

Jewish Power, Jewish Politics
History 510:389:01/Jewish Studies 563:389:01
(provisional syllabus)

Professor Nancy Sinkoff

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This semester-long course will examine the political relationship of the Jewish community to the gentile authorities among whom they lived (and live), to the internal authority structures within the Jewish community, and to the modern Jewish state. We will examine how Jews rebelled against and accommodated to structures of power in varying historical contexts. We will examine select aspects of traditional Jewish politics, such as the concepts of *dina de-malkhuta dina* (“the law of the gentile hosts is the law”) and the “royal alliance,” as the basis for our study of the continuities and challenges inherent in modern Jewish politics. The ideological assumptions in the words “power” and “powerlessness” will be critiqued throughout the course, which covers discrete topic areas in chronological order. Topics to be discussed include: Roman Rebels; Spanish Inquisitors and Jewish Courtiers; Kings, Nobles and Jewish Administrators in Early Modern Poland; Military Conscription and Communal Responses in Nicholas I’s Russia; Jewish Socialists in late Imperial Russia; Gender Politics of Jewish Women; The Appeal of Communism and Socialism in the Interwar Years; Jewish Liberalism and its Discontents; Zionist Empowerment and the challenge of the Holocaust. Primary and secondary sources, as well as fiction, poetry and films, will be used.

Course Requirements: The assigned readings have been put on the Sakai website (<https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>) and on Undergraduate Reserve at Alexander Library. Students are *required* to prepare the course readings and to participate actively in class. Please note that some weeks have more reading than others, so try to pace yourself accordingly. Students should bring the course packet and any primary sources that are assigned from the Sakai site to class. Students are also required to post, via Sakai and/or an email listserve, terms and discussion questions for each session. Students will be asked to lead mini-discussions in class about particular readings.

There will be a short assignment to compensate for the cancellation of class on Yom Kippur, an **in-class midterm** examination and a **take-home final**. Students are also required to write an analytic paper (approximately 1500-1750 words).

The analytic paper will require the ability to synthesize both historical information and interpretive concepts and to present them in a coherent informed argument. No late work will be accepted under any circumstances. The exams will include identifications and essay questions based upon the lectures as well as upon assigned readings (even if those materials were not discussed in class).

Grading:

Attendance and class participation: 10%

Short Assignment: 10%

Midterm Exam:	20%
Analytic Essay:	25%
Final Exam:	35%

The following books are available for purchase at the Rutgers University Bookstore:

Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel* (Oxford, 1993).

Ezra Mendelson, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (Oxford, 1993).

[Robert Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, an excellent survey of Jewish history, is on Reserve and can be useful]

***A required course packet is available from Pequod Copy Center, 119 Somerset Street.**

1. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

<http://history.rutgers.edu/undergrad/writingguide.htm>

<http://history.rutgers.edu/undergrad/policy.htm>

<http://history.rutgers.edu/undergrad/plagiarism.htm>

2. Traditional Rabbinic Political Postures

David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, (New York, 1986),
 “Introduction.” (Sakai website)

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York, 1958): 3-10. (Sakai website)

Ismar Schorsch, “On the Political Judgment of the Jew,” *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, (Hanover and London, 1994): 118-132. (Sakai website)

Michael Walzer, “Introduction: The Jewish Political Tradition.” (P*18-29)

Genesis 47:7 (handout)

Jeremiah 29:5-7 (handout)

Ezra 6:10 (handout)

3. Rabbinic Power and the War with Rome

Biale, “The Political Theory of the Diaspora,” pp. 34-57. (Sakai website)

M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews Under Roman and Byzantine Rule* (New York, 1976): 54-88.
 (Sakai website)

Richard G. Marks, *The Image of Bar Kokhba in Traditional Jewish Literature*, pp. 13-56.
 (Sakai website)

BT *Gittin* (P*3-8)

4. Traditional Rabbinic Political Postures and their Influence on Medieval Jewish Political Quietism:

Salo Baron, *The Jewish Community*, 1 (Westport, CN, 1942): 208-282. (Sakai website)

