

HISTORY 74

INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURES

UCSC, FALL 2012

Is it possible to survey more than three thousand years of Jewish history and literature in ten weeks? The challenge is daunting, of course, but we can at least explore some of the principal questions that have informed the study of Jewish history and culture since the nineteenth century: Who are the Jews? What were their origins in the ancient world? How did they manage to survive their "scattering among the peoples" for so many centuries, and what roles have sacred and secular texts (literature) played in their history? What kinds of adaptations have they made to the many cultures in which they have lived? What is Judaism, and how has it evolved over the centuries? What roles have Jewish women played in Jewish communities and cultures? And how and why did Jews come to play vanguard roles in the processes of modernization and globalization?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Regular attendance and participation in class discussions, a midterm examination (November 5), a 6-page paper based on primary sources (December 3), and a final examination (Monday, December 10, 4:00-7:00).

1. ORIGINS (September 28-October 5)

Reading: Raymond P. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, chapter 1: Israelite Origins and Kingdom (Before 1220 BCE to 587 BCE)

Topics: Introduction—Origins: The Evidence of Archaeology—Biblical Narrative—Prophets and Kings

Reading: Genesis 1-4, 22, 24, 38; 2 Samuel 11 (David and Bathsheba)

Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, especially chapters 1-6, 11-14

2. JUDEA (October 8-12)

Topics: Jews and Greeks—Jews and Romans—Revolt and Catastrophe

Reading: Scheindlin, chapter 2: Judea and the Origins of the Diaspora (587 BCE to 70 CE)

Josephus, *The Jewish War*, chapters 7-9, 12-15, 19-23

3. SEPHARAD (October 15-19)

Topics: From Babylon to Spain—From Spain to Egypt—Jews and the Crusades

Reading: Scheindlin, chapter 3: Roman Palestine and Sassanid Babylonia (70 CE to 632) and chapter 4: The Jews in the Islamic World: From the Rise of Islam to the End of the Middle Ages (632 to 1500)

Sherwin B. Nuland, *Maimonides*, especially chapter 1: Jews and Medicine; chapter 2: Spain—Morocco—Egypt; chapter 6: *The Guide for the Perplexed*; chapter 7: Maimonides: Physician; and Epilogue

Poems by Samuel Hanagid and Judah Halevi

4. ASHKENAZ (October 22-26)

Topics: The Jews in Medieval France and England—Glückel's World—From the Rhineland to Poland

Reading: Scheindlin, chapter 5: The Jews of Medieval Christian Europe (Ninth Century to 1500)

The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln, books 1-5

5. VENICE AND AMSTERDAM (October 29-November 2)

Topics: The Venetians and the Ottomans—Shylock and Shakespeare—Spinoza and Modernity

Reading: Scheindlin, chapter 6: The Jews in the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East (1453 to 1948)

Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, *Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity*, especially chapters 1, 3, 4, 5

6. THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: POLAND AND GERMANY (November 5-9)

Topics: Poland: Decline and Renewal—Berlin: Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment—The Philosopher as Rogue: Maimon

Reading: Scheindlin, chapter 7: The Jews of Western Europe (1500 to 1900)

Solomon Maimon, *An Autobiography*, chapters 1-15, 21-24

7. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPE (November 14-16)

Topics: The Jews in Tsarist Russia—The Flowering of Yiddish Literature—Odessa, Paris, Vienna

Reading: Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, parts I and II

Sholem Aleichem, "The Search" and "Dreyfus in Kasrilevke" (on e-Commons)

I.L. Peretz, "If Not Higher" (on e-Commons)

8. POLAND: THE SHTETL AND THE CITY (November 19-21)

Topics: Warsaw: Assimilation and Antisemitism—Bilgoray: The Shtetl in Decline—Singer's Century

Reading: Isaac Bashevis Singer, *In My Father's Court*

9. AMERICA: THE NEW GOLDEN LAND? (November 26-30)

Topics: German Jews in America—The Jews in New York—Jews and American Popular Culture

Reading: Scheindlin, chapter 8: The Jews of Eastern Europe and the United States (1770 to 1940)

Bella Spewack, *Streets: A Memoir of the Lower East Side*

Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," audiovisual version available on-line at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0B9CitsfU0>

10. CATASTROPHE AND REVIVAL (December 3-7)

Topics: Between the Wars: Crisis and Creativity—The Holocaust: Primo Levi—The Birth of Modern Israel

Reading: Scheindlin, chapter 9: The Holocaust and chapter 10: Zionism and the Origins of the State of Israel

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

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Teaching Assistant: Rita Jones (rita.ingrid.jones@gmail.com)

Academic integrity: For information on proper citation of sources, please see

<http://library.ucsc.edu/help/research/cite-your-sources>.

For information on university policy regarding plagiarism, please see

http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/index.html.

Students with Disabilities: If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me as soon as possible. Contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu for more information.

