



Map 1. Russian Poland and the Pale of Jewish Settlement

HI 275 - History of the Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe

Fall 2012

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11:00-12:30

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:30 and by appointment

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Course Outline

This course is a comprehensive survey of the history of the Jewish communities of Russia and Eastern Europe from the middle of the eighteenth century until today. Economic, social, religious, cultural and political developments contributing to the course of Jewish history in Eastern Europe will all be examined in detail.

The course focuses on the modern period, but begins by explaining how Jews initially came to settle in Eastern Europe and the reasons for their demographic expansion. After describing some characteristics of Jewish life in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the course covers the partitions of Poland and the absorption of the majority of European Jewry into the Russian Empire. Much of the course focuses on the nineteenth century, and in particular, the effects of urbanization, modernization, and government policies on Jewish life in Eastern Europe. The course moves on to discuss the rise of Jewish politics, the emergence of Jewish nationalism, and the impact of World War I and the Russian Revolution on East European and Russian Jewry. The topic of the Holocaust is discussed in the context of its impact on Jewish life in independent Poland and the Baltic states. The course concludes with an overview of Jewish life in the Soviet Union, post-communist Russia, and Eastern Europe. In exploring the evolution of the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, it is hoped that students will learn the historical context crucial to a proper understanding of the Jewish experience in the modern era.

Approach

This year we will be trying out a completely new approach to studying the history of the Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe. The course will be organized as a regional tour. During most classes we will be looking at one particular topic with a focus on one particular city. The idea is that rather than students learning about historical processes abstractly, each issue will be understood in the context of a particular place. Plus, students will learn a great deal about the kinds of places where Jews lived (and in some cases still live) in Eastern Europe.

Course Websites

All required texts not for purchase, assignments, handouts from class, and any essential course documents will be available on blackboard. I will also maintain a facebook page

for the course where I'll post interesting contemporary news and multimedia. It's not mandatory, but students with facebook accounts are encouraged to "like" the page and to post materials and comments (please, keep it civil). The facebook page can be accessed from the Teaching page of my website, blogs.bu.edu/srabinov. Students are also encouraged to familiarize themselves with the writing and research guides and other multimedia on the Student Resources page of my site.

Course Requirements

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

2-3 page book review, 10%. Each student is responsible for reviewing one book of their choosing from the list provided on blackboard. The book review is due October 4.

Midterm, 20%. For the take-home midterm examination you will write an analytical essay analyzing a primary source. It will be handed out at the end of class on October 18 and is due the following class, October 23.

Online research guide, 20%. You will write an online research guide (essentially a multimedia annotated bibliography) on a topic pertinent to the class. I will provide more detailed instructions and help you get started. Research guides will be published on the website <http://blogs.bu.edu/guidedhistory> and will form the groundwork for your term paper. Though you will be free to update and upgrade your guides throughout the semester, for the purpose of grading your guide will be considered complete on November 8.

Term paper, 25%. Students must complete one research paper (+/- 10 pages) examining some aspect of Jewish history pertinent to the course. Topics might cover political, religious, intellectual, cultural, social, or economic history and should correspond approximately to the topic of your research guide. I will frequently suggest topics during the course of the semester and students are encouraged to come to my office to discuss possibilities. Both the syllabus and the list of books for review are good places to start your search for a topic. The term paper is due December 6.

Final examination, 25%. The final exam will be a two-hour open-book exam. For the exam, students will answer two essay questions pertaining to the major themes of the course. Students may bring any notes or books of their choosing to the exam.

Class discussion and preparation. Attendance and informed participation in class discussion is required. Although a grade will not be allocated for participation, in the case of final grades which are borderline good participation may boost a student's grade. Prolonged absence is grounds for failure.

All assignments should be completed independently and plagiarism from any source is unacceptable. In all written assignments be sure to properly credit (using proper citations) all ideas, phrases, statements, arguments, and ideas taken from your sources. Cases of

suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean's Office. If they have not already, students should familiarize themselves with the Academic Conduct Code of the College of Arts and Sciences:

<http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/>

Texts

The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe www.yivoencyclopedia.org

Get to know this website. It's an amazing resource, and free! Before each class, at a minimum, read the article about the town we will be discussing and look at appropriate maps and other documents. You may also find it helpful to read survey articles about the topics we will discuss. If you are unfamiliar with a term or place it is the ideal resource to search for an explanation. Here are some entries worth consulting as we go: Assimilation; Economic Life; Family; Gender; Hasidism; Haskalah; Hebrew Literature; Life Cycle; Lithuania; Orthodoxy; Parties and Ideologies; Poland; Population and Migration; Relations between Jews and Non-Jews; Russia; Shtetl; Ukraine; USSR; Yeshiva; and Yiddish Literature.

