Course Outline

Class One: The History and Politics of Defining Antisemitism

Class Two: Israel and Antisemitism: Two definitions, two worldviews

Class Three: Definitions of Hate as Political Engagement: Antisemitism in the 21st Century
Course Goals

• To have a better understanding of history and politics of defining antisemitism.

• To consider the contemporary political situation informing efforts to define antisemitism.

• To encourage people to find ways to build interreligious coalitions to combat antisemitism (with & without a definition).
Agenda

7:00pm  Introduction
7:10pm  Origins (a): Antisemitism in a Time of Nationalism
7:20pm  Origins (b): Wilhelm Marr
7:25pm  Late 19th and early 20th Jewish Responses to Marr
7:35pm  Breakout Rooms
7:45pm  The Game Changer: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion
8:00pm  Defining Antisemitism in the Wake of the Protocols
8:15pm  Breakout Rooms
8:25pm  Plenary and Parting Thoughts
8:30pm  Adjourn
Anti-Judaism: Supersessionism and Christian Theologies

1. Christian accusation of *deicide* against Jewish people as a whole.
2. The Blood Libel (emerging in the 12th century)
3. The Alhambra Decree, 1492
4. Martin Luther’s *On the Jews and Their Lies*, 1543
“The state makes history, only collective groups with political sovereignty and territorial boundaries have the potential to act on the world scene as a collective group.”

*Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1822)
Wilhelm Marr (1819-1904)

1. In his 1879 pamphlet *The Victory of Judaism Over Germandom: Regarded from a Non-Confessional Point of View*, Marr coins the term “Antisemite.”

2. “Woe to the Conquered” is the pamphlet’s motto.

3. Accusation that German liberalism allowed Jews to take over Germany.
The 1882 edition of the *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*

“Anyone who hates Jews or opposes Judaism in general and struggles against the character traits and intentions of the Semites.”
Theodor Fritsch
1852-1933

In 1887, he wrote a treatise entitled *Antisemitic Catechism*, which provided a set of “commandments” for antisemitism.

His definition was clear: “anti—to oppose, Semitism—the essence of the Jewish race; antisemitism is therefore the struggle against Semitism.”
Theodor Herzl
(1860-1904)

“We are one people—our enemies have made us one without our consent, as repeatedly happens in history. Distress binds us together, and, thus united, we suddenly discover our strength. Yes, we are strong enough to form a State, indeed a moral State.”

*The Jewish State* (1896)
Early Jewish Responses

1. In 1901, the first edition of the 12-volume Jewish Encyclopedia appeared in London and New York.
2. Complied in the U.S., entries were written by more than 400 Jewish experts.
3. Emphasis was initially placed on the Christian theological origins of antisemitism, not on the secular-political ones.
4. The entry on antisemitism was different.
Rabbi Dr. Gotthard Deutsch
1859-1921

His definition emphasized its racist—rather than religious—origins and focused on the racist characterization of Jews, encompassing:

“greed, a special aptitude for money-making, aversion to hard work, clannishness and obtrusiveness, lack of social tact and especially of patriotism. Finally, the term is used to justify resentment for any crime or objectionable act committed by an individual Jew.”
In 1911, in the 11th edition of the Jewish Encyclopedia, wrote:

“The Jews contend that Anti-Semitism is a mere atavistic revival of the Jew-hatred of the Middle Ages.”
In a letter dated in 1917 to Mathilde Wurm, Luxemburg addressed a few issues related to a novel on Spinoza, then moved to Jewish suffering:

“what do you want with this theme of the ‘special suffering of the Jews?’ I am just as much concerned with the poor victims on the rubber plantations of Putumayo, the black people in Africa with whose corpses the Europeans play catch . . . I have no special place in my heart for the [Jewish] ghetto. I feel at home in the entire world wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears.”
Quick Summary

Definitions of antisemitism needed to consider:

- questions of national identity, loyalty, and nationalism;
- questions of cultural and biological belonging;
- questions of universal vs particular hatred;
- questions of colonialism and empire.

Identity was changing in the 19th and early 20th centuries, so bigotry changed too.
Breakout room

What elements of late 19th and early 20th century definitions of antisemitism are relevant today?
The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

1. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is the most influential work of antisemitism ever written.

2. *The Protocols* were initially written to blame Jews and Freemasons for the 1905 Revolution in Russia.

3. The work is an illustration of confirmation bias: It didn’t convince people to hate or distrust Jews, rather it allowed a document to confirm those biases.

4. International sales of the pamphlet were astronomical during the 1920s and 1930s, including in the U.S. During this period, it was the second most translated work in the world (the Bible was first).
• While the origins of the documents are still debated, it was first published in 1903 in the Russian newspaper Znamya ("the Banner").
• In 1920, The Protocols are published in Poland, England, France, and the U.S.: they blame the Russian Revolution on Jewish conspirators.
• Hitler quotes it at length in Mein Kampf.
• Nazis publish 23 editions and teach it in schools.
1. Jews and Citizenship

Jews were perceived to be a “State within a State.”

Propaganda poster, circa 1941. The Nazi exhibition "The Jew and France" was on display in Paris from September 1941 to January 1942.
2. Jews and Money

Jews were (are) perceived to have an uncanny attachment to money.

3. Excess of Jewish Influence in Public Life

Following (1) and (2), Jews have attained a disproportionate amount of influence in public life, ranging from media to financially supporting political movements that advance the interests of the “Jewish spirit” in overpowering the world.

Image: Der Sturmer, 1934
4. Modernity Works for Jewry

Jews are guilty of introducing unsavory views into the world.
5. The Jewish Conspiracy

Jews are conspiring against the world.
6. The Demonic Jew:

It is part of the theological and biological nature of Jews to be evil.
Breakout room

What are the challenges in defining antisemitism today?
Class One: The History and Politics of Defining Antisemitism

Goal One:

To have a better understanding of history and politics of defining antisemitism