



# **ЕВРЕИ В РОССИИ И В СОВЕТСКОМ СОЮЗЕ**

## **The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union: Experience and Expression (Jewish Studies 2791F)**

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**Monday 12:30-2:30, Wednesday 1:30-2:30  
Room H-227**

**Professor:** Dr. John P. Hope  
**Email:** jhope24@huron.uwo.ca  
**Office Hours:** Monday 2:30-3:30, Thursday 12:30-1:30, and by appointment  
**Office:** A-15  
**Prerequisites:** None

### **Course Description**

This course is an introductory survey of the history and cultural expression of the Jewish population of Russia and the Soviet Union. We will trace the events and processes that helped shape the Russian Jewish identity, including modernization, secularization, the advent of communism, and the contradictions of Soviet power, and we will examine the cultural and intellectual life that flourished over the course of this history. The objects of our exploration will include literature written in Yiddish and Russian, pictorial art, cinema, and popular culture. All readings will be in English and no previous knowledge of Russian or Jewish history is required.

### **Learning Objectives**

This course aims to help students to:

- Understand modern Jewish history in its Russian and European context
- Explore the interplay between historical change and cultural expression
- Examine the ways in which identity is constructed and articulated
- Analyze the artistic strategies of works of literature, cinema, and pictorial art
- Identify potential research topics
- Amass and evaluate research sources
- Construct an argument and communicate it in writing

### **Course Method**

Class will unfold primarily as discussion, with forays into lecture when necessary. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and identified questions and topics of interest.

### **Required Resources**

- Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye the Milkman and Motyl the Cantor's Son*, Penguin
- Isaac Babel, *The Complete Works of Isaac Babel*, W.W. Norton

All other readings will be provided in electronic form on owl.uwo.ca.

### **Assessment**

Grades will be determined by the following assignments:

- Preparation and participation: 25%
- Midterm exam: 20%
- Research paper: 30%
- Final exam: 25%

### **Discussion board**

Included in your class participation grade is the requirement to contribute EIGHT paragraph-length postings to our OWL discussion board (owl.ca). These may take the form of a comment on the reading, a question, or an idea you want to try out. Basically, this is a way to continue our discussion outside of the classroom, and to give everyone an opportunity to express their ideas. To receive full credit, you should make your post before 11 p.m. on Monday and 12 pm on Wednesday. Your post should concern the reading or topic of the upcoming discussion.

### **Research paper**

One of the goals of this course is to assist you in conceiving and producing a research paper. This will unfold over several steps. The first step will be producing a research statement and bibliography, followed by a rough draft, a meeting to discuss your work, and a revised final draft which takes my feedback into consideration. Please see the schedule for the relevant dates.

Subject to my approval, you may pursue any line of inquiry into any research topic you choose, as long as it is related to the topic of the course. Grades will be based on the depth of your research and the clarity of your writing.

### **Exams**

There will be a one-hour midterm exam in class and a two-hour exam during finals period. The date and time of the final exam will be announced by the university. Please do not make any travel plans until you know when the exam will take place. No alternate arrangements will be made.

## **COURSE POLICIES:**

### **Attendance**

You are expected to attend class and participate in discussions. After three unexcused absences, each additional absence will result in your participation grade being lowered by a letter (A → B, etc.). Students with ten or more unexcused absences will not be permitted to sit for the final exam. If you have a compelling reason to miss class, I ask you to let me know. If you are unsure as to whether your reason is compelling, please discuss it with me.

### **Technology in the Classroom**

All phones must be powered down and put away. I greatly prefer that laptops not be used in class, though you may discuss this with me if you have a need or a strong preference to take notes in this way.

### **Missed or Late Work**

Late assignments will not be accepted, and as a rule I do not grant extensions the night before an assignment is due. However, some flexibility is possible. Look over the syllabus and check it against your schedule. If you have a conflict, I am willing to work with you to set a new deadline, provided that you contact me **well in advance**. For more information on academic accommodations for medical and non-medical reasons please consult the appendix below.

**NB:** This syllabus is a guide, not a contract, and I reserve the right to make reasonable changes to it based on your suggestions, my sense of your interests and, and any flashes of inspiration that may occur during the course of the semester.

## How To Get an 'A' in This Course

An 'A' in a university class is a significant achievement and there is no guarantee that you will get one, but there are a number of things you can do to maximize your chances and – not incidentally – to exponentially increase your learning.

**Come to class.** Showing up and participating in class is the single most important thing you can do. It's not just about the grade penalty: class is where the learning happens. This course is based primarily on discussion and presumes a lively exchange between you, your classmates, and me. I can never entirely know ahead of time what direction the conversation will take, and there is no way for me to recreate it for you later or for you make up for an absence by talking to a classmate. You cannot get fit by reading about someone else's workout, and you cannot learn the material by reading someone else's notes. Be present.

**Do the reading. Do it before class.** This is the other most impactful thing you can do. Since class is based on discussion and the discussion is based on our readings, you cannot participate if you do not do the reading on time. My role is not to summarize the reading for you or – heaven forbid – to put it up on Power Point. In class we are going to talk about the reading and use it to branch out into other topics. If you haven't read, you will be lost, bored, and disengaged.

