History 399: Anti-Semitism & Racism in America  CRN:35989  Spring 2015
Class Room: 240A McKenzie  Meeting Time:TU 4- 5:20 PM
Instructor: William Toll  Office 340X McKenzie Hall
Office hours: T U 2:15-3:30 PM & by appointment  e-mail: btoll@uoregon.edu

Introductory Observations:
Anti-Semitism and Racism in United States History

This course will examine how Anti-Semitism became a distinctly American phenomenon and how American Jews were able to respond. We can understand how anti-Semitism became an American phenomenon (a) by separating its incidence in the United States from its ideological origins and mass politics in Europe, and (b) by setting its incidence in the USA into the broader topic of American Racism. Anti-Semitism in America bears many similarities to its expressions in Europe, but this course will try to determine how anti-Semitism became part of American public discourse, and how its expression here helps us to compare the experience of Jews with that of other American ethnic and racial groups. Anti-Semitism, when studied in conjunction with American Racism, is intended to provide insights into the basic fissures in American social history and to examine how Jews have been connected—in different ways at different times and in different regions—to these fissures. We will also want to know how American Jews through their own defense organizations and through the elective political process responded to anti-Semitism.

Because anti-Semitism arose in Europe, we will first examine its ideological origins there and its role in the development of national identities in France, Germany and elsewhere. We will examine how it was brought to America, and how in the English colonies it fit into the more fundamental tension between the English and (a) the Natives from whom they were taking the land, (b) the Africans who were brought to work the land, and (c) Catholics whom the English perceived as the international enemy. In the early 19th century, Jews and Catholics faced political discrimination in many state law codes, but discrimination imposed on people of African and Asian descent was far more comprehensive. So, studying how anti-Semitism fit into mid-19th century America should allow us to understand the fundamental tensions in a society which valorized liberty and growth, but which dreaded the social consequences of a multi-racial society.

By the 1870s industrialization and the rise of formal racial theorizing in America combined to change the context for stigmatizing Jews and other ethnic groups. In order to establish criteria for comparison in this new era, we will look at one anti-Semitic European event with an immense historiography, the Dreyfus Affair. Through examining this prolonged legal and political event which had international publicity, we can establish how antagonists in France used anti-Semitism to interpret their own fundamental social and cultural conflicts. We can then apply that method of social analysis to the United States to examine what expression of anti-Semitism can tell us about our own country. We will compare the trial and lynching of Leo Frank (1913–1915) in Atlanta with the pervasive anti-Semitism faced by Russian Jews in New York to illustrate how very different regional contexts allowed critics of Jews to use anti-Semitism for different purposes. In Atlanta, anti-Semitism highlighted a temporary drama in a society where changing relations between whites and Blacks led to virtually daily violence. In New York anti-Semitism moved to the center of the politically explosive
discussion of America’s new multi-ethnic immigrant proletariat and the alleged threats that it posed to an otherwise serene Nordic nation.

The era of immigration restriction in the 1920s, followed by the rise of Hitler in the 1930s led to the most overt expressions of anti-Semitism in American History. But because of its proponents, anti-Semitism became politically disreputable, while generating a comprehensive Jewish political mobilization. In the years after World War II, as racial theorizing became academically disreputable, as anti-semitism became identified with the Nazi horrors, as Protestant, Catholic and Jewish religious leaders promoted a Brotherhood Campaign, and as a Black civil rights movement became politically viable, Jews became involved in new coaliton-building. For a time, concern about anti-Semitism was eclipsed by a national focus on Racism. When anti-Semitic rhetoric emerged in the 1960s, it was expressed by disparate groups on the fringes of American society, who emphasized different issues, with different goals.

**Required Readings (available at U of Oregon Bookstore)**
3. Packet of Readings

Note: Additional required readings for this class available on Blackboard

**Assignments:**
1. Students will be required to write three papers of about six pages each. The tentative topics are listed at pertinent points in the schedule of lectures and assigned readings. The specific question to be answered for each paper will be distributed at least ten days in advance of the due date. Each of the three paper will be worth 20% of your grade.

2. Students should also form into groups of two or three to make an oral presentation during the last week of class on an event in American history (or in current affairs) that has an anti-Semitic dimension. The event will be chosen from a list provided by the instructor (or it could be an event like the recent shootings in Paris that would be mutually agreed upon by students and the instructor). But the precise dimensions of the event and its interpretation will be determined by the student groups. The presentation must be explained in a brief (3 page) write-up describing the event, explaining why it might be considered anti-Semitic, and suggesting what broader historical insight the event provide. It must also include a brief bibliography listing the sources consulted and explaining—again briefly—which source or two were the most helpful. This presentation (a) should provoke class discussion and (b) will be worth 20% of the students’ grade.

**Possible Topics for Group Presentations**
- Pennsylvania Constitution (original 1776 version)
- General Grant’s field order #11 (1862)
- Black Boycotts of Blumstein’s department store (Harlem) 1936, 1939
- Restrictive covenants, Los Angeles 1940s, 1950s
American Council for Judaism’s opposition to founding of Israel (1946-50)
Ocean–Hill Brownsville confrontation (Brooklyn) (1967)
American Nazi march in Skokie (1977)
Membership policies of college fraternities (one non-Jewish & one Jewish, today
Boycott & Divestment mobilization on UC system campuses (2015)

3. **Twenty per cent (20%) of your grade** will depend on your participation in class discussions. For those sessions that are designated as including a “discussion,” you will be required to prepare questions in advance, bring them to class to provide the basis for class discussion, and turn them in after class

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**Schedule of Lectures & Assigned Readings**