Gerald J. Bildstein, “A Note on the Function of ‘The Law of the Land is the Law,’”
Jewish Journal of Sociology 15 (1973): 213-219. (Sakai website)

Walzer, *The Jewish Political Tradition*, pp. 430-436. (P*30-36)

“Jewish Autonomy in Babylon about 1168.” (P*9-11)

5. Medieval Jewish Political Quietism Continued

Biale, pp. 58-85. (Sakai website)

Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics*, (Oxford,1989): 11-35. (Sakai website)

Walzer, *The Jewish Political Tradition*, pp. 436-446. (P*36-47)

6. The Royal Alliance; *Shtadlanut*; Magnates and Jews in Early Modern Poland

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976). (P*56-57)

Gershon Hundert, "Jews, Money and Society in the Seventeenth-Century Polish Commonwealth: The Case of Krakow," *Jewish Social Studies*, 43 (Summer-Fall 1981): 161-174. (Sakai website)

M. J. Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century*, (Cambridge, MA), 1990): 1-22, 185-212. (Sakai website)

Charter of Bolesław the Pious (P*12-14)

"The Massacre of the New Christians of Lisbon, April 1506." (P*58-60)

7. The Jewish Enlightenment and the State; Russian Jewry and the Breakdown of Traditional Authority and Politics [Holiday Assignment Due**]**

Lederhendler, pp. 36-83. (Sakai website)

Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, Phil., PA, 1983), pp. 13-34; 97-122. (Sakai website)

---. "The Transformation of Traditional Authority in Russian Jewry: The First Stage," in David Berger, *Jewish Migration: 1881 and its Impact*, (New York, 1983): 23-30. (Sakai website)

Psalms for the Tsar (packet)

Tsar Nicholas I, "Statutes Regarding the Military Service of the Jews," S. J. Fuenn, "The Need for Enlightenment," Judah Leib Gordon, *Awake My People!* "A Jewish Program for Russification" (P*61-69)

8. Yom Kippur. No Class.

9. Enlightenment and the State Continued

Lederhendler, pp. 84-110 (Sakai website)

Biale, pp. 87-117. (Sakai website)

Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment in Austrian Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (JPS, 1985): 31-67. (Sakai website)

Sources: Joseph Perl's Memo Regarding Rabbis, Kosher Slaughtering, and Circumcisers in Galicia. (handout)

10. The Damascus Affair and the Alliance Israelite Universelle

Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair, 'Ritual Murder,' Politics, and the Jews in 1840*, pp. 17-30 and conclusion (Sakai website)

Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*, pp. 1-8. (Sakai website)

"The Damascus Affair," *Appeal to All Israelites* (packet, pp. 51-52), "Alliance Israelite Universelle." (P*70-77)

11. Class Conflict and the Rise of Jewish Labor

Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (Oxford, 1993), Chapter One (whole class); individual students, individual chapters.

Jonathan Frankel, "The Crisis of 1881-8 as a Turning Point in Modern Jewish History." (Sakai website)

12. Midterm

13. Class Conflict and the Rise of Jewish Labor/Trade Unionism Continued

Joshua Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, pp. 36-56; 83-98; 288-92; 295-299. (Sakai website)

"Decisions on the Nationality Question, 1899, 1901, 1905, 1910." (P*79-83)

14. Jewish Socialists, Jewish Communists

Gerald Sorin, *The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals, 1880-1920*, (Indiana, 1985): 1-9; 72-104; 163-168. (ALEX Reserve)

Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora, ed. Nancy Green (Univ. of California Press, 1998): 1-14; 74-75; 119-127. (handout)

Articles in the *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, eds. Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1998): 399-405; 912-918. (ALEX reference)

Paul Buhle, "Jews and American Communism: The Cultural Question," *Radical History Review* 33 (1980): 9-33. (Sakai website)

15. Jewish Socialists, Jewish Communists continued

Film: "Arguing the World" [80 minutes]

16. Jewish Liberalism

Finish "Arguing the World" [27 minutes] and discussion.