Texts available for purchase at the BU Barnes and Noble:

Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2004).

Vladimir Jabotinsky, *The Five*. Michael Katz trans. (Ithaca, 2005).

David Bergelson, *The End of Everything* (New Haven, 2008)

Zvi Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present* (Bloomington, 2001).

Jan Gross, *Neighbors* (Princeton, 2000).

All readings on blackboard are indicated in the syllabus by *.

Course Schedule and Assignments

September 4

Introduction

September 6

How the Jews got where and why: A brief history of Jewish migration

Section I – Jewish Life in Poland-Lithuania

September 11

Topic: A brief history of early Poland-Lithuania

Reading: Hundert, Introduction and chapter 1

September 13

Topic: Jewish society in pre-partition Poland

Reading: Hundert, chapters 2 and 10

September 18

No class (Rosh Hashanah)

September 20 - **Krakow/Kazimierz and Warsaw**

Topic: Royal towns

Reading: Hundert, chapters 3-4

September 25 - **Tarnow, Opatow, and Zamosc**

Topic: Noble towns

Reading: Hundert, chapter 5

Section II – Religion and Modernity

September 27

Topic: Pre-partition Jewish religious life

Readings: Hundert, chapter 6

October 2 - **Medzhibizh**

Topic: The emergence of Hasidism

Readings: Hundert, chapter 7

October 4 - **Mezhyrich**

Topic: The *tsadik*

Readings: Hundert, chapter 8

Book review due

October 9

No class (substitute Monday)

October 11 – **Vilna/Vilne/Wilno/Vilnius**

Topic: Hasidism's opponents

Readings: David Biale, "A Journey Between Two Worlds: East European Jewish Culture from the Partitions of Poland to the Holocaust," in David Biale ed. *Cultures of the Jews* (Schocken, 2002), 799-860.*

October 16 - **Shklov**

Topic: Haskalah

Readings: Israel Bartal "My Heart is in the West': The Haskalah Movement in Eastern Europe," in *idem.*, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881* (U. Penn, 2002), 90-101.

Section III – Jewish Communities in the Nineteenth Century

October 18 - **Minsk**

Topic: The Pale of Settlement

Benjamin Nathans, “Jews in the Imperial Social Hierarchy,” in *Beyond the Pale* (California, 2002), 23-44.*

Midterm distributed

October 23 – **St. Petersburg**

Topic: Russian attempts to transform the Jews

Benjamin Nathans, “The Genesis of Selective Integration,” in *Beyond the Pale* (California, 2002), 45-79.*

Midterm collected

October 25 - **Lemberg/Lwow/Lviv**

Topic: The Jews in Austrian Galicia

Readings: Israel Bartal and Antony Polonsky, “Introduction: The Jews of Galicia under the Habsburgs,” in *Polin* vol.12, 3-24*; Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Lviv: A Multicultural History through the Centuries,” in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 1/4 (2000): 47-73.*

October 30 - **Poznan**

Topic: The Jews in Prussia

Sophie Kemlein, “The Jewish Community in the Grand Duchy of Poznań under Prussian Rule, 1815-1848.” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 14 (2001): 49-67.*

November 1 - **Lodz**

Topic: Congress Poland

Readings: Theodore Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The “Jewish Question” in Poland, 1850-1914* (Dekalb, 2006), 33-70.*

Section IV – Into the Fin-de-Siècle

November 6 - **Kiev**

Discussion of David Bergelson, *The End of Everything*

November 8 - **Kishinev**

Anti-Jewish violence

Readings: Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, chapter 1

Research guide due

November 13- **Vitebsk**

Jewish politics

Reading: Primary source selections on blackboard*

November 15

Film: The Dybbuk

November 20
Discussion of the Dybbuk

November 22
No class (Thanksgiving)

November 27 - **Odessa**
Discussion of Vladimir Jabotinsky, *The Five*

Section V – Challenges of the 20th Century

November 29 - **Moscow**
Topic: WWI, the Russian Revolutions, and Civil War
Readings: Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, chapters 2-3.

December 4 - **Jedwabne**
Discussion of Jan Gross, *Neighbors*

December 6 - **Moscow again...**
Topic: Post-war Jewish life behind the Iron Curtain and since the fall of Communism...
Readings: Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, chapters 5-6
Term papers due

December 11 – **... and New York, Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Vilnius, Lviv, Kiev...**
Topic: ... and since the fall of Communism
Readings: Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, chapter 8-9