



"The Jewish question; the eternal question mark that does not let the world fall asleep." Menachem Birnbaum. Postcard. c. 1910. Jewish Museum, Vienna.

THE POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE JEWISH QUESTION SOC489H1S – LEC0101/CJS490H1-S LEC0201

COURSE WEBSITE: <https://q.utoronto.ca>

WEDNESDAY, 10:10 AM–12 PM

WINTER 2022

371 Bloor Street West—FE41

Also accessible in the basement,
Department of Sociology, 725 Spadina Ave.

Instructor

Professor Robert Brym

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office hours: by appointment

Prerequisites

- For students wanting a Sociology credit: 2 one-semester Sociology courses at the 300 level or higher.
- For students wanting a Jewish Studies credit: 10 one-semester courses, at least 1 of them in Sociology.

Course Format

Lectures will be delivered in class on Wednesdays between 10:10 am and noon. Office hours will be held by Zoom online. Please make an appointment via email (robert.brym@utoronto.ca). Tests will be administered at times indicated below.

Technical Requirements

You will need Microsoft 365 for this course. U of T offers it to all students free of charge. For Microsoft 365 installation instructions, click [here](#). Microsoft 365 includes Word (for .doc and .docx files) and PowerPoint (for .ppt files). You will also need [Acrobat Reader](#) (for .pdf files) and [VLC](#) for .mp4 files.

Overview

One must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and grant the Jews everything as individuals....
Individually, they must be citizens.

—Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre, French National Assembly, debate on the eligibility of Jews for citizenship (1789)

Let us not look for the secret of the Jew in his religion.... An organization of society that would abolish the prerequisites of haggling...would make the [existence of the] Jew impossible.

—Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question* (1844)

A corner of Palestine, a “canton,” how can we promise to be satisfied with it? We cannot. We never can. Should we swear to you we would be satisfied, it would be a lie.

—Vladimir Jabotinsky, Evidence Submitted to the Palestine Royal Commission (1937)

דער מענטש טראַכט און גאָט לאַכט.

People plan and God laughs.

—Yiddish folk saying

In pre-modern Europe, Jews lacked citizenship rights. The Jewish Question asks how Jews ought to adapt to the modern world. Seeking answers, Jews formulated competing ideologies and joined social and political movements that, they believed, would help them realize their dreams. This course examines the origins, development, implementation, successes and failures of the three socio-political movements that were the main secular solutions Jews advocated: liberalism, communism and Zionism.

- *Liberalism* promoted the integration of Jews in democratic, capitalist societies with the same civil and political rights as non-Jews.
- *Communism* invited Jews to fight for the creation of a classless society in which, as Marx put it, each person would contribute “according to his ability” and receive “according to his needs,” and where religion would disappear because it would no longer be needed.
- *Zionism* advocated the founding of a sovereign state in the Jews’ ancient homeland.

The liberal, communist and Zionist dreams succeeded in some respects to live up to the expectations of their advocates. However, like most human endeavours, they failed in other respects, sometimes tragically. It is unlikely that this course will generate compelling answers to the Jewish Question for the 21st century. However, it may raise issues that prompt you to inquire further as you seek your own meaningful values and courses of action.

Readings

Students with little or no background in Jewish history should read the first item (#0) in the list below *before* the start of classes. The remaining items (#1 to #15) are required readings for all students.

Books that should be obtained before the course begins

- #0 David Myers. 2017. *Jewish History: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press. This book is available online free of charge through the U of T library system by clicking [here](#) and entering your UTRORID and password when requested.
- #1 Zvi Gitelman. 2001 [1988]. *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*, 2nd ed. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press. This book is available for \$11.19 from [Indigo](#) (Kobo ebook) or \$9.99 from [Amazon](#) (Kindle edition).
- #2 Milton Viorst. 2016. *Zionism: The Birth and Transformation of an Ideal*. New York: Thomas Dunne. This book is available for \$12.99 from [Indigo](#) (Kobo ebook) or [Amazon](#) (Kindle edition).