**Wk#1**  
A. Anti-Semitism and the Context of American Racism  
3/31  L#1: European Origins of Anti-Semitism  
A. Lindemann, “Jewish Question,” (2010), 17-33 BL

4/2  L#2: Anti-Semitism, Racism & USA History  
Read: Fredrickson, *Racism*, 1-47

**Wk 2. America Society & Centrality of Race**  
4/7  L#3: America as Civilization’s Frontier  
Read: Robert Berkhofer, “Imagery & White Policy,” *White Man’s Indian*, 113-45 BL  
Wm Pencak, “Anti-Semitism, Prejudice & Appreciation,” (2011) BL

4/9  L#4: Fit for Freedom: Defining a Racial Republic  
WEB DuBois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” (1903)  
*Discussion*† Lindemann, Pencak, DuBois

**Wk 3. Jews & Anti-Semitism in mid- 19th Century America**  
4/14  L#5: The Irish, German Jews & Opportunity  
Read: J. Froude, “Romanism & Irish Race in US,” (Dec, 1879), 519-36  

4/16  L#6: Chinese Immigration & Jews of the West {DISC}  
Read in chronological order:  
3 brief articles on Chinese in *The Nation*, (1870,1879)  
Francis E Sheldon, “The Chinese Immigration Discussion,”(1886), 113-19  
G Danziger, Jews of San Francisco (1896)

*1st Essay Question: [Topic: Anti-Semitism, Racism & 19th Century Jewry]  
due next Tuesday
B. Modernity, Social Question & Jews: Europe and America

Wk 4. Jews & anti-Semitism in late 19th century Europe

4/21 L#7: Modernity, Emancipation & the Jews

4/23 L#8: Dreyfus Affair
KVT,”Dreyfus Case: A Study of French Opinion,” (1898), 593-608
E. Zola, “J’Accuse” (1898)
*Discussion: Feldman, KVT, Zola

Wk 5. Black Emancipation, Atlanta Riot (1906) & Leo Frank Affair

4/28 L#8: Black Emancipation and the New South
Read: Fredrickson, Racism, 97-112
Wendel Phillips, untitled essay, (March 1879)
Ray S Baker, “A Race Riot and After,” (April, 1907)
*John T Graves & WEB DuBois, “Tragedy of Atlanta,” (Nov, 1906),

4/30 L#9: Populist Anti-Semitism & Leo Frank
Read this 1st: MacLean, “Leo Frank Case Reconsidered,” J Am H (1991), 917-48
“Why Was Frank Lynched?,” (December, 1916), 677-92
*Discussion: Phillips, Graves & DuBois, MacLean

Wk 6. Proletarian Threat & the Russian Jews

5/5 L#11: Hebrews & the American Proletariat
Read: Roediger, Working toward Whiteness, [Parts 1, 2], 3-130
T. A. Bingham, “Foreign Criminals in New York (Sept, 1908)
E. A. Ross, “Hebrews of Eastern Europe in America,” (1914)
B. J Hendrick, “Jewish Invasion of America,” (1913)

5/7 L#12: Racializing USA Social Problem: Black Migration to cities
Read: Oscar Leonard, “East St. Louis Pogrom,” Survey (July 1917), 331-3
Alain Locke, “The New Negro,” (1926), 3-16

2nd Essay Q Topic: Racism and Immigrant Jewish worker in the USA
due next Tuesday]

Wk 7. 1920s: Immigration Restriction, Jewish Mobility

5/12 L#12: Immigration Restriction
Read: Roediger, Working Toward Whiteness, 133-77
H Ford, “Jewish Supremacy..Motion Pict,” Drbrn Ind (Feb 19, 1921)
H Ford’s Apology to the Jews, Outlook (July 20, 1927), 372-74
H. Kallen, “Roots of Anti-Semitism,” The Nation (Feb 28, 1923,)240-2
*Discussion] Ross, Kallen, Locke
5/14 L#14: Anti-Semitism & Race in a Depressing Age

Read: Roediger, Working Toward Whiteness, 199-234
Jonathan Smertenko, “Hitlerism Comes to America,” Harper’s (1933), 660-70.
“Jews in America,” Fortune (February, 1936)
T Irwin, “Inside the Christian Front,” The Forum (March, 1940), 102-08

C. Race, Ethnicity & American Pluralism
Week 8. War Time
5/19 L#16: The Double V in the Racist War
Read: H Cayton, “Negro’s Challenge,” Nation (July 3, 1943), 10-12
E Brown, “Truth About the Detroit Riot” Harper’s (Nov. 1943), 488-98
Roediger, Working Toward Whiteness, 235-44

5/21: (catch-up session)
*Discussion: Irwin, Cayton, Brown

Week 9. Jews and Blacks in Post-War City
5/26 L#17: Holocaust Trauma & Safety Net City
Read: Roediger, Working Toward Whiteness, 224-44
D Bernstein, “Jewish Insecurity & Am Realities” Commentary (Feb, 1947),119-27
R Pick, “Refugee Looks at Anti-Semitism Here,” Commentary (Sept, 1948),207-13
C McWilliams, “Does Social Discrim… Matter?” Commentary (Nov,1947),408-15

5/28 L#18: Race, Civil Rights & Jewiwh New York
Read: Kenneth Clark, “Candor About Negro-Jewish Relations, (Feb, 1946), 8-14

Week 10. Jews as Suburban Americans
6/2 A Privileged Minority?

6/4 Class Presentations of Group projects on anti-Semitism

3rd Essay Question Topic: Anti-Semitism & Multi-cultural America due: Mon, June 8th @ 12:30 AM in my office] time when finl exam wold be administered