Russian Jewry’s Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991

Course description
This course introduces students to the history of Soviet Jewry between World War One and the fall of the Soviet Union, with a particular emphasis on the Jewish experience of the World War One and the Russian Civil War. The Jews of Tsarist Russia – the largest Jewish community at the time – were subject to mandatory draft, deportations, violence and pogroms throughout the tumultuous years of World War One and the Russian Civil War. At the same time, Zionist political hopes were boosted by the British government’s promise to establish a “national home” in Palestine, Jewish Communists rose to some of the most prominent roles in the fledgling Soviet state, and the slogans of Jewish political and cultural autonomism carried the day. The emancipation of Jews in 1917 brought about an unprecedented flurry of Jewish political, literary, and social activity, while Soviet Jewish authorities attempted to define an idiosyncratic course of development for the Jews of the Soviet state. From the persecution of Judaism and Zionism, through the development of Yiddish culture and education, to postwar official antisemitism we get a glimpse into the flourishment and tribulations of Jewish life in the Soviet Union. Through primary sources and secondary works, this course will examine the tectonic changes Russian Jewry underwent during the years of crisis in 1914-1921, and in the following seven decades. The course will also serve to introduce students to the history nationalities question of the multiethnic Soviet state, and the vexed relationship between internationalism and Jewishness.

Learning Outcomes
The course provides a thorough overview of Soviet Jewish history. Along with primary sources such as literary works, memoirs, and historical documents students are expected to read a number of scholarly works. By the end of the course, students will be able to identify principal themes, organizations, and figures of Soviet Jewish history, and will have a sense of the major periods of Soviet history. Using the “Jewish question” as a test case, we will contemplate how the modern state engaged in categorizing, transferring, and transforming her population. The course will also engage with other broader themes such as minority politics and policies, national rights, multiethnic states, genocide, and migration, and the interaction between nationalism and Communism, thereby providing students with an outline of concepts and questions applicable to other geographic areas and historical periods. Students will be able to interpret primary documents, relate them to scholarly works, and critically assess historiographies. A mandatory research paper will develop an ability to find, select, and evaluate sources, and formulate historical arguments.

Requirements
- Regular, informed participation (20%)
- Q&A forum: by 8PM on the day before class post an a few sentences or a paragraph, addressing a topic of particular interest in the readings, and comment on others’ ideas (20%)
- Presentation: form pairs and prepare a 15-minute introduction for a class discussion based on the readings (20%)
- One research paper (12-15 pp.), using primary sources, with an abstract due on Week 8 (10% + 30%)

Week 1: War, Spy Mania, and Deportations

+++ (optional readings)

Week 2: Jews and the Russian Revolutions


**Week 3: Jewish Autonomism in Russia and Ukraine**


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**Week 4: Jews and the Army in War and Civil War**


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**Week 5: Pogroms: Theory**


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**Week 6: Pogroms: Sources and Scholarship**

Rokhlin, David G. Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture, 79-109. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1999

Week 7: Jews and the Soviet State

Week 8: Jewish Culture and Religion in the Soviet Union

Week 9: The Holocaust in the East: Genocide
Arad, Yitzhak. The Holocaust in the Soviet Union, 125-211. Translated by Ora Cummings. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009

Week 10: The Holocaust in the West: Repression
**Week 10: Holocaust Representations and Official Antisemitism**


Rubenstein, Joshua, and Vladimir P. Naumov, eds. *Stalin’s Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*, 1-64 + choose 2 testimonies from Fefer, Markish, or Bergelson. New Haven, N.Y.: Yale University Press, 2001


**Week 11: The Jewish Dissident Movement**


**Week 12: Emigration**
