

**ZION AND ZIONISM:
Conceptions of Jewish Identity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries**

SYLLABUS (revised)

Brief description

The course of eight tutorials will look at changing conceptions of Jewish identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with an eye to the emergence of Zionism as an ideology and a movement. Confining our attention to Western (mainly European) thought, we shall examine a variety of key texts by central Jewish thinkers and writers. Among the questions that will guide our reading are these: What does 'the Jewish people' mean? How does Judaism's ancient focus on Zion develop into the modern idea of Zionism? How does the distinction between religious and secular enter into the picture? What place do 'Israel' and 'Diaspora' respectively occupy in different conceptions of Jewish identity?

The subject is vast and the term short, so treat this course as an introduction only. Inevitably, our coverage of the material and the period will be highly selective. Although we shall be looking at historical texts, keep in mind that we shall not be looking at them historiographically. Our approach will be (mainly) textual – rather than historical – analysis. With each author, we shall try to bring their conception of Jewish identity into focus, assess its clarity and coherence, and consider its bearing on the questions that guide our reading (and vice versa). We shall also, of course, discuss connections and contrasts among authors.

We shall meet at St. Benet's Hall (in the Yellow Room on the ground floor) on Fridays from 11 a.m. to 12 noon throughout Trinity term, i.e. eight consecutive weeks from Friday 1 May.

Each week I shall assign readings for your essay (see topics below). Your essay should be typed, double-spaced and roughly 2000 words long (give or take a few hundred words). If possible, send it to me (by email as a word attachment) by 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, the day before we are due to meet. (I live in London and normally will be coming up to Oxford on Thursday, staying over on Friday, and might not be able to check email or print out attachments.) Alternatively, bring your essay to the tutorial. Either way, make sure that you and I have separate copies. The tutorial will revolve around your essay, which I might well ask you to read aloud.

Schedule (subject to change)

Essay questions will be set and readings assigned or suggested week by week. The weekly topics might change if, as the term progresses, certain issues (or figures) emerge that lead us in an unexpected direction.

Week 1: *A Spinozist's spin:* Moses Hess

Week 2: *From assimilation to separation:* Leo Pinsker, Theodor Herzl

Week 3: *Class and nation:* Ber Borochov, Aaron David Gordon

Week 4: *From exile to return:* Rabbi Kalischer, Rav Kook

Week 5: *Zion as spiritual centre*: Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginzberg)

Week 6: *From particular to universal*: Claude Montefiore

Week 7: *Zionism and normalization*: Martin Buber, A. B. Yehoshua

Week 8: *From Israel to Diaspora*: Philip Roth, George Steiner

Sources

Please obtain (or ensure ready access to) the following two anthologies. They contain some texts that are basic and others that are useful as background:

- Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997
- Paul Mendes-Flohr & Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, Oxford: OUP, 1995

The following books either are (or include) basic texts. [Works in brackets are useful and suggested, but not essential.] In some cases, the bibliographical information is not quite complete but ought to be sufficient for you to locate the work. From time to time I might add new works.

Week 1

- Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem* [1862], Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2005
- [Shlomo Avineri, *Moses Hess: Prophet of Communism and Zionism*, NY: New York University Press, 1985 (esp. chap. 7)]
- [Micael Graetz, 'On the Return of Moses Hess to Judaism – The Background to "Rome and Jerusalem"', *Binah*, Everyman's University, Israel (undated booklet, 21 pp.)]

Week 2

- Leo Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation* [1882], Zionist Organization of America, 1944 (full version available online at <http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/6640/zion/pinsker.html>)
- Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* [1896], London: Henry Pordes, 1993
- [Steven Beller, *Herzl*, London: Peter Halban, 2004 (esp. chaps. 1, 3)]

Week 3

- Ber Berochov, *Class Struggle and the Jewish Nation*, Transaction Publishers, 1984
- [Raphael et al, *Borochov for Our Day: The Socialist-Zionist View of the Jewish People*, Progressive Zionist League (Hashomer Hatzair), 1958]
- [Amos Perlmutter, 'Dov Ber-Borochov: A Marxist-Zionist Ideologist', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1969), pp. 32-43]
- Aaron David Gordon, *Selected Essays*, NY: League for Labor Palestine, 1938 (esp. chaps. 2, 3, 4)
- [Herbert H. Rose, *Life and Thought of A. D. Gordon: Pioneer, Philosopher and Prophet of Modern Israel*, Bloch, 1964]

Week 4

- Jody Myers, *Seeking Zion: Modernity and Messianic Activism in the Writings of Tzevi Hirsch Kalischer*, Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003 (esp. chap. 7)
- Ben Zion Bokser (ed.), *The Essential Writings of Abraham Isaac Kook*, Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehuda Press, 2006
- Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Religious Radicalism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 (esp. pp. 26-32 on Kalischer, chap. 3 on Kook)

Week 5

- Ahad Ha'am & Leon Simon, *Selected Essays by Ahad Ha'am*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1912
- Ahad Ha'am, *Ten Essays on Zionism and Judaism*, London: Routledge, 1922
- Ahad Ha'am, 'Truth from Eretz Yisrael' (1891). English translation in Alan Dowty, 'Much Ado about Little: Ahad Ha'am's "Truth from Eretz Yisrael," Zionism, and the Arabs', *Israel Studies*, vol.5, no. 2 (fall 2000)
- [Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993 (esp. chap. 3)]
- [Jacques Kornberg, *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Ha'am*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1983 (esp. introductory essay)]
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Week 6

- Claude Montefiore, *Liberal Judaism: An Essay*, London: Macmillan, 1903 (esp. chaps. 1, 10, 11)
- Claude Montefiore, *Outlines of Liberal Judaism*, London: Macmillan 1923 (esp. chaps. 12, 19)
- Edward Kessler, *An English Jew: The Life and Writings of Claude Montefiore*, London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002 (the section 'Liberal Judaism and Zionism' in chap. 4, pp. 143-151)
- [Daniel R. Langton, *Claude Montefiore: His Life and Thought*, London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002 (esp. chap. 6)]

Week 7

- Paul Mendes-Flohr (ed.), *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983 (esp. chap. 4 'Nationalism', chap. 13, 'The National Home and National Policy in Palestine', chap. 34, 'The Meaning of Zionism', chap. 43 'Zionism and "Zionism"', and passim)
- Martin Buber, *On Zion: The History of an Idea*, NY: Schocken Books, 1973
- Martin Buber, *Israel and the World*, NY: Schocken Books, 1963 (esp. parts IV, V)
- Étan Levine (ed.), A. B. Yehoshua, 'Exile as a Neurotic solution' in *Diaspora: Exile and the Contemporary Jewish Condition*, NY: Steimatzky, 1986

- Bernard Horn, *Facing the Fires: Conversations with A. B. Yehoshua*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003

Week 8

- Philip Roth, *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, London: Vintage, 1998
- George Steiner, *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978-1996*, London: Faber & Faber, 1996 ('Our homeland, the Text', pp. 304-327)
- George Steiner, *My Unwritten Books*, London: Phoenix, 2008 (chap. 4 'Zion')

I encourage you to explore other works and to browse the secondary literature. But beware of the vast scope of this subject and do not try to devour too much. Over-reading (in this sense) is like overeating: too much food for thought can give you mental indigestion. Be selective. Do not lean heavily on commentaries. I am more interested in what *you* have to say on the subject than in the (supposed) wisdom of the experts.

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