

## **Jews of Galicia: A History**

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### **Course Description:**

In 1939, on the eve of the Holocaust, East European Jewry constituted the most important and influential Jewish community in the world. As a result of half a century of mass migration to the West, up to 90% of world Jewry either lived in Eastern Europe or were children of east European immigrants. Although scholarship and popular memory typically equate Eastern Europe with the Russian Empire, in fact Jews in the eastern Austrian empire – in Galicia and Bukowina – numbered one million souls by the Holocaust, plus hundreds of thousands of emigres throughout the world. Moreover, despite the popular image of the cunning, coarse, fanatical “Galitsyaners,” Galicia actually served as a center of *haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment), rabbinic scholarship and a vital and innovative Hasidic movement, and later produced countless Zionist and socialist leaders as well as a cadre of literary and academic stars including most prewar Polish-Jewish historians and, most famously, the noble prize laureate S.Y. Agnon.

This course surveys the establishment, flourishing and destruction of this once vital community by examining its social, economic, political, religious and cultural history from the eighteenth century – the time of the province's creation – to the Holocaust and its aftermath. While we focus on Galicia, we will regularly place Galicia in its broader East European context, particularly in the final three lectures covering the period after the demise of Galicia as a legal province at the end of the First World War.

### **Course Requirements:**

Weekly reading assignments: Each lecture will complement one or more short articles or book chapters. Please complete each lesson's reading before viewing the video lecture. Student assessment will be based on written work commensurate with the level you choose to take the class.

**Response papers:** Students will have to submit **3** short response paper of approximately 1000 words each, addressing an issue based on selected pieces of the course assigned reading and lectures. Each response should indicate familiarity with the material covered in lectures. These should NOT be comprehensive, but rather should be tightly-edited responses to major issues after completing the readings and lectures.

**Final “short” paper** (referat) for those who opt for it: Length – approximately 3000 words. Students should submit proposal of 1-2 pages for final papers.

A proposal should include research question, a brief explanation about the literature on the topic, methodological considerations, and bibliography. Final papers should follow standard academic practice.

**Seminar paper**, for those who opt for it: Length – approximately 8-9,000 words. Students should submit proposal of approximately 2-3 pages along the same lines as required for the short final paper – but including also primary source.

**Final Grade:**

3 response papers – 50% -Final short paper 50%  
3 response papers – 40% -Final seminar paper 60%  
Or a grade based on the 3 response papers.

**Schedule**

**1. "Polish Partition and the Birth of Galicia"**

Israel Bartal, “Austria and the Jews of Galicia, 1772-1848” in: *The Jews of Eastern Europe*, 70-81

Stanislaw Grodzinski, “The Jewish Question in Galicia: The Reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, 1772-1790” in *Polin 12: Focusing on Galicia* (1999), 61-72

Nancy Sinkoff, *Out of the Shtetl: making Jews modern in the Polish borderlands*, 203-25

**2. "Hasidism and Traditional Jewish Society"**

Rafael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*” (1985), 3-29, 69-103

Rachel Manekin, "Hasidism and the Habsburg Empire, 1788-1867," *Jewish History* 27 (2013), 271-97

### 3. "Haskalah: The Jewish Enlightenment"

Rafael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (1985), 31-67

Nancy Sinkoff, *Out of the Shtetl: making Jews modern in the Polish borderlands*, 225-41

Jerzy Holzer, "Enlightenment, Assimilation, and Modern Identity: The Jewish Elite in Galicia," in *Polin 12: Focusing on Galicia* (1999), 79-85

### **\*\*First response paper. [3/12/24](#)**

Please compare the approach of Rafael Mahler to later historians on the Haskalah and Hasidic movement in Galicia.

### 4. "Emancipation"

Rachel Manekin, "Taking it to the Streets: Polish-Jewish print discourse in 1848 Lemberg", *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Institut* 7 (2008), 215-227

Rachel Manekin, "Politics, Religion, and National Identity: The Galician Jewish Vote in the 1873 Parliamentary Elections," in *Polin 12: Focusing on Galicia* (1999), 100-120

Jozef Buszko, "The Consequences of Galician Autonomy after 1867," in *Polin 12: Focusing on Galicia* (1999), 86-99

### 5. "Modern Jewish Politics: Jewish Nationalism and its Opponents"

Ezra Mendelsohn, "From assimilation to Zionism in Lvov: the case of Alfred Nossig," *Slavonic and East European Review* 49 (1971), 521-34

Ela Bauer, "The Intellectual and the City: Lwow (Lemberg, Lviv) and Jehoshua (Ozjasz) Thon" in *A Romantic Polish-Jew: Rabbi Ozjasz Thon from Various Perspectives*, 11-26

Joshua Shanes, "Fort mit den Hausjuden!": Jewish nationalists engage mass politics," in *Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and Beyond*, 153-78

Rick Kuhn, "Organizing Yiddish Speaking Workers in Pre-World War One Galicia: The Jewish Social Democratic Party" in *Yiddish Language and Culture Then and Now* (1996)

## 6. Jewish Life after Emancipation: Economic Developments and Antisemitism

Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz, "Yiddish as an Expression of Jewish Cultural Identity in Galicia and Vienna," in *Polin 12: Focusing on Galicia* (1999), 164-176

Dan Unowsky, "Local violence, regional politics, and state crisis: the 1898 anti-Jewish riots in Habsburg Galicia," in *Sites of European Antisemitism in the Age of Mass Politics, 1880-1918*, 13-35

John-Paul Himka, "Dimensions of a Triangle: Polish-Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Austrian Galicia," *Polin 12* (1999), 25-48

### \*\*Second response paper. 5/1/25

What struck you in the readings about how emancipation and economic change affected Jewish identity and relations with their non-Jewish neighbors?

## 7. "First World War and its Aftermath"

S. Ansky, *The Enemy at his Pleasure*, pages 3-59, 63-110

## 8. Interwar Soviet Experience

Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, 49-87

## 9. Independent Poland

Ezra Mendelsohn, "Interwar Poland: good for the Jews or bad for the Jews?" in *The Jews in Poland* (1986), 130-139

Gershon Bacon, "Agudat Israel in interwar Poland," in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*

Sam Kassow, "Community and Identity in the Interwar Shtetl" in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, 198-222

Antony Polonsky, "A Failed Pogrom: the demonstrations in Lwow, June 1929" in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*,

## 10. Holocaust: Destruction and Afterlife

Frank Golczewski, “Shades of Grey: Reflections on Jewish-Ukrainian and German-Ukrainian Relations in Galicia,” in *The Shoah in Ukraine*, 114-55

Omer Bartov, “White Space and Black Holes: “Eastern Galicia’s Past and Present” in *The Shoah in Ukraine* 318-53

Recommended: Jan Gross, *Neighbors* (entire book)

### **\*\*Final response paper. 5/2/25**

What do the readings suggest about the Holocaust as aberration or culmination of the modern, especially 20<sup>th</sup> century East European Jewish experience?