

Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Florence

Course Code / Title: FL/JWST 360 Jews in Modern Europe: National Contexts, Shared Histories

Contact Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Jewish Studies / History, Sociology

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

This course examines how Jews engaged with other Western Europeans both before and after World War II, tracing their intertwined histories and collective memories. Students will gain insight into Jewish experiences in Western Europe, beginning with 19th-century Emancipation and continuing through the early 20th century, the Holocaust, and the complex aftermath in countries such as Germany, Italy, France, and in Israel. The course emphasizes how non-Jewish citizens in Italy, Germany, and France confronted—or avoided—reckoning with their roles in Fascist and Nazi regimes. Students will investigate Jewish views of their lives in Europe and Israel throughout the past century, including the perspectives of Displaced Persons after the Holocaust as well as Jews who opted to remain in their home countries. They will explore the reasons behind why some Jews stayed, the nuances of their citizenship, their relationships with non-Jews, and the motives leading others to choose emigration to Israel.

Content warning:

At times, this course necessarily engages with readings, visual materials and contents that can be disturbing. This is especially the case of materials related to the rise of Fascist states – and of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany in particular - in Europe in the first half of the 20th century, and to the discrimination, persecution and extermination of European Jews and the Second World War. Students are encouraged to engage with this material seriously, rigorously and critically. If certain material, or discussions on it, become too emotionally challenging, students may leave the classroom without academic penalty. Students are, however, responsible for all missed material, and so should arrange to get notes from another student.

Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students will:

- Gain a comprehensive knowledge of Jewish history and culture in 20th century Europe.
- Identify key social, political, and cultural factors affecting Jewish communities.
- Compare different Jewish experiences across various European countries.
- Analyze the impact of historical events on Jewish identity and survival.
- Understand the complex relationships between Jews and other groups in Europe during this period.

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- Engage in critical discussions about memory, trauma, and representation of Jews in modern Europe.

Requirements

Active participation is essential in this course. Students are expected to attend each class and field study course component as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Students are expected to read all assigned materials before the relevant class session and come prepared to participate thoughtfully in class discussions. Reading assignments are generally 20-30 pages per class session. All assignments must be submitted via Canvas unless otherwise noted. Site visits are a required field study course component. Students are expected to participate and complete required assignments (readings, written, oral) related to the Seminar, which are factored into the final course grade as outlined below.

Graded assignments include:

- **Participation:** Students are expected to contribute actively to class discussions, linking the concepts and terms from the readings, lectures, and presentations with their own comments and observations.
- **Quizzes:** 2 quizzes (multiple choice about 15 questions) to test students' general knowledge of the historical context (time and place) where studied events take place.
- **Reaction paper:** Based on either traveling seminar or site visit to a place of interest to the topics of the course, within Florence or broader Tuscany.
- **Presentation:** 15 minute presentation, with 5 minutes for questions (total 20 minutes), using an assigned text (film, article, memoir, testimony, personal research) to illustrate events and concepts studied in class and to stimulate a critical discussion.
- **Mid-term exam:** 1 hour to reply to three questions in an essay format making references to readings, contexts and materials examined in class. Refers to materials and periods studied during the first part of the semester.
- **Final exam:** 1 hour to reply to three questions in an essay format making references to readings, contexts and materials examined in class. Refers to materials and periods studied during the second part of the semester.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

Participation (<i>see rubric below</i>)	10%
Quizzes (2 at 10%)	20%
Mid-term Exam	20%
Reaction paper	15%

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Presentation	15%
Final Exam	20%

Class Participation Grading Rubric

	A – 90-100% Exemplary	B – 80-89% Proficient	C – 70-79% Developing	D – 60-69% Unacceptable	F – 0-59% Missing
Frequency of class participation	Actively contributes 2+ times per meeting	Actively contributes at least 1 time per meeting	Actively contributes at least half of the time during term	Actively contributes less than half of the time during term	Does not contribute
Quality of class participation*	Contribution is always thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, frequently interacting with peers	Contribution is mostly thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, usually interacting with peers	Contribution is somewhat thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, sometimes interacting with peers	Contribution is rarely thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, rarely interacting with peers	Does not contribute or interact with peers
Level of class preparation	Always fully prepared and on task	Mostly prepared and on task	Somewhat prepared and on task	Rarely prepared and on task	Consistently unprepared and not on task

Readings / Resources

Auslander, Leora. "Coming Home? Jews in Postwar Paris." *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 2 (2005): 237-59.

Berr, H el ene. *The Journal of H el ene Berr*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2008.

Brenner, Michael. *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Life in Postwar Germany*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Clifford, Rebecca. *Commemorating the Holocaust: The Dilemmas of Remembrance in France and Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013

Friedl ander, Saul. *When Memory Comes*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979.

Koch, Anna. "Returning Home? Italian and German Jews Remigration after the Holocaust." In *Migrations in the German Lands, 1500-2000*, edited by Jason Coy, Jared Poley, Alexander Schunka, pp. 173-82. New York: Berghahn Books, 2016.

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Levi, Primo. *If This Is a Man*. London: Abacus, 1987. (Originally published as *Se questo è un uomo*, Torino: De Silva, 1947.)

Mandel, Maud. *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Modiano, Patrick. *Dora Bruder*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Renton, James, and Ben Gidley, editors. *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A Shared Story?*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Simoni, Marcella. "Young Italian Jews in Israel, and Back: Voices from a Generation, 1945-1953." In *Italian Jewish Networks from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*, edited by Francesca Bregoli and Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, pp. 173-200. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Simoni, Marcella. "When the conflict spills over. Identities, memories and representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Italy. The 1960s." In *The Languages of Discrimination and Racism in Italy in the 20th Century*, edited by Marcella Simoni and Davide Lombardo, pp. 99-135. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Stille, Alexander. *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Valensi, Lucette, and Nathan Wachtel. *Jewish Memories*. Translated by Barbara Harshav. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991.

Zuccotti, Susan. *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

Content

Topic 1 – Jewish emancipation, assimilation, and identity in Western and Eastern Europe (1750-1905)

- Urban and rural Jews; cities vs. shtetls
- The languages of European Jews
- Jewish contribution to European culture, arts, and sciences
- The end of the ghettos in Europe; civil and political rights
- New political and national identities

Topic 2 – Antisemitism: old prejudices and modern forms (1880s-1935)

- Judeophobia vs political antisemitism
- Pseudoscientific racial theories

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Topic 3 – The rise of the racial state

- Fascism in Italy
- Nazism in Germany
- Other fascist regimes in Europe

Topic 4 – The Churches and the Jews in Europe before and during World War II

- Churches in Italy, Germany and France
- The silences of Pious XII

Topic 5 – Holocaust in Europe

- Discrimination – Persecution - Extermination
- Resistance and agency
- The drowned and the saved
- DPs and refugees

Topic 6 – Reconstruction and memory

- Reconstruction of Jewish life in Europe after 1945
- The State of Israel and the Holocaust as sites of a new Jewish European identity
- Memory of the Holocaust in comparative perspective

Topic 7 – The foundation of the State of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

- Migrations and returns of some European Jews (1948 and 1967)
- The Spillover: Israeli-Palestinian conflict spills over into European politics

Topic 8 – Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe

- Migrations
- Terrorism
- Cooperations
- New European frontiers: the Mediterranean

Field study and experiential learning components may include:

- Synagogue and Jewish Museum of Florence
- Meeting with Director Tamar Tal Anati, screening of the movie *Shalom Italia*, visit to the sites of the movie
- Guest lectures by visiting professors

Syllabus of Record is subject to minor changes in Term-specific Syllabus at faculty's discretion.