



CIEE in Prague, Czech Republic

Course Title:	History of the Jews in Bohemia and Central Europe
Course Code:	RELI 3002 PRAG
Programs offering course:	CES, CNMJ
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2019

Course Description

This course examines the Jewish experience in the Czech Lands and the other countries of Central Europe. It touches upon the history of Jews in Russia, in addition to Central Europe, since Russia shares some commonalities with the history of Jews in Poland and the Czech Lands. The course will be of interest to History and/or Jewish or Religious studies students, as well as those who want to learn about the history of the Jewish people in the heart of Europe. It is of interest to US students in particular, as one of the largest Jewish communities worldwide lives in the United States and most North American Jews are of Central or Eastern European decent. The History of Jews in Central Europe is not only a story of prejudice and contempt, but also a story of hope and suffering which culminates in the worst tragedy of the Jewish people in history, the Holocaust. However, the issue of the Holocaust is not principal in this course. This course aims at providing students insights into this most flourishing center of Jewish life of Prague and Central Europe. Students will gain a great deal from excursions to Prague's Jewish Quarter with its famous Jewish cemetery, and to the new Jewish cemetery where Franz Kafka is buried. Further, students will participate in a class excursion. The course will deal partly with some Jewish philosophical ideas and practices, but is not a course in the Jewish Religion.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand Jewish experience in Prague and other Central European centers
- Identify the main obstacles in the life of Central European Jewry
- Contextualize the existence of Jewish population within plurality of cultures in the region
- Discuss the acquainted knowledge about Jewish existence before Auschwitz

Course Prerequisites



A student should have a curiosity and desire to explore Jewish History in Prague and Central Europe using the on-site opportunity to explore real sites and locations and "walk" where this history took place.

Methods of Instruction

Experiential excursions, presentations, group discussions, research

Assessment and Final Grade

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| 1. Discussion leader of a reading or a selected topic | 20% |
| 2. Tests | 20% |
| 3. Final paper and presentation | 20% |
| 4. Reading Checks, Field trip reaction papers | 20% |
| 5. Class participation | 20% |

Course Requirements

Discussion leader of a reading or a selected topic

Mandatory presentation on a given topic or an assigned reading. Assessed areas: clarity, delivery, organization. This task includes ppt presentation with one slate info about the author of the reading (if relevant), five slates with content presentation with difficult points explained and last slate with questions and polemic points for moderating the debate. Grading takes into account the accuracy in delivering main issues to the class and success in stimulating discussion. Remember you are presenting the content of the reading (if relevant), your comments and interpretations are voiced in the discussion part.

Final paper and presentation

2000 words, spacing 1,5 lines. The projects are evaluated according to the quality of research and ability to add your own commentary. The work MUST have resonance with topics and readings covered in class. The topic must be consulted with the lecturer and approved by the lecturer in advance.

Reading Checks, Field trip reaction papers

Consistent preparation for the class. First page - check: Author, title (event/ exhibition,...), year (if relevant). Bullet points learned, in the jargon of the author, quotes, names, data. One initiated question for great class discussion. Second page – reaction: your evaluation, polemics, criticism, etc. Only accepted BEFORE class. Submit in email and print. Deadline for electronic submitting of the checks: two days before class at 8 pm.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1	Jews in the Ancient world and in the Middle Ages, Ashkenazim
Week 2	Crusades, medieval antisemitism, status of Jews in the Middle Ages

	<p><i>Discussion:</i> Blood Libel and other accusations <i>Sources:</i> Thomas of Monmouth's account of the <i>Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich</i> (a ritual murder accusation from 1173); A ritual murder accusation from Blois, 1171; Accusations of well-poisoning levelled against Jews during the Black Death (c. 1346-52)</p> <p><i>Discussion Readings:</i> Langmuir 1990, 263-281. Breuer 1988, 139-151.</p>
Week 3	<p>Jewish mysticism and Hassidism, Jews in the 17th and 18th centuries</p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Potok 1966, 104- 113. Possible field trip to the Old-New Synagogue</p> <p>Kolín: one of the main centers of Jewish life in Bohemia since the 14th century. The 15th century Jewish cemetery is the second most important one in the country after the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague.</p> <p><i>Presentations:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Medieval antisemitism and representations of Jews 2) Architecture of a synagogue 3) Maharal and his followers <p><i>Reading:</i> Fiedler 1991, 27-36.</p>
Week 4	<p>Emancipation of Jews, French revolution, Joseph II., reformed Judaism</p> <p><i>Presentation:</i> Moses Mendelsohn</p> <p><i>Discussion Reading:</i> Laquer 2003.</p> <p><i>Recommended reading:</i> Kling 1999, pp. 22-58.</p> <p>Mendes-Flohr, Reinhartz 1995 The French National Assembly: Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1789 The French National Assembly: Debate on Eligibility of Jews for Citizenship, 1789 Moses Mendelsohn, The Right to be Different, 1783 Joseph II: Edict of Tolerance, 1782</p>
Week 5	<p>The Pale of Settlement</p> <p>Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 19th century</p> <p>Mendes-Flohr, Reinhartz 1995. Alexander I: Statutes Concerning the Organization of Jews, 1804</p>