**Take your writing seriously.** I only have a few opportunities to evaluate your command of the material and your intellectual growth. Make them count. Start thinking about and working on your papers well before they are due, and take advantage of all of the resources we provide to help you develop your writing. I am always happy to discuss your work in person or via email, and to read drafts, outlines, introductions or thesis statements. The Huron Library offers an array of writing services, including tutorials and help with assignments.

**Write your posts – the sooner the better.** I form some of my first impressions of you as a student through your posts, and they allow me to better integrate you into our class discussions. Posting early in the semester builds good habits, immerses you in the material, and alerts me to any difficulties you might have with the course when there is still time for that to make a difference. If you wait until late in the semester you run the risk of not getting all of your posts done.

**Overall: Be engaged. Be curious.** You should strive to find something interesting in any day's topic and to engage with it in a genuine way. If you can do that, if you can find some passion for what you are studying, then you won't be chasing a grade – you'll be pursuing knowledge, and with that the grades will come on their own.

**A regrettable note: how to fail this course.** This course, like all university courses, is meant to be challenging. You may occasionally have difficulties understanding some of the material, you may run into a dead end when writing, and you may fall behind. That's OK. We can always find ways to get you back on track. What is not OK, however, is taking a short cut by presenting someone else's writing as your own. It doesn't matter whether the source is a webpage, an article you found online, a paper someone else wrote, or anything else. It doesn't matter if you change the wording. It doesn't matter if it's only for an OWL post. If you draw on anyone else's ideas without making that clear, you are committing plagiarism. I cannot overstate the severity of the consequences of making this choice. They may range from failing the course to being expelled from the university. There have been cases of graduates having their degrees revoked after their plagiarism was discovered. If you fall behind in this course there are other ways to recover – academic dishonesty is not worth the risk.

## ***Un Peu de Politesse, or How to Get Your Professor to Like You***

University teachers are a varied bunch and we all have different styles, different expectations, and different ways of communicating with students. Some of us are very informal, while others maintain an academic distance. Some prefer to discuss questions in office hours and loathe writing emails, while others would much prefer to handle things online. You should follow each professor's lead. With that said, there are certain rules of *politesse* that are always good to follow.

**How to Address Your Professor:** Academic titles can be confusing, and there are a great many of them: Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Full Professor, Doctor, Visiting Professor, Instructor, Lecturer, *Herr Doktor Professor*, Senior Vice Provost of Oboe Theory... It doesn't matter. Unless you are told otherwise, you should refer to any faculty member as "Professor [Last Name]" – both in writing and in conversation. "Doctor [Last Name]" is usually fine too, but "Doctor" signals that the person holds a Ph.D., and they might correct you if that is not the case. You should never call a professor by her or his first name unless specifically invited to do so. "Mr." and "Ms." make us grind our teeth at night. I've personally never minded "Hey Prof," but you are rolling the dice with that one. "Professor" is your safest bet by a very wide margin.

**How to Write an Email:** There seems to be an age divide when it comes to email. Some students tend to treat email as an extension of texting, while faculty often think of email as a form of letter-writing. It is best to conform to your professors' expectations. You will never go wrong if, when you write, you greet your professor, explain briefly why you're writing, and sign off.

*Dear Professor Poliakov,*

*I've started working on our next essay and I'm not sure I'm going in the right direction. Would you be willing to have a look at my introductory paragraph? I'd be happy to bring it to your next office hours, or I can email it if you would prefer. Just let me know. As always, thanks for your help.*

*Best,*

*Samantha*

Once your professor responds, write back to acknowledge that you got the message and to say thanks. Don't ghost us. We don't know what that is, and it makes us confused and cranky.

**How Not to Irritate Your Professor:** There are no stupid questions, but there are wholly reasonable, intelligent questions that have already been answered in great detail elsewhere. "When is the first paper due?" (It's in the syllabus.) "What percentage of our grade is the final exam?" (It's in the syllabus.) "Do we need to buy a textbook?" (Honestly, it's in the syllabus.) This is a thing. There are now t-shirts and mugs faculty can buy that say, "It's in the syllabus," usually along with some choice profanity. It is best not to cause your professor to resort to profanity.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **PART ONE: THE TURNING POINTS OF HISTORY**

