

Professor Alvin H. Rosenfeld
Ballantine Hall 314

TR 2:30-3:45 p.m.
Fall Semester 2012

H234/JSTU 203--UNDERSTANDING ANTISEMITISM

The term "antisemitism" was coined only in the late 19th century, but the phenomenon it describes--intense hostility to Jews and/or Judaism--dates back millennia. Sometimes called "the longest hatred," antisemitism begins in the ancient world and, with varying degrees of virulence, has continued over the centuries in the lands of both Christendom and Islam. At its most destructive, in the Nazi Holocaust of European Jewry, it turned genocidal, but well before that catastrophe, and also since, it has been the cause of humiliation, denigration, persecution, and murder, sometimes on a mass scale. Dormant for a time following the end of World War II, antisemitic passions have reawakened in recent years and pose serious challenges today in certain parts of the world.

The aim of this course is to help students understand this complex and often lethal form of hatred. Students will be introduced to the history of anti-Jewish hostilities and become familiar with some of their most prominent manifestations, especially in the modern period. They will learn that antisemitism is rooted in a range of sources--theological, legal, social, political, economic, and mythical--and that it both resembles and differs from other kinds of social bias and antagonism. Through close readings of antisemitic texts, they will become acquainted with the full repertoire of antisemitic tropes: Jews as agents of cosmic evil and murderers of God, children of the Devil and followers of the Antichrist, money manipulators and usurpers of other peoples' possessions, political connivers and conspirators, sexual predators and social corrupters, and more. How these negative stereotypes get encoded and transmitted and why they continue to

have appeal will be a continuing concern during our study.

Required readings for the course will include an historical survey of antisemitism, Walter Laqueur's *The Changing Face of Antisemitism*, Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer's anthology of antisemitic texts, *Antisemitic Myths*, a novel that describes the nature and consequences of antisemitic violence: Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*, and one historical case study, Jan Gross's *Neighbors*. Additional materials will be provided in class or accessed on the Web. A few films will also be shown.

Written work for the course will include three papers: one of 3-4 pages, one of 6-8 pages, and a term paper of 10-12 pages. Students will also present two brief oral reports in class. These assignments are described in detail on the course syllabus. There may also be an in-class examination. The final examination is optional.

Given the nature of the subject matter, this will be a demanding course. Students will be expected to do the assigned readings on time, attend all class meetings, and participate actively in class discussions of the literature. If you must miss a class session, be sure to let me know in advance. Repeated unexcused absences (more than 3) will lower your grade for the course.

You are encouraged to see me during office hours, TR 3:45-4:30 p.m. (Ballantine Hall 453 or Goodbody Hall 306), to discuss any aspect of your work in this course. If these times are inconvenient for you, please call me (855-2325) or contact me through e-mail (Rosenfel@Indiana.edu) for a special appointment. I welcome meeting with you, so if you think I can be helpful, please feel free to get in touch.

Schedule of class meetings and assignments

Note: The following texts are required reading for this course. In addition, you will be given some handouts and also encouraged to locate relevant materials on the Web.

Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (referred to below as W.L.)

Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, editors, *Antisemitic Myths: A Historical and Contemporary Anthology* (referred to below as P & S)

Bernard Malamud, *The Fixer*

Jan Gross, *Neighbors*

August 21 T -- Explanation of course aims, assigned readings, written work, grading and attendance policies; rationale for the course: why study antisemitism? some of the challenges of engaging in such study; efforts to define antisemitism; the persistence of antisemitism; varieties of antisemitism; examples of contemporary antisemitism.

August 23 R -- The resurgence of antisemitism (film: *Antisemitism in the 21st Century*)

August 28 T -- W.L., Preface and Chapter 1;

August 30 R -- W.L., Chapter 2; P & S, #12

September 4 T -- W.L., Chapter 3;

September 6 R --Visiting lecture by Dr. Catherine Chatterley; please read the Book of Matthew or at least chapters 26, 27, 28 for this class. Here is a link: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/matthew-kjv.html>

September 11 T --P & S, # 1-9

September 13 R -- W.L., Chapter 4; P & S, # 10, 16

September 18 T -- No class (Rosh HaShanah)

September 20 R -- W.L., Chapter 5; P & S, #13, 17;

September 25 T -- selections from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*

September 27 R -- W.L., Chapter 6; P & S, #14, 19, 20, 21

October 2 T -- Gross, *Neighbors*

October 4 R -- Gross, *Neighbors*; also, Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "Facing Jedwabne"

October 9 T -- W.L., Chapter 7; P & S, #25, 27, 29

October 11 R -- W.L., Chapter 8; P & S, #15

October 16 T -- W.L., Chapter 9; also, Ari Shavit, "The Jewish Problem" according to Theodorakis (Ha'aretz August 27, 2004; available online)

October 18 R -- student consultations

October 23 T -- W.L., Chapter 10 and Conclusion; P & S, #30; also, "The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas; available online at

<http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/www.thejerusalemfund.org/carryover/documents/charter.html>

