

THE HELLER SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
HS 125A-1
Contemporary Antisemitism in the United States: A Social Scientific
Perspective

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Office hours: By appointment
Prerequisites: None

Invitation to the course/Course goals

Some students have heard of antisemitism but have little knowledge of what it is and are curious to learn more. Others may have studied the history of antisemitism, or have personal experiences with antisemitism, but have unanswered questions, such as how today's antisemitism compares to the past and how it is related to other forms of hatred and discrimination. For students with a broad range of backgrounds, the goal of this course is to provide a social scientific perspective that will enable students to better understand what contemporary antisemitism is and responses to it. This course will help students learning about how antisemitism has evolved over time, how we can evaluate claims about antisemitism presented in the media and public discourse, how we can respond to it, and how to know if our responses are effective. The social science tools that this course offers should also help students better understand other forms of discrimination and prejudice, as well as complex intergroup conflicts that are part of contemporary society.

Overview

There has been a recent resurgence of anti-Jewish hate speech and violence directed against Jews and antisemitism has reemerged as a threat to Jews, both in the United States and around the world. This course is designed to help students understand contemporary antisemitism and explore ways to address both traditional and newly emerging forms of anti-Jewish hatred. Framed around social scientific analyses of the causes and expressions of antisemitism, the multi-disciplinary course content will be drawn from history, political science, social psychology, and sociology. The course is designed to engage students with the current academic and policy discourse about antisemitism, as well as efforts to address antisemitism and ameliorate the conditions that have fostered its spread. The course will be “hands-on” and participants will have an opportunity (individually or in groups) to engage in original or secondary data collection.

The course is divided into two broad sections. The first half of the course is concerned with understanding what antisemitism is and how it is manifest – both in the recent past and currently. Using actual examples of hate speech and behavior, the course will progress from discussion of the historical and contemporary socio-political context in which antisemitism has emerged to survey-based discussion of trends in current attitudes and behavior, in particular, the social forces that are driving antisemitism. Our focus will include a detailed exploration of the complex relationship between antisemitism and views of Israel.

The second half of the course focuses on how to respond to antisemitism. This includes a discussion of existing efforts to address antisemitism, a review of the theory and methods used to create effective social policies, and an analysis of how antisemitism is associated with different political ideologies and social groups. Also considered will be the relationship of antisemitism to hatred and acts of violence directed toward members of other racial and ethnic groups. At the end of the course, students (individually or in small groups) will conduct a policy analysis that integrates what they have learned with proposals for addressing antisemitism.

The course is designed for undergraduate students and no background in the topic is required. Graduate students are invited to participate, but should contact the instructors prior to enrolling. Readings and course assignments will be designed to engage students with different backgrounds and levels of knowledge.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the sources of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student. Violations of university policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of *Rights and Responsibilities*, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

Notice: If you have a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and require accommodations, please bring it to the instructor's attention prior to the second meeting of the class. If you have any questions about this process, contact Mary Brooks, disabilities coordinator for The Heller School at maryeliz@brandeis.edu.

Course Plan, Readings, and Assignments

Weekly reactions/commentaries: Students will be required to write brief weekly reports summarizing their understanding and reactions to the readings and lectures. The memos are intended to stimulate active engagement with the course material. Students are invited to include their questions about the assumption and implications of the readings (as well as lectures).

News presentation: Each week, one or more students will present a news article related to US antisemitism. After summarizing the article and why they selected it, they will lead a class discussion by framing questions that draw on course material.

Midterm Project: For the midterm students will design, conduct, and report on interviews with Brandeis students or others to assess their views about antisemitism, such as whether they think a particular statement is or is not antisemitic. The report will draw on coursework that covers various forms of antisemitism and how they present themselves in speech, social media, images, and more. The goal of the data collection is “educational” and is not intended as formal research. An alternative option will be available for students to conduct secondary analysis of already collected qualitative data.

Final Project: The final project is aimed at helping to identify ways to respond to contemporary antisemitism. There are two options. For the first option, students will develop and present a proposal for a new initiative to respond to antisemitism in the US. The proposal will draw on research discussed throughout the course to justify how and why it would reduce or address antisemitism. For the second option, students will critique an existing initiative, using the tools presented in the course to identify strengths and weaknesses of the initiative, and suggest possible improvements. Students will have an opportunity to work alone or in a group with one or two other students.

