



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title:	History of the Jews in Bohemia and Central Europe
Course code:	RELI 3002 PRAG
Programs offering course:	Business, Arts and Sciences, Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3.00
Contact hours:	45.00
Term:	Fall 2023

Course Description

This course examines the Jewish experience in the Czech Lands and the other countries of Central Europe. It touches upon the history of Jews in Russia, in addition to Central Europe, since Russia shares some commonalities with the history of Jews in Poland and the Czech Lands. The History of Jews in Central Europe is not only a story of prejudice and contempt, but also a story of hope and suffering which culminates in the worst tragedy of the Jewish people in history, the Holocaust. However, the issue of the Holocaust is not principal in this course. This course aims to provide students with insights into the most flourishing center of Jewish life of Prague and Central Europe, exploring its many different facets. Although the course presents some Jewish philosophical ideas and practices, it is not primarily a course in the Jewish Religion.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Critically discuss Jewish experience in Prague and other Central European centers;
- Identify, analyze and assess the main obstacles in the life of Central European Jewry;
- Acquire the knowledge and skills to contextualize the existence of Jewish population within plurality of cultures in the region;
- Compare and contrast the situation in the presented Central European countries during the key historical periods and events discussed in class;
- Research and present a topic of their choice and defend their findings.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

Experiential excursions, presentations, group discussions, research.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Presentation on an Assigned Topic	15%
2. Tests	20%
3. Final Paper and Presentation	20%
4. Reading Checks	20%
5. Group Presentation during a Day Excursion	5%
6. Class Participation	20%
TOTAL	100%

Course Requirements

Presentation on an Assigned Topic

A mandatory 30-40 minutes presentation on an assigned topic. This task includes a PowerPoint presentation with information about the author(s) of the reading(s) used, multiple slides with content presentation with difficult

points explained and final slides with questions and polemic points for moderating the debate. Grading takes into account the accuracy in delivering main issues to the class and success in stimulating discussion. Assessed areas are: clarity, delivery, organization and capacity to engage fellow students.

Schedule of presentations will be determined at the beginning of the semester.

Tests

In addition to two tests (dates specified in the Weekly Structure), the study groups prepare and exchange tests on the content of the previous class at the beginning of most classes.

Final Paper and Presentation

1,500-2,000 words, spacing 1.5 lines. The projects are evaluated according to the quality of research and ability to add your own commentary. The work **MUST** have resonance with topics and readings covered in class. The topic must be consulted with the lecturer and approved by the lecturer in advance. A presentation of a research paper takes approximately 10-15 minutes.

Reading Checks

There will be ten readings requiring a reading check. Each check is worth up to 10 points. It is part of a consistent preparation for the class. First page - check: Author, title (event/ exhibition, etc.), year (if relevant). Bullet points with quotes, names, and data. One question for whole class discussion. Second page - reaction: your evaluation, polemics, criticism, etc. Only accepted **BEFORE** class. Submit by Sunday 10:00 p.m. on Canvas and bring a printed version to the class.

Group Presentation during a Day Excursion

A 30-minute group presentation on an assigned topic. This task includes outdoor presentations. Assessed areas are: clarity, delivery, organization and capacity to engage fellow students.

Class Participation

Class participation involves more than mere attendance. A consistent acquaintance with **SOURCES** and readings is required as well as an active participation in class discussions. Field trip checks include: place(s) visited, time of construction, a text including learned facts. Length: min 500 words. Guest lecture checks: there will be two guest lectures held during the semester. A guest lecture check must include: the name of the Holocaust survivor, bullet points learned, second page: how it was for you.

CIEE Prague Class Participation Policy

Assessment of students' participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Participation is valued as **meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom**, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students are required to actively, meaningfully and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions and all types of in-class activities throughout the duration of the class.

Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed, in advance of each class session. This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Students are responsible for following the course content and are expected to ask clarification questions if they cannot follow the instructor's or other students' line of thought or argumentation.

The use of electronic devices is only allowed for computer-based in-class tests, assignments and other tasks specifically assigned by the course instructor. Students are expected to take notes by hand unless the student is entitled to the use of computer due to his/her academic accommodations. In such cases the student is required to submit an official letter issued by his/her home institution specifying the extent of academic accommodations.

Class participation also includes students' active participation in Canvas discussions and other additional tasks related to the course content as specified by the instructor.

Students will receive a partial participation grade every three weeks.

Attendance

To encourage engaged learning, regular class attendance is required for the program. This includes any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as internship, service-learning, or other required field placement.

