

Stanford University Department of History  
Spring quarter 2010  
History 287 E/ 387 E

**Jewish Intellectuals and the Crisis of Modernity**

Instructor: Arie M. Dubnov

Monday, 1:15 pm - 3:05 pm/ makeup classes: Friday, 10:00-12:00 (Room TBA)  
260-002 (Pigott Hall)

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Phone: (650) 723-1585  
Office: 200-125 (Lane Hall)

**Course Aim and Description**

The course looks at intellectual responses of Jewish political thinkers to the age of extremes. We shall read from the writings of Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, and Isaiah Berlin. We shall examine their analyses of enlightenment, nationalism, socialism, and totalitarianism, their life stories, and their direct and indirect role in creating a transatlantic political discourse in postwar years. We will try to ask ourselves to what extent were their political and philosophical writings designed as a response to the maladies of the twentieth century, and to what extent did their Jewishness notify their writings, if at all. By doing so we shall be able to contextualize historically the fundamental features of Jewish intellectual activity after 1945.

*No prior knowledge of political science, philosophy and/or Jewish studies are required.*

**Course Requirements**

**General note:** The course is a colloquium combining undergraduate and graduate students. Requirements differ according to the student’s level. Bibliographical items marked with [∀] in the list below are to be read by all course participants; [α] items are for undergrad students; and [Ω] refers to items that should be read by graduate students.

* Please bring the primary texts with you to the class for our meetings.
Students are expected to read all the sources and secondary literature according to their stage of study before the session and actively participate in class discussion.

The assignments of the course are as follows:

i. *"Agenda Setting": Each graduate student will be responsible for "agenda setting" (5-7 mins.) at least once during the term. In this oral presentation the student will:
   a. Provide a short biographical portrait of the intellectual we are dealing with.
   b. Summarize the main points of interest in the readings of that session, and will propose interesting questions and points for consideration and further discussion by the class.

The “agenda setting” will be accompanied by a short (3-4 pages) report summarizing the central arguments of the presentation, and should include a personal critical statement as well.

* Undergrad students are warmly encouraged to experience themselves with this as well, but are not formally obliged to do so as part of the course requirements.

ii. **Book Review**: each student will choose one book from the additional secondary readings list (see last section of this syllabus) and will write a short (3-4 pages) book review.

   ALL book reviews must be submitted by **Monday, May 17, 2010**. Bring printout to class

iii. **Final Paper**: A 15-25 pages long analytical essay. Subjects of the final essay should be discussed and coordinated in advance with the course instructor.

   Final paper due midnight of **Friday, June 4, 2010**. Please send papers by e-mail.

Grading will be done as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergrad Students (287 E):</th>
<th>Graduate Students (387E):</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and class participation: 25%</td>
<td>Attendance and class participation: 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review: 25%</td>
<td>Book Review: 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper: 50%</td>
<td>“Agenda Setting” 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper: 50%</td>
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* Attendance: Due to the rescheduling of two classes, attendance is not mandatory in ALL classes. Nonetheless, attendance in less than 8 out of the 10 meetings of the colloquium will affect grades.
Course Sessions and Reading List

* General recommendation: students are warmly encouraged to make use of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy which is available online at http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html. It offers excellent entries on individual thinkers and theoretical concepts we encounter during the reading and discussion.

1. Introduction: the Myth of the Non-Jewish Jew (29 March)

   No prior reading required

2. Theodor Adorno, part I: Dialectic of Enlightenment (5 April)

Sources:
[∀] Horkheimer, Max, and Adorno, Theodor W., Dialectic of Enlightenment (New York: Continuum, 1996).

Secondary literature:

*Please note - Class will NOT meet on Mon. 12 April.

1 Glossary: [∀] items that should be read by all course participants; [α] items are for undergrad students; and [Ω] refers to items that should be read by graduate students.
3. Theodor Adorno, part II: the Frankfurt School in America  
(19 April)

Sources:


Secondary literature:


\[\Omega\] – read the whole book.

\[\alpha\] – chaps. 5-6 (The Frankfurt Institutes Analysis of Nazism and Critique of Mass Culture)


*Please note - Class will NOT meet on Mon. 26 April.*

4. Hannah Arendt, part I: Explaining Totalitarianism  
(Friday, 30 April, 10:00-12:00/ Room TBA)

Sources:


Secondary literature:


5. Hannah Arendt, part II: The Jew as Pariah  
(3 May)

Sources: 
[Ω] – read the whole book. 

Secondary literature: 

*Please note - Class will NOT meet on Mon. 10 May.  
Deadline for submitting Book Reviews: 17 May.
6. Leo Strauss, part I: Athens or Jerusalem, Modernity or Antiquity?
   (17 May)

Sources:
   [Ω] – read the whole book.
   [α] – read the first lecture.

Secondary literature:
[∀] Devigne, Robert, "Strauss and 'Straussianism': From the Ancients to the Moderns?," *Political Studies* 57 (2009), 592-616.

7. Leo Strauss, part II: Why We Remain Jews?
   (Friday, 21 May, 10:00-12:00/Room TBA)

Sources:

Secondary literature:
8. Isaiah Berlin, part I: Bifurcating the Concept of Liberty
(24 May)

Sources:
[Ω] – read the whole book.

Secondary literature:
[Ω] Reed, Jamie, "From Logical Positivism to 'Metaphysical Rationalism': Isaiah Berlin on the 'Fallacy of Reduction' " *History of Political Thought* 29 (2008), 109-131.

9. Isaiah Berlin, part II: Jewish Emancipation and its Discontents
(Friday, 28 May, 10:00-12:-00/Room TBA)

Sources:

Secondary literature:
10. (Very) Tentative Conclusion: Was there a distinctively Jewish Intellectual Response/Contribution to the Crisis of Modernity?

[Cancelled due to Memorial Day]


Additional recommended secondary literature:

* each student will choose one book from this list (see p. 2 above) and will write a short (3-4 pages) book review. **ALL book reviews must be submitted by MAY 17, 2010**

1) **Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt school:**


2) **Hannah Arendt:**


3) **Leo Strauss and ‘Straussianism’:**

4) **Isaiah Berlin:**