Assignments and grades

Course grades will be calculated using the following system:

| Assignment | Grading method | Points |
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| Weekly reactions – complete at least 10 | 1-10 points | 10 |
| News discussion | 1-10 points | 10 |
| Class participation and consistent attendance | 1-10 points | 10 |
| Mid-term project | Letter grade | 30 |
| Final project | Letter grade | 40 |

Classroom performance is based on both attendance and the quality of your participation in classroom discussions and activities. You are expected to attend all class sessions and should not miss more than one class session without permission of the instructors. Grades for participation are also based in part on the quality of your contributions to discussion.

Readings

Readings for the class will include a variety of news articles, book chapters, and academic papers, available on Latte, as well as the following required book:

Lipstadt, D.E. (2019). *Antisemitism: Here and Now*. New York: Schocken Books.

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitism is hatred and discrimination towards others because they are Jewish. In the first part of the course, we will use the methods of social science to develop a better understanding of antisemitism’s history, boundaries, effects, and prevalence, in the contemporary United States.

| DATE | Topic | Readings to be done before class |
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| Week 1 Class 1 Th 1/11 | <p><u>Why study anti-Jewish Hatred?</u></p> <p>To introduce the class, we will discuss a number of recent and not-so recent incidents, including at Brandeis, which have been considered “antisemitic” by various groups and commentators. We will then consider the value of studying antisemitism using the methods of social science, and the ways in which a rigorous, data-informed understanding of antisemitism can help us to respond to it more effectively.</p> | <p>Lipstadt (2019), Chapters I and II.</p> <p>Twain, M. (1899). “Concerning the Jews,” <i>Harper Magazine</i>.</p> |
| Week 2 Class 2 T 1/16 | <p><u>Antisemitism and other forms of prejudice</u></p> <p>This class begins by reviewing how social scientists think about the ideas of “prejudice” and “discrimination” in general, and considers how to apply these ideas to studying hatred and bigotry against Jews.</p> <p>It then reviews a number of different, and sometimes competing ways in which the boundaries of what constitutes antisemitism are discussed.</p> | <p>Readings:</p> <p>International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. (2016). <i>What is antisemitism? Non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism</i>. Retrieved 6/2/2022 from https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism</p> <p>Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism</p> <p>NEXUS Document</p> <p>https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/what-is-antisemitism/explained</p> <p>Conerly et al (2021). “Predjudice, Discrimination, and Racism” from <i>Introduction to Sociology</i>. Houston, TX. OpenStax</p> |
| Week 2 | <p><u>Origins of antisemitism and the Holocaust</u></p> | <p>Readings:</p> |

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| <p>Class 3 Th 1/18</p> | <p>Contemporary antisemitism is a unique expression of a long-standing hatred.</p> <p>This class will briefly trace the historical trajectory of three common “strands” of antisemitism: anti-Jewish views in Christianity, antisemitic beliefs about “Jews and money,” and antisemitic conspiracy theories about Jewish plans for world domination, and explain how all three of these strands contributed to the rise of Nazism in Germany and the Holocaust.</p> | <p>Lipstadt (2019), Chapters III and IV</p> <p>Foxman (2010) <i>Jews And Money</i>. Chapter 3 – the Story of a Stereotype.</p> <p>Yad Vashem. (2011). “The Development of the Final Solution” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPXPjZurupc</p> |
| <p>Week 3 Class 4 T 1/23</p> | <p><u>Social Science Methods – A toolbox for studying antisemitism</u></p> <p>The class will help students to gain a better appreciation and understanding of the methods used by social researchers to study antisemitism and other forms of prejudice, and why these methods are important. It includes a brief overview of the most important principles and ideas in both qualitative and quantitative social science research, and the dangers that arise when these principles are not followed.</p> | <p>Readings:</p> <p>Chambliss and Schutt (2013). <i>Making Sense of the Social World</i>. Chapter 1: Science Society, and Social Research.</p> |
| <p>Week 3 Class 5 Th 1/25</p> | <p><u>Antisemitism in Post-War United States</u></p> <p>This class considers the American context for antisemitism, including the establishment of the state of Israel and how antisemitism changed (or not) during this period. We will also discuss more recent antisemitism incidents in the United States.</p> | <p>Film: Gentleman’s Agreement (1947) – Or documentary on Skokie or Tree of Life</p> <p>Goldstein, P. (2012). <i>A Convenient Hatred: The history of antisemitism</i>. Chapters 14-16.</p> <p>ADL Antisemitism surveys (1964-present)</p> <p>Chanes, J.A. (2004), <i>Antisemitism: A Reference Handbook</i>. Chapters 1 and 5,</p> |
| <p>Week 4 Class 6 T 1/30</p> | <p><u>Using Social science research to understand Antisemitism in American Public Opinion</u></p> <p>This class will draw on public opinion data, collected using the methods of social science discussed previously, to identify and explore trends in how the American public thinks about Jews, and various antisemitic ideas, since World War 2.</p> | <p>Readings:</p> <p>Smith, T. W., & Schapiro, B. (2018). Antisemitism in Contemporary America. In A. Dashefsky & I. M. Sheskin (Eds.), <i>American Jewish Year Book 2018</i>. Springer Nature.</p> <p>Anti-Defamation league (2023): Antisemitic Attitudes in America:</p> |