*Items available free of charge on the course Quercus site (go to **Files-->readings**)*

- #3 Jacob Katz. 1971 [1958]. "The economic basis of the Jewish community." Pp. 43-63 in *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*. New York: Schocken.
- #4 Robert Brym. 2018. "The political economy of the Jewish Question (1096-1900)." Unpublished manuscript.
- #5 Louis Greenberg. 1944. "The West-European background of *Haskalah*" and "The first attempt at emancipation." Pp. 12-28 in *The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for Emancipation*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.
- #6 Pauline Wengeroff. 1967 [1908-10]. "Memoirs of a grandmother." Pp. 160-8 in Lucy Dawidowicz, ed. *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe*. Boston: Beacon.
- #7 Pavel Borisovich Axelrod. 1967 [1924]. "Socialist Jews confront the pogroms." Pp. 405-10 in Lucy Dawidowicz, ed. *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe*. Boston: Beacon.
- #8 Robert Brym. 1988. "Structural location and ideological divergence: Jewish Marxist intellectuals in turn-of-the-century Russia." Pp. 359-79 in Barry Wellman and Stephen Berkowitz, eds. *Social Structures: A Network Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- #9 Lucy Dawidowicz. 1975. Pp. 201-23, 463-79, 544 in *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*. New York: Bantam.
- #10 Ari Shavit. 2013. Pp. 99-132 in *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.
- #11 Robert Brym. 2018. "Explaining suicide bombers." Pp. 33-51 in Robert Brym, *Sociology as a Life or Death Issue*, 4th Canadian ed. Toronto: Nelson.
- #12 Nir Gazit and Robert Brym. 2011 "State-directed political assassination in Israel: a political hypothesis." *International Sociology* 26(6): 862-77.
- #13 Zvi Gitelman. 1998. "The decline of the diaspora Jewish nation: boundaries, content, and Jewish identity." *Jewish Social Studies* 4(2): 112-32.
- #14 Robert Brym, Anna Slavina and Rhonda Lenton. 2020. "Qualifying the leading theory of diaspora Jewry: an examination of Jews from the former Soviet Union in Canada and the United States." *Contemporary Jewry* 40(2): 367-85.
- #15 Robert Brym and Rhonda Lenton. 2020. "Jewish religious intermarriage in Canada." *Canadian Jewish Studies* 30(2): 67-82.

Films

The films listed below deal with inhuman cruelty and deep moral and political quandaries. In other words, they mirror life. Viewer discretion is advised. Viewing the following films is required.

- *Jew Süß* (Germany, 1940; 1:35). Süß was a real historical figure. He served as financial advisor to the Duke of the German state of Württemberg in the early 1700s. When the Duke died, Süß's enemies accused him of fraud, embezzlement, treason, lecherous relations with court ladies, accepting bribes, and trying to re-establish Catholicism in the Protestant state. After a trial that produced no proof of guilt, Süß was found guilty. Given a chance to convert to Christianity, he refused and was hanged. Two centuries later, Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Propaganda, backed a reinterpretation of the story of Süß that became the most notorious antisemitic film ever produced. A box office sensation across Germany, it became a staple of propaganda evenings organized by Hitler Youth, the SS and other Nazi organizations. The film depicts Süß as a figure of cynical cunning and malign will, a sexual predator sowing corruption everywhere whose promotion of Jewish emancipation brings Württemberg to the brink of moral and social ruin.
- *Paradise Now* (Palestine and Israel, 2005; 1:31), screenplay by Hany Abu-Assad and Bero Beyer, starring Kais Nashif and Ali Suliman. This film won 13 film awards, including a Golden Globe Award for best foreign film, and was nominated for an Oscar. It portrays two Palestinian friends who are recruited for a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv during the second *intifada*. However, things go wrong, and the attackers follow separate paths.
- *The Gatekeepers* (Israel, 2012; 1:41), documentary, directed by Dror Moreh, starring Ami Ayalon, Avraham Shalom and Avi Dichter. This film won 7 film awards including the Award of the Israeli Film Academy for best documentary, and it was nominated for an Oscar for best documentary. The three principals, all former heads of the *Shin Bet*, Israel's Security Service, provide compelling arguments about how best to solve the Palestinian question.
- *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (Canada, 1974; 1:55). This film is based on Mordecai Richler's 1959 novel of the same name. The film won four film awards, including the Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Film, and was nominated for an Oscar for best adapted screenplay. Benjy (played by Richard Dreyfus) is a young Jew in 1940s Montreal whose father drives a taxi. While his rich uncle is putting Benjy's brother through McGill medical school, Benjy must use his guile and street smarts to make it big. Along the way, he betrays a friend and loses his Québécoise girlfriend and much of traditional value.