October 24 W -- Lecture on French antisemitism by Professor Maurice Samuels

October 25 R-- submit first paper, on Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer* (see guidelines below)

October 30 T -- film showing

November 1 R - a review of four international framework documents on combating antisemitism

November 6 T -- further discussion of contemporary antisemitism

November 8 R -- further discussion of contemporary antisemitism

November 13 T-- Contemporary manifestations (student reports)

November 15 R -- Contemporary manifestations (student reports)

November 20 T -- No class (Thanksgiving break)

November 22 R -- No class (Thanksgiving break))

November 27 T -- Contemporary manifestations (student reports)

November 29 R -- Contemporary manifestations (student reports)

December 4 T -- Contemporary manifestations (student reports)

December 6 R -- ***Submit your research paper in class today***

December 13 R (5-7 p.m.) - Final Examination (optional)

ORAL REPORTS AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

All students in this course will present two oral reports in class and submit three papers. Guidelines for these assignments are presented below. Please feel free to see me with any questions you might have.

(I) Every student will be asked to give a brief (8-10 minute) report in class on one of the documents in the Perry and Schweitzer anthology, ***Antisemitic Myths***. This oral report should then form the basis for a brief paper (3-4 pages) in which you will do the following: (1) offer a summary description of the contents of the document; (2) explain what it is the Jews are accused of and analyze the kinds of arguments that

are presented against them; and (3) present a defense of or rebuttal to the arguments against the Jews. Please submit this brief paper no later than one week after you give your oral report.

(II) Write a 6-8 page paper on *The Fixer* in which you apply insights gained from your study of material in *The Changing Face of Antisemitism* and *Antisemitic Myths* to illuminate major themes in Bernard Malamud's novel. Your aim should be to demonstrate how knowledge of antisemitic motifs from the past can help us understand later manifestations of antisemitic hostility. Date for submission of this paper is October 25..

(III) Extra credit will be given to students who attend Maurice Samuels' lecture on October 24 and submit a 1-2 page response to the lecture. This brief paper should describe the thematic focus of the lecture and assess its effectiveness. What did you learn from this talk that you did not previously know? Your response should be turned in no later than October 30.

(IV) Your major writing assignment of the semester will be a 10-12 page research paper on a topic of your choice selected from the list of topics below. The chief goal of this assignment is to have you track contemporary manifestations of antisemitism and to situate these developments within historical and rhetorical contexts that will help us better understand them. You should regard this project as a term paper that will draw on a knowledge base accumulated over the course of our study. I recommend that you begin thinking about it, therefore, from the very first week of the semester and consciously pursue it as a 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ month research project. Questions that might helpfully guide your thinking include the following: (1) what are the defining features of this phenomenon? (2) how have they manifested themselves in the past? (3) what are their contemporary manifestations? (4) what forms-

-linguistic, political, cultural, ideological, religious, etc.--do they take? (5) what seems to motivate them? (6) what is the nature of their appeal? (7) how can they most effectively be exposed and combated?

Your paper should be annotated. It should also include a bibliography of works consulted and other works that might be examined for a fuller investigation of your chosen subject.

This is the single most important piece of writing you will be doing in this course, so be sure to give it your best effort.

Paper length: 10-12 pages (double-spaced), not including notes and bibliography; you may exceed this length if you wish, but your paper should not fall under a minimum of 10 pages.

Submission date: no later than December 6 (papers that reach me after this date will not be accepted).

Oral report: In addition to presenting your research in written form, you will be asked to make an oral presentation of your findings in class. This report should run to about 15 minutes. A schedule of these oral reports will be finalized within the near future, but they will likely fall between November 13-December 6.

TOPICS FOR RESEARCH PAPERS AND REPORTS

Note: The topic headings listed below are broadly defined and will need to be more narrowly focused and refined for your papers. We will discuss how you might best go about doing that well before the due date for submission.

Instructions: Choose one of the following. See me, if you wish, if you have any questions about your selection or need help in pursuing it. You will be asked to submit a working title for your paper and a brief outline of it no later than November 6.

1. Christian antisemitism

2. Muslim antisemitism
3. Antisemitism on the political left
4. Antisemitism on the political right
5. Anti-Americanism and antisemitism
6. Anti-Zionism and antisemitism
7. Antisemitism and anti-globalization
8. Antisemitism and the critique of capitalism
9. Russian antisemitism (during the Soviet period and afterwards)
10. Antisemitism in Western Europe
11. Antisemitism in Eastern Europe
12. Holocaust denial, distortion, and obfuscation as forms of antisemitism
13. The myth of a Jewish world conspiracy
14. Antisemitism on the Web
15. Antisemitism in the United States
16. Antisemitism and the United Nations

17. Antisemitism on college and university campuses
18. The revival of medieval blood libels
19. Literary antisemitism
20. Antisemitism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
21. Efforts to combat antisemitism (legislative, educational, etc.)
22. Antisemitic cartoons
23. Antisemitic "humor"
24. The psychology of antisemitism: Is there an antisemitic personality?
25. Some other topic of your choice (be sure to clear topic with me before pursuing it)