17. Jewish Liberalism continued

Marc Dollinger, *Quest for Inclusion: Jews and Liberalism in Modern America*, pp. 3-18; 129-163. (Sakai website)

Benjamin Nathans, "The Other Jewish Politics: Integration and Modernity in Fin de Siècle Russia" (Sakai website).

18. Jewish Women and Social Protest

"National Council of Jewish Women," in *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, eds. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore (New York, 1997): 968-979. (ALEX reference)

Paula E. Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest: The New York City Kosher Meat Boycott of 1902," *American Jewish History* (September 1980): 91-105. (Sakai website)

Susan Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca, 1990): 1-49, 167-242. (ALEX Reserve)

19. Jewish Women and Social Protest Continued

20. Zionism Confronts Jewish ‘Powerlessness’

Eliezer Schweid, “The Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches,” in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, eds. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York, 1996): 133-160. (Sakai website)

Theodore Herzl, *The Jews’ State* (New York, 1997): 121-150. (P*85-101)

Hayim Nachman Bialik, “City of Slaughter.” (handout)

21. Zionism Confronts Jewish ‘Powerlessness’ Continued

Ahad ha-Am, *Selected Essays*, ed. Leon Simon, (New York, 1981): 217-241, 252-305. (P*102-142)

22. Zionism Confronts Jewish ‘Power’

The Seventh Day: Soldiers Talk About the Six-Day War, Avraham Shapira, ed., (New York, 1970): 65-69, 91-99, 107-119, 136-153, 179-194, 234-242. (P*143-181)

Yaron Ezrahi, *Rubber Bullets: Power and Conscience in Modern Israel* (Berkeley, 1998): introduction and pp. 175-234. (Sakai website)

“Reservists Balk at Occupation.” (P*182-184)

23. No Class. (Considered a Friday)

24. Zionism, Messianism, and Jewish ‘Power’

Aviezer Ravitsky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, pp. 1-39. (Sakai website)

Gershom Scholem, “Toward and Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism.” (ALEX Reserve)

25. The Holocaust, Jewish Politics and Jewish Resistance [Analytic Paper Due**]**

Film: “The Partisans of Vilna” [80 minutes]

26. The Holocaust, Jewish Politics and Jewish Resistance

Finish “The Partisans of Vilna” [50 minutes]

Primo Levi, “Beyond Judgment,” *The New York Review of Books*, December 17, 1987 (P*186-7)

Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover, NH, 1987): 133-155 (ALEX Reserve)

Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, pp. 662-669. (Sakai website)

27. Religion and Politics

Jonathan Sarna, “Jewish Prayers for the U.S. Government: A Study in the Liturgy of Politics and the Politics of Liturgy.” (Sakai website)

Gershon Bacon, “Imitation, Rejection, Cooperation: Agudat Yisrael and the Zionist Movement in Interwar Poland.” (Sakai website)

Walzer, pp. 450-458. (P*47-55)

28. Religion and Politics Continued

Ravitzky, 79-144. (Sakai website)

29. Conclusions [Take-Home Exam Handed Out]

Conduct Code

Regular attendance of class and active participation in class discussion is required. Students are expected to come to class on time, having prepared the assignments due that day; to respect the protocols of classroom conduct (e.g., arriving promptly, turning off cell phones, not eating during class, avoiding distracting chatter); to check their email regularly for class announcements (e.g., changes in schedule or assignments); and to turn in written work on the dates due. Students who find that they are unable to attend class regularly for some pressing reason are required to notify their dean as well as the instructor as soon as possible. Excuses for absences will not be accepted after the final assignment for the course is due.

Except for collaborative assignments officially approved by the instructor in advance, all work a student submits must be his/her own independent effort. Students must cite properly all outside sources consulted in preparing written assignments. Students should review the university policy on Academic Integrity (see the website for the Teaching Excellence Center). Failure to comply with this policy can result in failure of the course. I wish to reiterate that the final exam, which is a take-home, *must be done independently*.