthology of Holocaust Short Stories*, eds. Linda Schermer Rapahel and Marc Lee Raphael, pp. 199-216  
Be prepared to report on your experiences with the AU's Spring 2010 Voices of Terezin Project

## **VIII. Postwar World**

- 4-19** A. Israel: From Birth to Sixty  
David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, 145-76, e-reserves  
Michael Brenner, *Zionism*, 155-68

### **4-22 Papers Due**

- B. America: 350 Years of Jewish Settlement  
View the exhibit, "From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America," on line at <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/> . Print out one image or artifact, and be prepared to discuss what it illuminates about the American Jewish experience.
- 4-26** C. Soviet and Post-Soviet Jewry  
Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*, 174-95, e-reserves

### **4-29 Final Exam, 8:30 to 11:00 a.m.**