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| | | <p>Topline Findings https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitic-attitudes-america-topline-findings</p> |
| <p>Week 4 Class 7 Th 2/1</p> | <p><u>Lab session: Understanding research on antisemitism</u></p> <p>Students will work in small groups to write a brief, non-technical summary of the results of an academic article on antisemitism suitable for policymakers and advocacy groups.</p> | <p>Feinberg, A. (2020). Explaining Ethnoreligious Minority Targeting: Variation in U.S. Anti-Semitic Incidents. Perspectives on Politics.</p> |
| <p>Week 5 Class 8 T 2/6</p> | <p><u>Antisemitism and Israel – Background</u></p> <p>This classes discusses the role of Israel (as both a “land” and a “state”) to Jewish identity, and the ideas of “Zionism” and “anti-Zionism” in political, ethnic, and religious context. Given these relationships, the class returns to some of the definitions discussed at the beginning of class and explores why they see certain forms of criticism of Israel as antisemitic.</p> | <p>Chapters from: Rosenfeld, A. H. (2019). Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: The Dynamics of Delegitimization. Indiana University Press. https://search.library.brandeis.edu/permalink/01BRAND_INST/nmaao4/alma9923732711701921</p> <p>The Nexus Document. https://israelandantisemitism.com/the-nexus-document/</p> <p>The Jerusalem Declaration: https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/</p> <p>“Thirty-nine words about antisemitism are splitting the Jewish community” Arno Rosenfeld. https://jweekly.com/2021/01/26/thirty-nine-words-about-antisemitism-are-splitting-the-jewish-community/</p> <p>https://politicalresearch.org/2017/06/29/skin-in-the-game-how-antisemitism-animates-white-nationalism</p> |
| <p>Week 5 Class 9 Th 2/8</p> | <p><u>Antisemitism and Israel: the role of research</u></p> <p>This class discusses how social science research can help us to better navigate debates about the relationship between criticism of Israel, including BDS (the boycott,</p> | <p>Bakin, A. B., & Abu-Laban, Y. (2009). Palestinian resistance and international solidarity: the BDS campaign. Race and Class.</p> |

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| | divest, and sanction movement against Israel) and antisemitism. | <p>Bard, Mitchell. The History of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/bds-movement</p> <p>https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitic-attitudes-america-topline-findings</p> <p>Forthcomming CMJS research on What Jews thik about when criticism of Israel is antisemitic (from CJL presentation)</p> |
| <p>Week 6 Class 10 T 2/13</p> | <p><u>Lab session: conducting research</u></p> <p>Students will have the opportunity to review and analyze qualitative research data related to antisemitic experiences.</p> | |
| <p>Week 6 Class 11 Th 2/15</p> | <p><u>Guest speaker (based on schedule)</u></p> <p>Interview of guest experts/thought leaders will be interspersed throughout the semester. Our guests (depending on their availability) include Rachel Fish, Abe Foxman, Deborah Lipstadt, Cary Nelson, and Mark Yudoff. We expect most of these interviews to be live via ZOOM.</p> | |
| <p>T 2/20 & Th 2/22</p> | <p>FEBRUARY BREAK</p> | |
| <p>Week 7 Class 12 T 2/27</p> | <p><u>Present midterm assignments</u></p> | |

PART 2: RESPONDING TO ANTISEMITISM

The second half of the class will focus on the question of how to “respond” to antisemitism.