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- Wed. 9/8 **Course Introduction.**
- Mon. 9/13 **Prehistory. The Pale of Settlement. Shtetl life.**  
**Read:** Ben-Cion Pinchuk, "The Shtetl: An Ethnic Town in the Russian Empire"
- Wed. 9/15 **From Repression to Reform to Repression.**  
**Read:** Steven Marks, "Destroying the Agents of Modernity: Russian Antisemitism" (pp. 140-54)  
**Read:** Eugene Avrutin, "Pogroms in Russian History"
- Mon. 9/20 **The Revolution of 1917. The Bund and the Bolsheviks.**  
**Read:** Zvi Gitelman, "Revolution and the Ambiguities of Liberation," *A Century of Ambivalence*
- Wed. 9/22 **New Soviet Man. Stalinism. The Terror.**  
**Read:** Anna Shternshis, "Antireligious Propaganda and the Transformation of Jewish Institutions and Traditions," *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union*
- Mon. 9/27 **World War II and the Holocaust**  
**Read:** Mordechai Altshuler, "The Unique Features of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union"  
**Recommended:** Anna Shternshis, "Between Life and Death: Why Some Soviet Jews Decided to Leave and Others to Stay in 1941"
- Wed. 9/29 **The "Black Years." The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. The Doctors' Plot.**  
**Read:** K. Azadovskii & B. Egorov, "From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism: Stalin and the Impact of the 'Anti-Cosmopolitan' Campaigns on Soviet Culture"
- Mon. 10/4 **The Thaw. Stagnation. Dissidence and Emigration.**  
**Read:** Zvi Gitelman, "Soviet Jews, 1967-1987: To Reform, Conform, or Leave?"
- Wed. 10/6 **Perestroika and Glasnost. The Fall of the USSR. Contemporary Russia.**  
**Read:** Larissa Remennick, "The Two Waves of Russian-Jewish Migration from the USSR/FSU to Israel: Dissidents of the 1970s and Pragmatics of the 1990s."

### **PART TWO: PREREVOLUTIONARY ART AND THOUGHT**

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- Mon. 10/11 *Thanksgiving*
- Wed. 10/13 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- Mon. 10/18 **Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye the Dairyman***  
**Read:** Kotonti, The Great Windfall, The Roof Falls In, Today's Children, Hodl, Chava
- Wed. 10/20 **Sholem Aleichem**  
**Read:** Shprintze, Tevye Is Going to Eretz Yisroel, "Get Thee Gone," Vachalaklokos
- Mon. 10/25 **I.L. Peretz**  
**Read:** The Magician, If Not Higher, "The *Shabbes-Goy*, Bontsha the Silent

- Wed. 10/27 **David Bergelson**  
**Read:** Remnants, Departing
- Thu. 10/28 **RESEARCH STATEMENT AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE BY 8 PM**
- Mon. 11/1 *Reading Week*  
Wed. 11/3 *Reading Week*
- Mon. 11/8 **Russian Jewish Art**
- Wed. 11/10 **Simon Dubnow and Jewish Nationhood**  
**Read:** The Doctrine of Jewish Nationalism, The Survival of the Jewish People
- Thu. 11/11 **WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE BY 8 PM**
- Mon. 11/15 **Tradition and Innovation: The Music of Russia's Jews**  
**Read:** Robert A. Rothstein, "How It Was Sung in Odessa: At the Intersection of Russian and Yiddish Folk Culture"

### **PART THREE: SOVIET CULTURE**

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- Wed. 11/17 **Jewish Life in Odessa**  
**Read:**
- Mon. 11/22 **Odessa, Identity, and Russian Jewish Humour**  
**Read:** Alice Nakhimovsky, "Mikhail Zhvanetskii: The Last Russian-Jewish Joker"
- Wed. 11/24 **Isaac Babel, "Autobiographical" Stories**  
**Read:** At Grandmother's, The Story of My Dovecote, The Awakening, In the Basement, First Love
- Thu. 11/25 **DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY 8 PM**
- Mon. 11/29 **Isaac Babel, *Red Cavalry***  
**Read:** Crossing the River Zbrucz, A Letter, Gedali, My First Goose, The Rabbi, Berestechko, Salt, Afonka Bida, After the Battle, The Rabbi's Son
- Wed. 12/1 **Isaac Babel, Odessa Stories**  
**Read:** The King, How Things Were Done in Odessa
- Mon. 12/6 **Soviet Yiddish Cinema**  
**Watch:** Alexander Granovsky's *Jewish Luck*
- Wed. 12/8 **Course Conclusion**
- Thu. 12/9 **FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY 8 PM**

**FINAL EXAM TO BE SCHEDULED**

## **Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations 2021 - 2022**

### **Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information**

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

### **Pandemic Contingency**

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, typically using a combination of synchronous instruction (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) and asynchronous material (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor. In the unlikely event that changes to the grading scheme are necessary, these changes will be clearly communicated as soon as possible.

### **Student Code of Conduct**

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

### **Attendance Regulations for Examinations**

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/attendance.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf).

### **Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf). The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf).

### **Turnitin.com**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### **Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

### **Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)**

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

### **Academic Consideration for Missed Work**

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_illness.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf) are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

### **Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence**

#### **(a) Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising**

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, and if the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported absences, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may **not** collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

#### **(b) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca).**

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_illness.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf). Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca) for any further questions or information.

### **Support Services**

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services at [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca). An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>

Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>

Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>

Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>

Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>

Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

### **Mental Health & Wellness Support at Huron and Western**

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: [huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca)

Community Safety Office: [safety@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:safety@huron.uwo.ca)

Chaplaincy: [gthorne@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:gthorne@huron.uwo.ca)

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.