History 510:378
Jewish Studies 563:396:01

Jews and Revolution in Modern Russia: Politics, Society and Culture

Fall 2012
Professor Ziva Galili

Tuesday, Thursday: 6:10-7:30
College Avenue Campus

Course web site can be accessed via your page on the Sakai website.
Contact Professor Galili: galili@sas.rutgers.edu
Office Hours: 102 Van Dyck Hall, Wednesday, 1:30-2:30 pm; Thursday, 5:00-6:00 pm.

Purpose of Course:

In the decades leading to its demise, the Russian Empire was home to about 5 million Jews – the largest Jewish community in the world. Over half of them remained in the Soviet Union following the empire's breakup in 1917. This course will examine the complex history of Russia's Jews in relation to its revolutionary traditions and its reincarnation as the Soviet Union. The course will follow a double narrative, placing Jewish participation and responses in the context of the history of Russian society and politics from the middle of the 19th century to the end of Stalin's reign in 1953. Through readings, lectures, films, visual presentations, discussions & debates we will work to understand the varied and changing reactions of Jews to revolutionary ideologies and practices, as well as their place among those who shaped revolutionary and Soviet history in Russia.

In the early part of the course we will focus on the sources of instability in Russian society in late 19th and early 20th centuries; Russia's revolutionary parties; the revolutions of 1905 and 1917; the legal and social condition of Jews in Tsarist Russia; the sources, nature and impact of repeated violence against Jews; Jewish political and cultural responses to violence and revolution. Later on, we will consider the evolution of the Soviet system through periods of civil war, relaxation, Stalin's forceful remaking of Soviet society, losses and victory in World War II, and Stalin's post-war years. Much of our attention will focus on the effects of the Soviet system on the lives, culture, and allegiances of Jews living within its orbit. Topics will include the Jewish romance with Soviet Communism; the role of the Jewish Section of the Communist Party in the attack on religion and Hebrew culture; early Soviet struggles against anti-Semitism and the attempt to solve Jewish poverty through agricultural settlement; the flourishing of Yiddish culture in the 1920s and 1930s; Soviet Jews in the Second World War and the Holocaust; the rise of Soviet nationalism and Stalin's anti-Jewish campaign of the post-war years.

The course combines lectures, discussions & debates, films, and visual presentations of art and photography. Students are expected to complete the readings for every topic as indicated in the schedule and to participate in class activities, including reports, debates and discussions.

Three writing assignments are required of all course participants:

1. Throughout the semester, students will be writing their own "History of Jews and Revolution in Modern Russia." Using assigned readings, lectures and class discussions, students will update their "History" periodically, in accordance with a list of dates posted under *Assignments* on the Sakai course site (updates are normally due two days after we complete a topic). The "History" will consist of 12 "chapters" and is expected to be 12-15 pages long when completed.
2. 5-page paper, due in mid-semester.
3. Take-home final exam (2 essay questions, each approximately 5-page long).

Learning Goals

1. Understanding the roots and course of revolution in Russia and the shape it took in the Soviet Union from the 1920s through the 1970s.
2. Acquiring knowledge and understanding of the complex relations between Jews and revolution in Russia and the Soviet Union.
3. Understanding a range of Jewish responses to modernity, including secularism, assimilation, socialism and nationalism.
4. Ability to read and understand a variety of sources for the study of history, including contemporary primary documents, memoirs, literature, as well as secondary sources written in academic prose.
5. Ability to draw historical insight from media sources, including films and visual arts.
6. Ability to analyze and integrate information from disparate data sources to form an understanding of historical events.
7. Ability to write correctly and persuasively.
8. Ability to speak about historical questions.

Course Requirements and Grading

1. Attendance at all class meetings (10%). Absence from more than two class meetings will result in a lower grade, unless a written excuse is presented.

2. Completion of the readings for every topic <u>and</u> active participation in reports, debates, and discussions, as indicated in the schedule below (15%).

3. Semester-long "History of Jews and the Russian Revolution" (30%).

4. 5-page paper (15%)

5. 10-page take-home final exam (30%).

6. All assignments are due at the time and date indicated and should be submitted via the Assignments area on the Sakai course website.

7. Failure to complete any requirement will result in a proportionally lower grade.

Books ordered through Rugers Bookstore:

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, *1917-1932*, Oxford University Press, 2008

Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence. The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present* . Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001

All other readings will be posted on the Sakai course site.

In addition, students are encouraged to use the on-line *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* www.yivoencyclopedia.org/

Schedule of classes, readings, and assignments

Introduction: Jews and Modern European Revolutions
Tue. 4 September

Russia and its Jews: Background
Thur. 6 September

Gitelman, Intro + Chapter 1 (60 pp.)