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| <p>Week 7 Class 13 Th 2/29</p> | <p><u>Responses to antisemitism</u></p> <p>This class reviews a variety of responses to antisemitism that have been proposed and discuss how to evaluate these approaches. We will also introduce the final project which will examine an existing or new response to antisemitism.</p> | <p>US National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. May 2023. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U.S.-National-Strategy-to-Counter-Antisemitism.pdf</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/25/us/politics/biden-antisemitism-plan-hate-crimes.html</p> <p>Review selected websites for their strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ADL [Anti-Defamation League]: https://www.adl.org - American Jewish Committee: https://www.ajc.org/ - https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/projects-and-initiatives/21-day-practice-on-combating-antisemitism/ <p>Weiss (2019), selected chapters</p> |
| <p>Week 8 Class 14 T 3/5</p> | <p><u>Theories of Social Change</u></p> <p>This class discusses how social science researchers have thought about how to address social problems (like antisemitism). This includes theories and strategies for reducing prejudice and bias, and preventing hate crimes. The class then compares these approaches with the strategies being pursued by the organizations discussed previously</p> | <p>Readings:</p> <p>Political theories</p> <p>Socio-psychological</p> |
| <p>Week 8 Class 15 Th 3/7</p> | <p><u>How do we know if what we’re doing is working?</u></p> <p>A quick overview of the field of program evaluation: research designed to figure out if a program designed to achieve a specific goal is actually effective. We will discuss the importance of understanding which social programs work and which do not, and how both qualitative and</p> | <p>Fundamentals of evaluation research</p> <p>Horn, Dara (May 2023). Is Holocaust Education Making Anti-Semitism Worse? The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2023/05/holocaust-student-education-jewish-anti-semitism/673488/</p> |

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| | quantitative research can help us answer these questions. | |
| Week 9 Class 16 T 3/12 | <u>Antisemitism and Contemporary American Politics, 1</u> The next few classes cover the relationship between contemporary antisemitism and current US politics. The first class will focus on the study of American political attitudes and behavior, discussing the challenges faced by political scientists who want to know not only <i>what</i> Americans believe about contentious political issues (in particular, antisemitism) but also how (if at all) those belief actually matter politically. | Graham Wright & Sasha Volodarsky (2023): <i>To understand American politics, you need to move beyond left and right.</i> The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/to-understand-american-politics-you-need-to-move-beyond-left-and-right-201900 Ezra Kelin (2018) How identity politics elected Donald Trump. Vox. https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/11/5/18052390/trump-2018-2016-identity-politics-democrats-immigration-race |
| Week 9 Class 17 Th 3/14 | <u>Antisemitism and Contemporary American Politics, 2</u> The second class will explore how political ideology relate to antisemitic beliefs <i>among non-Jews</i> . How much is antisemitism a “right wing?” or “left wing” phenomenon? To explore this question popular commentary will be contrasted with a collective reading of an academic article that investigates the questions systematically. | Jonathan Jacoby (2022). The mistake in equating right-wing and left-wing antisemitism https://forward.com/opinion/522629/the-mistake-in-equating-right-wing-and-left-wing-antisemitism/ Wu, N., Desiderio, A., & Zanona, M. (2021). <i>Rising antisemitism strains Democrats and GOP alike</i> . Politico. Retrieved 3/07/2021 from https://www.politico.com/news/2021/05/25/anti-semitic-incidents-democrats-gop-490656 Hersh, E., & Royden, L. (2022). <i>Antisemitic Attitudes Across the Ideological Spectrum</i> . <i>Political Research Quarterly</i> . |