An excused absence in a CIEE course will only be considered if approved by a CIEE Center Director/Academic Director (not the Instructor), and:

- it is a self-certified absence for illness (only once per course, requires formal request before or within 24 hours, cannot miss assessment worth more than 5% of final course grade)
- a doctor's note from a local medical professional is provided
- evidence of a family emergency is provided
- it is a pre-approved observance of religious holiday

Unexcused absences include personal travel and/or travel delays, as well as missing more than 25% of a single class period (including tardiness and early departure). Assessments missed due to unexcused absences will be marked as zero. Students with over 10% unexcused absences will be contacted by CIEE staff. Students with over 20% unexcused absences will be contacted by CIEE staff, receive a formal warning letter (shared with their home institution) and lose 10% of the final course point total (e.g., a final A grade of 93% will be lowered to a B grade of 83%).

For more detail, please consult your CIEE Academic Manual.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to a positive and inclusive teaching and learning environment. All students are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness, respect, and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in grade penalties or disciplinary action. See the CIEE Student Academic Manual for further information on academic integrity.

N.B. Course schedule and co-curriculars are subject to change. The final duration and distribution of content and assignments will be determined and presented to students at the onset of the course.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class: Jews in the Ancient world and in the Middle Ages, Ashkenazim

Week 2

Class: Crusades, medieval antisemitism, status of Jews in the Middle Ages

Discussion: Blood Libel and other accusations

Sources: Thomas of Monmouth's account of the *Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich* (a ritual murder accusation from 1173);

A ritual murder accusation from Blois, 1171;

Accusations of well-poisoning levelled against Jews during the Black Death (c. 1346-52)

Readings (reading checks due):

1. Langmuir 1990, 263-281.
2. Nirenberg 2013, 183-216.
3. Michael 2008, 67-73.

Presentations:

1. Crusades and Blood Libel Accusation
2. Host Desecration and Ritual Murder
3. Black Death

Week 3

Class: Jewish mysticism and Hassidism, Jews in the 17th and 18th centuries

Reading:

Potok 1966, 104- 113.

Reading Check:

IV. Tirosh-Samuels, 2010.

Presentation:

4. Jewish Mysticism

Field trip to the Old-New Synagogue

Class Excursion:

Kolín: one of the main centers of Jewish life in Bohemia since the 14th century. The 15th century Jewish cemetery is the second most important one in the country after the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague.

Group presentations:

1. Medieval antisemitism and representations of Jews
2. Architecture of a synagogue
3. Maharal and his followers

Reading: Fiedler 1991, 27-36.

Week 4

Class: Sources in: Mendes-Flohr, Reinhartz 1995:

The French National Assembly: Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1789

The French National Assembly: Debate on Eligibility of Jews for Citizenship, 1789

Moses Mendelsohn, The Right to be Different, 1783

Joseph II: Edict of Tolerance, 1782

Reading (reading check due):

V. Laquer 2003.

Presentation:

5. Enlightenment and Haskalah

Week 5

Class: Field trip to the Jewish Museum in Prague

Reading: Kling 1999, pp. 22-58.

Week 6

Class: Midterm Exam Period

Test 1

Film: Yaakov Lifshin, The Way of Man – on Martin Buber

Week 7

Class: The Pale of Settlement / Midterm Exam Period

Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 19th Century

Sources in: Mendes-Flohr, Reinhartz 1995. :

Alexander I: Statutes Concerning the Organization of Jews, 1804

Nicholas I: Statutes Regarding the Military Service of Jews, 1827

Nicholas I: Delineation of the Pale of Settlement, 1835

Map of the Jewish Pale of Settlement, 1835-1917

Reading: Beller 2007.

Week 8

Class: 19th Century Antisemitism, Zionism, Modern Racial Theories, Blood Libel

Sources in: Mendes-Flohr, Reinharz 1995. :

Moses Hess: Returning Home, 1862

The Bilu: Manifesto, 1882

Theodor Herzl: A Solution of the Jewish Question, 1896

The First Zionist Congress: The Basle Program, 1897

N. Tchaykovsky: The Massacre of Jews at Kishniev, 1903

The Beilis Trial, 1913

Reading (reading check due):

VI. Bronner 2004, 81-94.

Week 9

Class: Interwar Situation in Central Europe

Readings (reading check due):

VII. Brustein 2003, 1-48.

Presentation:

6. Various aspects of pre-war antisemitism

Reading: Mendelsohn 1983, 131-169.

Week 10

Class: The Holocaust

Sources in: Mendes-Flohr, Reinharz, 1995:

Hitler 1923.

