

A History of Lies: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism

**JWST 201/
HIST 250**

**Mon/Wed/Fri
10:00 – 10:50 AM**

Room: JSC 337

Assistant Professor
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Office Hours:
Fridays, 2:30 – 4:30 PM



Course Description and Organization

On October 27, 2018 an armed man walked into a Pittsburgh synagogue and killed eleven Jews. Long before his simmering rage became murderous action, this man's posts on social media called Jews "an infestation," "filthy," and "the children of Satan." As disgusting and ignorant as these comments are, they were not new, and they were not the inventions of this gunman.

The hatreds that motivated and radicalized this man rely on scripts. Each of the key terms in his social media postings is a dog whistle for a specific belief about Jews. Some are old, some are ancient, few are new, and all are false.

The tropes, canards, stereotypes, and lies espoused by this man and those before him have long histories. This class interrogates those lies and their origins. Dropping the standard chronological organization of history classes, this course is instead organized around the lies told by antisemites. Each week we will confront a new trope about the Jews by first discussing the context in which it arose before next analyzing the lie itself. In the process we will use the skills of the historian to dissect the perceived basis of each falsehood, its appeal to those who said and say it, and the sincerity or opportunism of the speaker.

It has been said that "history is about the pursuit of truth." This course advances that pursuit by stripping antisemitic lies of their mystery and using them as a means to learn about how hatred and falsehoods gain favor and lasting relevance. Aside from being a class designed to build historical knowledge in a specific era or singular question, this course looks to the historians' toolkit to provide students with skills and experience in the active interpretation their present and future.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be better able to:

- ❖ Detect and dissect historic and present-day falsehoods
- ❖ Understand and critique arguments put forward by authors of the assigned sources
- ❖ Create historical questions that lead to effective and engaging class discussions
- ❖ Identify how primary sources can help us to answer particular historical questions, as well as the ways in which their usefulness is limited
- ❖ Provide an overall synthesis of the history of antisemitic thought
- ❖ Present ideas clearly in written form

Course Readings and Book Response Texts:

Readings such as academic articles, chapters, or sections are provided on OAKS. Your choices for the Book Response Paper will not be on OAKS—you will need to buy or borrow this book.

Formatting and Deadline Information for Assignments

Assignments should be turned in on time to avoid a grade penalty (on OAKS by 5:00 PM on the date noted on this syllabus). **All** assignments should be submitted by the deadline as Word documents on the course site. Unless otherwise agreed, email submissions will not be accepted. All assignments should stick to the word or page limit to avoid a grade penalty and use Times New Roman 12-point font and double spacing. Historians use footnote citations in the Chicago Manual of Style, explanation of which can be found [online](#).

I am understanding and flexible when needed—contact me in advance or as soon as a problem arises!

Writing Support:

The [College of Charleston Writing Lab](#), staffed by a faculty member and peer consultants, provides one-to-one assistance for every stage in the writing process for term papers, essays, letters, memos, or book reviews. Although consultants do not proofread papers, they do act as an audience listening to students' ideas and asking questions so that clients in the Writing Lab can make changes to their writing. In effect, the consultants work with the writers, not necessarily a piece of writing. Consultants also help clients review grammatical rules and principles of punctuation as well as the structure of sentences, paragraphs, and essays.

Grading Breakdown

- ❖ Attendance, Preparation, and Participation 20%
- ❖ Book Response 20%
- ❖ Antisemitism on Campus Assignment 20%
- ❖ Reading Discussion Leadership (2).....30%
- ❖ Dr. Michelle Kahn Visit 10%

Assignment Descriptions

A note on assignment values:

You cannot “do the math” and decide not to do a particular assignment. I reserve the right to fail any student who does not at least hand in a valid attempt at all assigned work.

Attendance, Preparation, and Participation: 20% of Course Grade

Classroom learning requires active participation and thorough preparation. Students will be graded on the basis of their ability to respond to the week’s readings from the texts and documents and their participation in discussion. As all of this is impossible if you are not present; attendance is also included in participation and preparation grades.

Book Response: 20% of Course Grade

- 4-5 Pages, 12 point, Times New Roman font, double spaced, one-inch margins, Chicago style footnotes and works cited page

Students will choose one book from the list provided (or an alternate in agreement with me) and write a response that demonstrates their understanding of its contents and knowledge of how the book fits into the history of antisemitism. Successful papers will quickly demonstrate knowledge of the book’s contents before moving on to analysis of the context of this history, the author’s use of sources, methodology, and thesis. In short, this paper should be much more than summary alone.

Of primary importance in these papers is demonstration of the student’s ability to analyze the origins and content of antisemitic or anti-Jewish lies covered in the text. This should constitute the bulk of the paper.

Antisemitism on Campus Assignment: 20% of Course Grade

- Copy of a substantial recent (2010 to present) news article covering allegations of antisemitism on an American, Canadian, or British college campus
- 2–3-page analysis of the article
 - 12 point, Times New Roman font, double spaced, one-inch margins, Chicago style footnotes and works cited page

Students will search online for coverage of an alleged incident of antisemitism on an American, Canadian, or British college campus. The incident can be something done by students, a professor, administration, etc. They will provide a copy of the article (link is not sufficient as the story could be removed or changed) and write an analysis of the alleged incident.

The analysis will seek to answer the following questions: what happened? Is this, in your understanding so far, antisemitism (meaning do you agree with the allegation)? What lie is being told about Jews in this incident and who are the tellers of that lie? What do those tellers hope to gain and are they sincere believers of their fictions or are they pushing an antisemitic means to an end?