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| | | https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129221111081 |
| Week 10 Class 18 T 3/19 | <u>Lab session:</u> Students will work in small groups to write a brief, non-technical summary of the results of an academic article on antisemitism suitable for policymakers and advocacy groups. | Wright, G. Volodarsky, S., Hecht, S., Saxe, L. (2022). Antisemitism and Polarization: The Political Dynamics of American Jewish Concerns about Traditional and Israel-related Antisemitism. <i>Politics, Groups, and Identities</i> . |
| Week 10 Class 19 Th 3/21 | <u>Antisemitism on Campus</u> This class will cover some issues that arise around concerns about antisemitism on the college campus. The class will review various high-profile events related to antisemitism on college campuses, and explore how they relate to antisemitism in other contexts, as well as public opinion data on the prevalence and nature of antisemitism in higher education. | Rothstein, R., & Santis, Y. (2016). The War against Israel and its Supporters on Campus. Retrieved from https://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/2016/06/20/the-war-against-israel-and-its-supporters-on-campus/ Samel, D. (2020). The manufactured campus antisemitism hysteria intensifies. Retrieved from https://mondoweiss.net/2020/02/the-manufactured-campus-antisemitism-hysteria-intensifies/ Saxe, L., Wright, G., Hecht, S., Shain, M., Sasson, T., & Chertok, F. (2016). <i>Hotspots of Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Hostility on US Campuses</i> . Retrieved from Waltham, MA: http://www.brandeis.edu/ssri/noteworthy/antisemitism.html |
| Week 11 Class 20 T 3/26 | <u>Antisemitism, free speech, and legal responses</u> This class will explore legal responses to antisemitism using antidiscrimination laws, as well as claims that antisemitism is protected speech. We will focus on specific incidents and policies. | US National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. May 2023. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U.S.-National-Strategy-to-Counter-Antisemitism.pdf https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/ed/ED6-Combating-Antisemitism.pdf |

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| | | https://www.aclumich.org/en/cases/synagogue-protesters |
| Th 3/28 | NO CLASS | |
| Week 12 Class 21 T 4/2 | <u>Antisemitism, Race, and Racism 1</u> This class looks at the complex relationship between antisemitism and other forms of “racial” discrimination and prejudice, especially “white nationalism,” and other forms of racism against Black Americans and other people of color. | Dov Waxman (2022): Antisemitism isn’t just ‘Jew-hatred’ – it’s anti-Jewish racism. https://theconversation.com/antisemitism-isnt-just-jew-hatred-its-anti-jewish-racism-193614 Emma Green, “Why the Charlottesville Marchers Were Obsessed with Jews”, The Atlantic, (August 15, 2017). https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/nazis-racism-charlottesville/536928/ |
| Week 13 Class 22 Th 4/4 | <u>Antisemitism, Race, and Racism 2</u> How struggles against antisemitism in the US have intersected with struggles against racism. This includes the relationship between Black and Jewish communities during the civil rights movements, the relationship between antisemitism and other forms of racism in contemporary politics. | Cohen, J. E. (2018b). Generalized Discrimination Perceptions and American Jewish Perception of Antisemitism. <i>Contemporary Jewry</i> , 38(3), 405-433. Lyang, Nora (2021). <i>Opinion: Here’s how the model minority myth hurts Asians and other people of color</i> . The San Diego Union-Tribune https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/commentary/story/2021-03-26/minority-myth-asians |
| Week 14 Class 23 T 4/9 | <u>Guest speaker (based on schedule)</u> Interview of guest experts/thought leaders will be interspersed throughout the semester. Our guests (depending on their availability) include Rachel Fish, Abe Foxman, Deborah Lipstadt, Cary Nelson, and Mark Yudoff. We expect most of these interviews to be live via ZOOM. | |

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| Week 14 Class 24 Th 4/11 | <u>Lingering questions: Impact of antisemitism on US Jews</u> What has been the impact of antisemitism on the US Jewish community? How have concerns about security altered Jewish behavior? Has the focus on antisemitism diverted attention from other Jewish concerns? Has trauma shaped Jewish identity? | Lipstadt (2019), p 234-242. https://www.securecommunitynetwork.org/ |
| Week 15 Class 25 T 4/16 | <u>Reflection and Wrap-up</u> Returning to the incidents discussed in the first class, this class returns to the question of “why study antisemitism” and the value of studying antisemitism through the lens of social science. Students will also have an opportunity to provide their own reflections about the course and what questions remain unanswered. | |
| Week 15 Class 26 Th 4/18 | <u>Present final projects</u> <u>LAST IN-CLASS SESSION</u> | |
| Week 17 T 4/23 & Th 4/25 | NO CLASS, PASSOVER BREAK | |
| Week 19 T 5/7 & Th 5/9 | Written final project due on May 7 | |

3/8/23

Rev. 10/23/23