Reform, Reaction, Revolution: 1855-1903
Tue. 11 September

Abraham Ascher, *Russia. A Short History* (Oxford: One World, 2009), pp. 131-136.
Benjamin Nathan, *Beyond the Pale. The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, pp. 239-256 ("The Student Sub-Culture")

Jews & Russia's revolutionary movements: Populism
Thur. 13 September

Fitzpatrick, 24-32.
Erich Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth Century Russia*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 256-276 ("Conclusions").

Reminder: The first installment of your "History of Jews and the Russian Revolution" is due at 10 pm, Saturday, 15 September. See the "Assignment" page on Sakai for instructions.

Jews & Russia's revolutionary movements: Marxism
Tue. 18 September

Israel Getzler, "A Grandson of the *Haskalah*" pp. 275-299
Jonathan Frankel, "The Roots of Jewish Socialism (1881-1892): From 'Populism' to 'Cosmopolitanism'?" pp. 58-77
In *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left*, edited by Ezra Mendelsohn, New York University Press, 1997

First Revolution: 1905-1907
Thur. 20 September
Tue. 25 September ***Discussion***

Abraham Ascher, Russia. A Short History (Oxford: One World, 2009), pp.136-148.
Nora Levin, *While Messiah Tarried. Jewish Socialist Movements, 1871-1917*, NY: Schoken Books, 1977, pp. 301-321 ("1905: The Bund at Its Zenith").
Russian Jews in the eyes of a British diplomat, 1905 (pp. 199-223)

Reaction & War: 1907-1917
Thur. 27 September

Gabriella Safran, *Wondering Soul: The Dybbuk's Creator. S. An-sky*, Harvard University Press, 2010, 1-6 (Prologue), 225-257 ("A Passion for Bloodshed").
S. Ansky, "The Destruction of Galicia" In *The Literature of Destruction*, pp. 210-223.

The Revolutions of 1917: February & October
Tue. 2 October

Fitzpatrick, pp. 34-60.
Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 59-64

Jewish responses to revolution: Competing ideologies
Thur. 4 October
Tue. 9 October ***Debate***

John D. Klier, "The Jews," in *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, London-Sydney-Auckland: Arnold, 1997, pp. 693-705
Ber Borochov,"The National Question and the Class Struggle" and "Our Platform" in Arthur Hertzberg, ed., *The Zionist Idea*, NY: Atheneum, 1959, pp. 353-366.
Hillel Kozlovsky, *The Artists of the Kultur-Lige*, Jerusalem: Gesharim, 2003, pp. 16-40 ("What Is the Kultur-Lige?"—12 pp. in English).

Civil War & Pogroms: 1918-1920
Thur. 11 October
Film: *Comrade Abram*. Directed by Alexander Razumni, 1919 (18 minutes)
B&W. Silent with English intertitles.

Fitzpatrick, pp. 61-84
Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence,* pp. 64-71
Isaac Babel, *Collected Stories*, translated by David McDuff. NY: Penguin Books, 1994, pp. ix-xxix, 116-126, 225-227 ("Introduction," "Gedali," "My First Goose," "The Rebbe," "The Rebbe's Son").

The Jewish romance with Communism
Tue. 16 October
Visual presentation**:**
The Jewish avant-garde: From national renaissance to socialist utopianism (El. Lissitsky, Natan Altman)

Leonard Schapiro, "The Role of the Jews in the Russian Revolutionary Movement," *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left*, edited by Ezra Mendelsohn, New York University Press, 1997, pp. 300-321.

Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*. Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 167-180

"Proletarian Dictatorship" on the Jewish street

Thur. 18 October

Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence,* pp. 71-87

The *Evsektsiia* & the idea of Soviet-Jewish culture

Tue. 23 October

Thur. 25 October ***Debate***

Anna Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher. Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, 1-43 ("Antireligious Propaganda and the Transformation of Jewish Institutions and Traditions")

David Schneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture, 1918-1930*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 30-52 ("Ideology and Jewish Language Politics: How Yiddish Became the National Language of Soviet Jewry")

A short course in Soviet history:

1922-1928: A time for compromise: NEP & the Nationality Policy

Tue. October 30

Fitzpatrick, pp. 109

1929-1939: "Revolution from above" & the "Great Purge"

Thur. 1 November

Fitzpatrick, pp. 110-161

5-page paper is due 10 pm Saturday, 10 November. Submit via Sakai.

