

**REVISED COPY OF 12/29/06**  
**JACKSON SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

*INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PROGRAM*

**RELIG 460 ANTISEMITISM AS A CULTURAL SYSTEM**

Winter 2007                      TTH 11:30-12:50                      Instructor: Martin S. Jaffee  
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*“Who is an Antisemite?  
 Anyone who hates Jews more than necessary.”  
 Central European Folk Witticism, circa 1920s*

**Course Theme**

It may be that hatred of the “Other” is neither a necessary nor an inevitable social institution. Yet ideological justifications of hatred often play undeniable roles in the formation and defense of such collective identities as religion, nationality, and ethnicity. The hatred of Jews is a particularly rich context for exploring the nature of institutionalized hatred of an in-group for an out-group.

Antisemitism, the modern term for a fear of Jews as a danger to the social order, is, first of all, probably the oldest continuous global tradition of hatred against a single, culturally-posed “Other.” Its roots draw from pre-Christian representations of Jews in Hellenistic Egypt, while its flowerings blossom throughout the lands of historical Christendom, bear fruit in the modern age of secular nationalism, and continue to produce in our own time, not only in post-Colonial Islamic lands, but in Europe and the US as well.

This raises the question behind our course: why have ideologies of Jew-hatred been (and continue to be) crucial to diverse cultural communities that appear to have little in common apart from their way of representing Jews as a threat? We may not definitively answer this question. But exploring it will offer an excellent opportunity to reflect upon the meaning of hatred as a social institution and to explore the role of ideologies of hatred in the construction of collective identities built upon ideologies of religious, national, or ethnic salvation.

**Course Format**

The course will include orientational lectures by the instructor and collective discussion and analysis of assigned readings.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation of Student Contribution**

--Students should be prepared to discuss and critically evaluate all readings assigned for the appropriate class period. Well-informed, articulate, and timely contributions to the class discussions over the course of the quarter will be factored into the student’s final grade as an **extra 4.0**.

--The last unit of the course will examine claims that Mel Gibson's, *The Passion of the Christ*, is antisemitic and/or that antisemitism figured in various attempts to defend its circulation. There will be a public viewing of this film for our class on the evening of February 26. If you cannot make that viewing I highly recommend you arrange to view it in some other venue.

--Due 1/30 (**33.3%** of final grade): A 5-7 page essay reporting on your own research in Antisemitism on the Web. Design your own search for antisemitic websites, using Google and/or other research aids. Select and compare two websites from the following points of view: a) what is "antisemitic" about these websites?; b) what groups do these websites appeal to?; c) why are Jews important to these groups (i.e., what "problem" does the activity of Jews "explain?"); d) to what degree is the information on these sites based upon first-hand knowledge of Jews or on first-hand research about Judaism, Jews, or Jewish history?; e) what is the quality of these websites in relation to other antisemitic sites and how does one evaluate the "quality" of an antisemitic website?

--Due 2/20 (**33.3%** of final grade): A 7-10 page essay comparing medieval Christian images of "the Jew" with those found in the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion. Your essay should focus upon the following issues: a) compare and contrast images of "the Jew" drawn from "Christian" and "secular" ideologies; b) what, if any, are the most important similarities and/or contrasts you find?; c) do you detect any important creative innovations that distinguish the modern "secular" antisemitism of the Protocols from pre-modern "Christian" images of "the Jew"?

--Due 3/12 (**33.3%** of final grade): A 7-10 page essay illustrating the problem of identifying "antisemitism." Select a public controversy involving Jews and non-Jews in which Jews come under hostile criticism by opponents who deny any antisemitic motives. If you believe the non-Jewish adversaries are NOT "antisemitic," explain your view in terms of some criteria we have explored in class. If you believe the adversaries DO employ "antisemitism" (consciously or not), explain your criteria and defend your view. Possible topical areas: journalistic coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict in general or of the recent war between Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas in particular; journalistic coverage of the shootings at Seattle's Jewish Federation last July; controversy surrounding Papal pronouncements about the Church's role in the Holocaust; criticism of the Jewish role in American entertainment and media in general; debates surrounding the influence of Jews in American politics, tensions involving Jews and other ethnic groups in a diverse neighborhood (e.g. the Crown Heights riots of 1991, etc.).

**Required Texts** (\* =available for purchase at University Book Store; @ =on hard copy reserve at Odegaard; # =on electronic reserve)

- # M. Gibson, *The Passion of the Christ* (special viewing for entire class)
- \*@S. Bronner, *A Rumor About the Jews: Antisemitism, Conspiracy & the Protocols of Zion*
- \*@J. Shawn Landres & Michael Berenbaum, eds., *After the Passion is Gone: American Religious Consequences*
- \*@R. Levy, ed., *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts*
- \*@B. Lewis, *Semites & Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict & Prejudice*
- \*@M. Shermer & A Grobman, *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened & Why Do They Say It?*
- #R. Stacey, "From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration: Jews & the Body of Christ," *Jewish History* 12
- #J. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933*
- #Y. Yerushalmi, "Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models," *The Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture, 1982*
- # J. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan & Christian Antiquity*

### **Some Supplementary Readings**

There is an enormous amount of publishing on antisemitism. The following is a small selection of some very useful studies for those who might wish further reading.

