Jews have been identified with the city to such an extent that they are often described as the quintessential urban dwellers. This course examines the multifaceted and multivalent relationships between Jews and the city, from medieval Europe and North Africa to modern Europe, America and the Middle East. It explores various forms of Jewish urban settlement, from the Venetian ghetto and Moroccan mellah to the Eastern European shtetl and the cosmopolitan metropolis. Jews were not always a predominantly urban people, but they underwent mass urbanization in the nineteenth century, especially in Europe and America. Using documentary sources, belles-lettres and film, this course explores the impact of this urbanization on religious practice, social relations, and patterns of assimilation, paying particular attention to the growing identification of Jews with the charms and vices of the big city. Three cities will be examined in greater detail: Budapest, New York and Tel Aviv. We will also reflect on “cities without Jews,” probing the perceived relationships between Jews and the city that come into sharper focus only with the Jews’ real or imagined absence.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

ü Place various forms of Jewish urban settlement in their historical and regional context

ü Discuss the relationship between Jews and modern urban culture

ü Expound on the role of the city in the formation of Jewish stereotypes and Jewish lifeways

ü Examine representations of space in a wide variety of primary sources

ü Develop critical reading skills

Requirements: All students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. In addition, all students are required to give a 20-minute class presentation, a 4-6 page (1,000-1,500 word) book review, and a 10-12 page (2,500-3,000 word) research paper.

Class Participation: 15%
Class Presentation (20 minutes): 15%
Book Review (4-5 pages) 20%

Research Paper (10-12 pages): 50%

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: The City
Georg Simmel, “The Stranger”
Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life”

Week 3: The Ghetto

William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, Act I, Scene III.

FILM: The Merchant of Venice (2004), directed by Michael Radford (selections).

Week 4: The Mellah
Emily Gottreich, “Rethinking the ‘Islamic City’ from the Perspective of Jewish Space,” *Jewish Social Studies* 11, No. 1 (Fall 2004): 118-146.


Amram Elmaleh, “Beginnings of Westernization and Reform in the Mellah Fez (1913),” in *JMW*, 464.


**Week 5: The Shtetl**


**FILM: Fiddler on the Roof** (1971), directed by Norman Jewison (selections)

**Week 6: Urbanization and Assimilation**


**Week 7: Urbaphobia and Judeophobia**


Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: Appleton and Co., 1905), selections


**Week 8: Sites of Urban ‘Jewishness’**

a. **The Coffeehouse**


The Jewish Metropolis. Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 207-226.

Theodor Herzl, Old New Land (1902), Chapter 1.

SUGGESTED READING:


b. The Department Store


Theodor Herzl, Old New Land (1902), 95-102.

F. Roderich-Stoltheim, The Riddle of the Jew’s Success (1927), 5-9, 120-140.

Week 9: Budapest: ‘Judapest’


Endre Ady, “Korrobóri” (written in 1917, published in 1924)
SUGGESTED READING:


**Week 10: New York: The Promised City**


**FILM:** Hester Street (1975), directed by Joan Micklin Silver

**Week 11: Tel Aviv: The Hebrew City**


Week 12: The City without Jews


FILM: Die Stadt ohne Juden (1924), directed by H.K. Bresslauer