	<p>Nicholas I: Statutes Regarding the Military Service of Jews, 1827 Nicholas I: Delineation of the Pale of Settlement, 1835 Map of the Jewish Pale of Settlement, 1835-1917</p> <p>Presentation: Cantonists, <i>Recommended reading</i>: Hoffman 1997. <i>Reading</i>: Kieval 2000, 10-36.</p>
Week 6	<p>Field trip to the Jewish Museum <i>Readings</i>: Pařík 1991, 5-12.</p>
Week 7 Midterm	<p>Test <i>Film</i>: Yaakov Lifshin, The Way of Man – on Martin Buber</p>
Week 8	<p>19th century antisemitism, sionism, modern racial theories, blood libel Presentations: Blood Libel Accusation de Gobineau 1915, 23-36. https://archive.org/details/inequalityofhuma00gobi</p> <p><i>Readings</i>: Biddis 1970: 103-180, 244-64. Dreher 1970, 59-169.</p> <p>Mendes-Flohr, Reinhartz 1995. Moses Hess: Returning Home, 1862 The Bilu: Manifesto, 1882 Theodor Herzl: A Solution of the Jewish Question, 1896 The First Zionist Congress: The Basle Program, 1897 N. Tchaykovsky: The Massacre of Jews at Kishniev, 1903 The Beilis Trial, 1913</p>
Week 9	<p>Interwar situation in the Central Europe <i>Readings</i>: Mendelsohn 1983, 131-169.</p>
Week 10	<p>Holocaust Mendes-Flohr, Reinhartz, 1995 Hitler 1923. The Nuremberg Laws, 1935, Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, The Reich Citizenship Law Security Service Report on the Kristallnacht, 1938 Decree for the Elimination of the Jews from German Economic Life, 1938 Numerus Nullus in Schools, 1938</p>

	Protocols of the Wansee Conference, 1942 Estimated Numbers of Jews Killed by the Nazis <i>Discussion readings:</i> Bauman 1989, 83-116. Peukert 1994, 274-299.
Week 11	Guest lecture: Holocaust survivor Michaela Vidláková Film screening on Sir Nicholas Winton, Matěj Mináč, The Power of Good
Week 12	Jews under communism <i>Discussion Readings:</i> Bauer 1989. Judt 2006, 803-831.
Final Exam Week	Final Exam, Final presentations of research papers

Course Materials

Required readings

- Bauer, Yehuda. *Out of the Ashes. The Impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry*. Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1989.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge and New York: Polity Press, 1989.
- Biddis, Michael. Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau. New York Weybright and Talley, 1970: 103-180, 244-64.
- Breuer, Mordechai "The Black Death and Antisemitism", in: Shmuel Almog, ed., *Antisemitism Through the Ages*. Oxford, New York, Pergamon Press, 1988, p. 139-151.
- de Gobineau, Joseph. *The Inequality of Human Races, translated by Adran Collins*. (London: William Heinemann, 1915 [orig., Paris, 1853]).
- Fiedler, Jiří. "Ghettos, Synagogues and Cemeteries", *Jewish Sights of Bohemia and Moravia*, Prague 1991.
- Hoffman, Eva. *Shtetl*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1997.
- Judt, Tony. *From the House of Dead: An Essay on Modern European Memory*. New York, Penguin Books, 2006.
- Kieval, Hillel J. „The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands“, *Languages of Community*. University of California Press, 2000.
- Kling, Simcha. *Embracing Judaism*, revised by Carl M. Perkins, New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1999.
- Langmuir, Gavin. "Ritual Cannibalism", *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990.
- Laquer, Walter. "Out of the Ghetto", *The History of Zionism*, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, London,

- New York, 2003.
- Mendelsohn, Ezra. *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1983.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul, Reinhartz, Jehuda (ed.), *The Jew in the Modern World. A documentary history*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Pařík, Arno „From the History of the Jewish Communities in Bohemia and Moravia“, *Jewish Sights of Bohemia and Moravia*, Prague 1991.
- Peukert, Detlev J. K. “The Genesis of the ‘Final Solution’ from the Spirit of Science.” In David Crew, ed. *Nazism and German Society, 1933-45. Rewriting Histories*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Potok, Chaim. *The Chosen*. Penguin, London, 1966.

Electronic resources

Accusations of well-poisoning levelled against Jews during the Black Death (c. 1346-52)

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/1348-jewsblackdeath.asp>

A ritual murder accusation from Blois, 1171 -

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1171blois.asp>

Thomas of Monmouth’s account of the *Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich* (a ritual murder accusation from 1173) -

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1173williamnorwich.asp>