- J. Aho, *This Thing of Darkness: A Sociology of the Enemy* (1994)  
Focuses on images of Jews in American racist ideologies of Christian Identity.
- "Anti-Semitism," article in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol 3 (1972)  
An excellent historical overview with a superb collection of antisemitic pictorial propaganda from medieval and modern times.
- J. Carrol, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (2000)  
An historical and theological meditation on Catholicism and antisemitism.
- N. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the World Jewish Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1981)  
Charts the historical impact of the notorious antisemitic forgery.
- J. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (1982)  
Explores the role that hostile images of Jews played in medieval Christian monastic piety.
- M. Curtis, ed., *Antisemitism in the Contemporary World* (1986)  
A collection of essays focused primarily on political antisemitism since the 1950s.
- H. Goldshmidt, *Race and Religion Among the Chosen Peoples of Crown Heights* (2006)  
Analysis of the intersection of racial and religious identities among the Afro-Caribbean, African American, and Hasidic communities of a small Brooklyn, NY, neighborhood

- D. Goodman & M. Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype* (1995)  
Studies the history of positive and negative appreciation of Jews in a society where virtually no one had known a Jew.
- A. Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews: Origins of Anti-Semitism* (1990)  
One of the classic studies of the role of modern rationality in the creation of antisemitism.
- S. Gilman & S. Katz, eds., *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crises* (1991)  
Excellent essays on antisemitism as a response to cultural & political change.
- D. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth & Memory*  
A pioneering discussion of Holocaust Denial as a cultural phenomenon.
- R. Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History: Mass Death & The American Future* (1975)  
An influential study of Nazi antisemitism's pioneering role in preparing the modern world to accept the extermination of "redundant populations."
- P. Schaefer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward Jews in the Ancient World* (1997)  
A revisionist study of anti-Jewish stereotypes in antiquity.
- G. Schoenfeld, *The Return of Anti-Semitism* (2004)  
A well-documented, highly-pessimistic assessment of contemporary antisemitism  
In the Islamic world, Europe, and North America.
- D. Lord Small, "Hatred as a Social Institution in Late-Medieval Society," *Speculum* 76  
A functionalist study of inter-group hatred in the structure of medieval society.

## **Class Topics and Assignments**

1/4 Organizational Meeting

### **I Antisemitism**

1/9 Who Is an "Antisemite?"

Levy: 1-27

Lewis: 42-57

1/11 An Ideology of Cultural Crisis?

Lewis: 81-116

Bronner: 33-69

### ***1/16 NO CLASS: JAFFEE LECTURING AT PRINCETON***

1/19 The Antisemite's "Jew": A Tradition of Symbolic Representation

Levy: 31-36, 135-146

Selected Contemporary Political Cartoons (on line)

## **II The Creation of “the Jew” in Ancient and Medieval Cultures**

1/23 Christ-Killers

Gospel of Mark 14:1-15:47 (on line)

Gospel of Matthew 26:1-27:66 (on line)

Gospel of Luke 22:1-24:35 (on line)

Gospel of John 10:22-42, 11:45-57, 18:1-19:42 (on line)

Letters of Paul (selections)

1/25 Companions of Satan & Bloodthirsty Jews

Stacey (all: on line)

### ***1/30: FIRST PAPER PROJECT DUE AT CLASSTIME***

#### **III “The Jew” for Modernity**

1/30 Emancipation and its Discontents

Levy: 37-96

Katz: 245-272 (on line)

2/1 The Idea of Racial Jewishness

Levy: 104-134

Yerushalmi: 3-36 (on line)

2/6 Modernity as a Jewish Conspiracy

Levy: 147-177, 204-223; cf. Bronner: 11-31

2/8 Zionism as a Jewish Conspiracy

Lewis: 117-139, 164-235

#### **IV Case Studies in Modern & Contemporary Antisemitism**

A The Classic of Modern Antisemitism

2/13 The Making of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Bronner: 1-10, 71-97

2/15 The World According to the Protocols

Bronner: 99-154

### ***2/20 SECOND PAPER PROJECT DUE AT CLASSTIME***

B Holocaust Denial

2/20 Who Denies the Holocaust?

Shermer & Grobman: 39-74

2/22 Why Deny the Holocaust?

Shermer & Grobman: 75-119

**2/26, evening viewing of Gibson's, *The Passion of the Christ***  
Denny Hall 205, 7pm.

C The Debate Over *The Passion of the Christ*  
2/27 The Jews' First Victim & the Passion Tradition  
Landres & Berenbaum: 19-34, 93-104

3/1 Is This Film Antisemitic?  
Landres & Berenbaum: 125-136, 137-147

3/6 Is Christianity "Inately Antisemitic?"  
Landres & Berenbaum: 177-192, 207-218, 243-253

3/8 Concluding Observations on Antisemitism as a Cultural System

**3/12 FINAL PAPER PROJECT DUE IN MY OFFICE BY 12:50PM**