Jewish Socialism Soviet style: Agricultural settlement, Birobidzhan

Tue. 6 November

Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence,* pp. 88-108

Slezkine, *Jewish Century*, pp. 216-227, 242-257.

Dekel Chen, "Jewish Agricultural Settlement in the Interwar Period: A Balance Sheet" in *Revolution, Repression, and Revival,* pp.69-90.

Leon Dennen**,** *Where the Ghetto Ends. Jews in Soviet Russia.* NY: Alfred H. King, 1934, pp. 32-49

Thur. 8 November

Film: *Seekers of Happiness* Director: Vladimir Korsh-Sabin, 1934 (84 minutes)

Constructing a Soviet-Jewish culture

Tue. 13 November

Thur. 15 November ***Discussion***

Visual Presentation: Jewish artists & the Moscow Yiddish Theater

Elissa Bemporad, "Behavior Unbecoming a Communist: Jewish Religious Practice in Soviet Minsk," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 14, Number 2, Winter 2008, pp. 1-31.

Anna Shternshis, *Kosher and Yiddish. Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 106-142. ("Soviet Jewish Songs as a Mirror of Jewish Identity")

David Schneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture, 1918-1930*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 179-184 ("Izi Kharik and the Question of Aesthetics, Politics, and Ideology") and 213-219 ("Afterword: How Does the Story End").

Jeffrey Weidlinger, "The Moscow State Yiddish Theater as a Cultural and Political Phenomenon," in *Dark Times, Dire Decisions. Jews and Communism* edited by Jonathan Frankel & Dan Diner, Oxford University Press, 2004.

1936-1941: Terror & Great Russian nationalism

Tue. 20 November

Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence,* pp. 108-114

Slezkine, *Jewish Century,* pp. 269-286

"Lazar Kaganovich: The Career of a Stalinist Commissar," *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence 1931-1936,* Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 21-36.

1941-1945: World War II & Holocaust

Tue. 27 November

Thur. 29 November ***Discussion***

Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 115-147

The Complete Black Book of Russia Jewry, Ilya Ehrenburg, Vasily Grossman (New Brunswick, NJ: Transactions Publishers, 2002), pp. 3-20, 91-92, 98-99, 166-171, 188-193, 231-233, 419-426, 487-500 (55 pages)

A Writer at War. Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941-1945. NY: Pantheon Books, 2005, Introduction (pp. vii-xvii)

1946-1953: Stalin's anti-Jewish campaign

Tue. 4 December

Thur. 6 December ***Discussion***

Joshua Rubinshtein and Vladimir P. Naumov, *Stalin's Secret Pogrom. The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*. Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 1-25-64

Shimon Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism. A Documented History of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR.* Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995, pp. 225-232, 239-240, 245-246, 255-258, 264-271, 373-377, 386-389.

Ilya Ehrenburg, *Peoples, Years, Life: Post War Years, 1945-1954* (124-135, 297-300)

Jews as dissidents

Tue. 11 December

Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence,* pp. 144-173

Slezkine, *Jewish Century,* pp. 329-348

Final Take Home Exam handed out 11 December, due 10 pm Saturday, 15 December.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS:

First Revolution: 1905-1907

Henry J. Tobias, The Jewish Bund in Russia: From its Origins to 1905. Stanford University Press, 1972, pp. 295-343.

Civil War & Pogroms: 1918-1920

Oleg Budnitsky, "The 'Jewish Battalions' in the Red Army," in Revolution, Repression, and Revival. The Soviet Jewish Experience. Edited by Zvi Gitelman and Yaacov Ro'I. NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007, pp. 15-35.

Zvi Gitelman, Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics, The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917-1930. Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 105-148.

Isaac Babel, 1920 Diary. Yale University Press, 1995;2002, pp. xvii-xxix, 3-8, 27-41, 56-60, 80-85, 104-105.

Building a new Jewish Life: Agricultural Settlement, Birobijan

Robert Weinberg, Stalin's Forgotten Zion. Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland. An Illustrated History, 1928-1996. Berelkey: University of California Press, 1998 (35 pp. +)

Culture: Jewish, Soviet, and Jewish-Soviet

Arkady Zeltser, "The Belorussian Shtetl in the 1920s and 1930s" &

Michael Beizer, "The Jews of a Soviet Metropolis in the Interwar Period: The Case of Leningrad"

in Revolution, Repression, and Revival, pp. 91-130

Sofia's Story www.sovietjewishculture.org

1941-1945: World War II & Holocaust

Slezkine, Jewish Century, pp. 286-297

A Writer at War. Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941-1945. NY: Pantheon Books, 2005, Ch. 24-Terblinka (pp. 280-306)