Weekly Topics, Readings, Films

Numbers preceded by a # correspond to the items listed above. Page numbers are in parentheses. The amount of required reading varies from week to week. Please plan accordingly. Films will be made available online and will be discussed in the class following the week in which they are viewed.

Date	Topic	Readings	Film
Prep	The course of Jewish history	#0	
12 Jan	The Jews in Europe: 1096-1900	#3 #4	
19 Jan	The Haskalah: 1750-1880	#5 #6	
26 Jan	Zionism: 1881-1914	#1(1-58);#2(1-182)	
2 Feb	TEST		
9 Feb	Marxism: 1848-1905	#1(59-114) #7 #8	<i>Jude Süß</i>
16 Feb	The holocaust: 1933-45	#1(115-43) #9	
23 Feb	READING WEEK		
2 March	The Jews under communism: 1917-91	#1(144-95)	
9 March	TEST		<i>Paradise</i>
16 March	The Palestinian question: 1947-67	#10 #11 #12	<i>Gatekeepers</i>
23 March	Nationalism vs democracy in Israel: 1967-2019	#2(185-284)	<i>Duddy Kravitz</i>
30 March	Democracy: Russia and North America	#1(212-74) #13 #14 #15	
6 April	TEST or OPTIONAL ESSAY DUE		

Evaluation

Tests will be written using the **Quizzes** function on the course's Quercus website beginning at 10:10 am on the dates indicated in the table above. The optional essay and optional film reviews are due before midnight on the dates indicated in the table above.

Item	Value	Due
Participation in class discussions	20%	weekly
Multiple-choice test #1	25%	2 Feb
Multiple-choice test #2	30%	9 Mar
Multiple-choice test #3	25%	6 Apr
OPTIONAL essay in place of test #3 (topic must be approved by Professor)	25%	6 Apr
OPTIONAL film reviews (reduce values of any test; maximum four reviews)	5%/review	16 Feb; 16, 23 & 30 Mar

Attendance

Attending all classes is required. If you cannot attend a class due to illness or family emergency, please obtain lecture notes from a classmate.

Deadline

The optional essay is due by noon on 6 April. Late work will not be accepted without proper documentation (see "Documentation below"). Without proper documentation, the penalty for late submission will be 2% per day.

Plagiarism

Students wishing to write an optional essay or book review must complete and submit the form on the last page of the syllabus with each assessment. Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. If

you commit an academic offence, you will face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly. Know where you stand by reading the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#).

Accessibility

If you have accessibility concerns, please visit [Accessibility Services](#). If you require accommodation, you MUST register with [Accommodated Testing Services](#) AT LEAST TWO WEEKS BEFORE EACH ASSESSMENT.

If you miss an assessment

If you miss an assessment due to illness or injury, you must immediately email Professor Brym (robert.brym@utoronto.ca) and declare your absence on ACORN. If you miss an assessment due to a family emergency or other personal reason, you must immediately contact your College Registrar, who will inform Professor Brym. If for any reason you miss an assessment, the value of the missed assessment will be distributed as follows:

Assessment	Original distribution	If test 1 missed	If test 2 missed	If test 3 missed
Class participation	20	25	25	30
Test 1	25	missed	35	35
Test 2	25	35	missed	35
Test 3	30	40	40	missed
Total	100	100	100	100

Academic Integrity Checklist
SOC489H1S/CJS490H1-S LEC0201

Professor Robert Brym

I, _____, affirm that this assignment represents entirely my own efforts.

I confirm that:

- I have acknowledged the use of another's ideas with accurate citations.
- If I used the words of another (e.g., author, instructor, information source), I have acknowledged this with quotation marks (or appropriate indentation) and proper citation.
- When paraphrasing the work of others, I put the idea into my own words and did not just change a few words or rearrange the sentence structure
- I have checked my work against my notes to be sure I have correctly referenced all direct quotes or borrowed ideas.
- My bibliography includes only the sources used to complete this assignment.
- This is the first time I have submitted this assignment (in whole or in part) for credit.
- Any proofreading by another was limited to indicating areas of concern which I then corrected myself.
- This is the final version of my assignment and not a draft.
- I have kept my work to myself and did not share answers/content with others, unless otherwise directed by my instructor.
- I understand the consequences of violating the University's academic integrity policies as outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*.

By signing this form I agree that the statements above are true.

If I do not agree with the statements above, I will not submit my assignment and will consult the course instructor immediately.

Student name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____