The Nuremberg Laws, 1935, Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, The Reich Citizenship Law

Security Service Report on the Kristallnacht, 1938

Decree for the Elimination of the Jews from German Economic Life, 1938

Numerus Nullus in Schools, 1938

Protocols of the Wansee Conference, 1942

Estimated Numbers of Jews Killed by the Nazis

Readings (reading checks due):

VIII. Peukert 1994, 274-299.

IX.&X. Bronner 2000, 1-70. (worth 2 checks)

Presentations:

7. Protocols of the Elders of Zion

8. Germany and Colonialism

9. Modernity, Science and the Holocaust

10. Eugenics and Genocides

Research paper due on Sunday, 11:59 p.m., Prague time

Week 11

Class: Postwar situation in Central Europe and Jews under Communism

Guest lecture: A Holocaust survivor

Film screening on Sir Nicholas Winton, Matěj Mináč, The Power of Good

Week 12

Class: Test 2

Field trip: Jerusalem synagogue

Week 13

Class: Final presentations of research papers

End-of-course discussion

Course Materials

Readings

All readings are available on Canvas or provided by the lecturer.

Required:

- Beller, Steven. *Antisemitism, A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Breuer, Mordechai "The Black Death and Antisemitism", in: Shmuel Almog, ed., *Antisemitism Through the Ages*. Oxford, New York, Pergamon Press, 1988, p. 139-151.
- Bronner, Stephen Eric, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment*, Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Bronner, Stephen Eric, *A Rumor About the Jews, Reflections on Antisemitism and the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2000.
- Brustein, William I. *Roots of Hate, Antisemitism in Europe before the Holocaust*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Evans, Richard J., *The Third Reich in History and Memory*, Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Fiedler, Jiří. "Ghettos, Synagogues and Cemeteries", *Jewish Sights of Bohemia and Moravia*, Prague 1991.
- Kieval, Hillel J. „The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands“, *Languages of Community*. University of California Press, 2000.
- Kling, Simcha. *Embracing Judaism*, revised by Carl M. Perkins, New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1999.
- Langmuir, Gavin. *"Ritual Cannibalism", Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990.
- Laquer, Walter. "Out of the Ghetto", *The History of Zionism*, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, London, New York, 2003.
- Mendelsohn, Ezra. *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1983.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul, Reinharz, Jehuda (ed.), *The Jew in the Modern World. A documentary history*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Michael, Robert, *A History of Catholic Antisemitism, The Dark Side of the Church*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, Hampshire, 2008.
- Nirenberg, David. *Antijudaism, the Western Tradition*, Norton, London, New York, 2013.
- Pařík, Arno „From the History of the Jewish Communities in Bohemia and Moravia“, *Jewish Sights of Bohemia and Moravia*, Prague 1991.
- Peukert, Detlev J. K. "The Genesis of the 'Final Solution' from the Spirit of Science." In David Crew, ed. *Nazism and German Society, 1933-45. Rewriting Histories*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Potok, Chaim. *The Chosen*. Penguin, London, 1966.
- Tirosh-Samuels, Hava. "Jewish Mysticism", Judith R. Baskin. Kenneth Seeskin (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to the Jewish History, Religion and Culture*, 2010, p. 399-423.

- Turda, Marius. *Modernism and Eugenics*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010.
- de Gobineau, Joseph. *The Inequality of Human Races*, translated by Adrian Collins. (London: William Heinemann, 1915 [orig., Paris, 1853]).
- Fiedler, Jiří. "Ghettos, Synagogues and Cemeteries", *Jewish Sights of Bohemia and Moravia*, Prague 1991.
- Hoffman, Eva. *Shtetl*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1997.
- Judt, Tony. *From the House of Dead: An Essay on Modern European Memory*. New York, Penguin Books, 2006.
- Kieval, Hillel J. „The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands“, *Languages of Community*. University of California Press, 2000.
- Kling, Simcha. *Embracing Judaism*, revised by Carl M. Perkins, New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1999.
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- Potok, Chaim. *The Chosen*. Penguin, London, 1966.

Online Resources

Accusations of well-poisoning levelled against Jews during the Black Death (c. 1346-52)

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/1348-jewsblackdeath.asp>

A ritual murder accusation from Blois, 1171 - <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1171blois.asp>

Thomas of Monmouth's account of the Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich (a ritual murder accusation from 1173) - <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1173williamnorwich.asp>

Media Resources

Films

Yaakov Lifshin, *The Way of Man*, Hamsin Productions Ltd., 2015.

Ages. Oxford, New York, Pergamon Press, 1988, p. 139-151.