Reading Discussion Leadership (two assignments): 15% each = 30% of Course Grade

Students will be assigned to help lead discussion of the week's readings two times over the course of the semester. They will take the time to make themselves subject matter experts on the readings and the topic of the week. At times this may mean looking for outside articles or other sources that shed light on the reading assigned that week.

Students will lead discussion in a group of five or six, though they need not think of this as group work. You may collaborate with others assigned that week or prepare on your own. That is your call and other students will not be graded on how they cooperate with you (nor you with them).

Students should prepare questions for the class, develop ideas to keep the conversation moving, and provide structure for the discussion. You will need to make sure that you/your group focuses on drawing out the theme of the week and excavating the antisemitic trope of focus.

BE CREATIVE. These leadership assignments are a substantial portion of your grade. Use them as a chance to take over how the class runs and how we move our conversation.

What you will hand in:

- Your notes on the reading and any outside sources you consulted
- An outline of you/your group's discussion plan
- A list of at least 5 discussion questions for the class

Dr. Michelle Kahn Visit: 10% of Course Grade

- 12 point, Times New Roman font, double spaced, one-inch margins

Students will attend Dr. Kahn's March 21 lecture at 7:00 PM either in Arnold Hall/Jewish Studies Room 100 or online via Zoom. They will write a 1-2-page summary and response to her talk that demonstrates engagement with the content of her lecture and understanding of its relevance to our course.

Extra Credit Opportunities

You may attend any lecture or event hosted by the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program and/or any event held on campus relevant to Jewish history (broadly conceived) and write a one-page reflection on the contents of the talk and what you learned.

Continuity of Learning & Support

Vaccination and Masks:

In accordance with College of Charleston policy, masks are required to be worn at all times in this course. If you have any issues with this policy and requirement, please see me immediately.

I also urge anyone who has not yet received a vaccination to do so immediately. Nearly all of those who suffer hospitalization and death from COVID are unvaccinated. This number sadly includes children and young people. The vaccine saves the lives of the vaccinated but also others who may not be eligible or are protected by the firewall of herd immunity. If you have not had a chance to get vaccinated, health services can help you at any time. If you have medical concerns, please see me. I can direct you to medical experts who can answer your questions.

Pronouns:

I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name and gender pronouns of your choice. Please advise me of this early in the semester via your college-issued email account or during office hours so that I may make the appropriate notation on my class list.

Honor Code & Academic Integrity:

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive an XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook by clicking [HERE!](#)

Mental & Physical Wellbeing:

At the college, we take every student's mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at <http://counseling.cofc.edu> or 843.953.5640 3rd Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit <http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php>, or meet with them in person on the third floor of the Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.

Food & Housing Resources:

Many CofC students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (such as not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the Dean of Students for support (<http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/about/salt.php>). Also, you can go to <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/student-food-housing-insecurity/index.php> to learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. In addition, there are several resources on and off campus to help. You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (second floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to any student in need. Please also consider reaching out to me if you are comfortable in doing so.

Inclusion:

The College of Charleston offers many resources for LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff along with their allies. Click on the links below for more information:

[Preferred Name and Pronoun Information](#)

[On Campus Gender Inclusive facilities](#)

[Campus Resources](#)

[College of Charleston Reporting Portals](#)

[National Resources for Faculty & Staff](#)

[GSEC Reports](#)

[Documenting LGBTQ Life in the Lowcountry \(CofC Addlestone Lib. Special Collections Project\)](#)

[College of Charleston Quality Enhancement Plan \(QEP\)](#)

[Articles about CofC and LGBTQ+ Issues](#)

Disability/Access:

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply for services at the [Center for Disability Services/SNAP](#) located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed.

I am a disabled veteran. I take accommodation seriously and I am happy to help you.

OAKS (For All Instructional Modalities):

OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Interruption of Instruction:

If in-person classes are suspended, faculty will announce to their students a detailed plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and Internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools.

Text Response Books List

Not interested in any of these books? That's ok. You can choose a text on your own, but you need to clear your choice with me by email or in office hours. Selections should—as much as possible—focus on one specific lie about Jews or Judaism. That is to say, the book should not be about antisemitism in general, but rather one discrete antisemitic belief.

Bronner, Stephen Eric. *A Rumor About the Jews: Antisemitism, Conspiracy, and the Protocols of Zion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Elfin, Margery. *A Nation on Trial: France and the Legacy of the Dreyfus Affair*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016.

Gerrits, André. *The Myth of Jewish Communism: A Historical Interpretation*. Éditions Scientifiques Internationales. New York: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009.

Gilman, Sander L. *The Jew's Body*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Hsia, Ronnie Po-chia. *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1992.

Kaufmann, Thomas. *Luther's Jews: A Journey into Anti-Semitism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Lipstadt, Deborah E. *Antisemitism: Here and Now*. First edition. New York: Schocken, 2019.

Smith, Helmut Walser. *The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town*. New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2003.

Weinberg, Robert. *Blood Libel in Late Imperial Russia: The Ritual Murder Trial of Mendel Beilis*. Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014.

Zipperstein, Steven J. *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History*. First edition. New York; London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018.

Text Response Books about the Political Left and Right

Hirsh, David. *Contemporary Left Antisemitism*. London; New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

Weisman, Jonathan. *(((Semitism)))*: *Being Jewish in America in the Age of Trump*. First edition. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018.

**** All Readings to be Completed by Wednesday of each Week ****

DUE dates in Red

Student Led Discussion Days in Blue

<p><u>Week 1</u> M – 01/10 W – 01/12 F – 01/14</p>	<p>Introduction to Anti-Jewish and Antisemitic Thought Syllabus Day and Introductions The Ancient Library of Antisemitism: Tropes, Canards, and Stereotypes Assignment and Student Led Discussion Explanations</p>
<p><u>Week 2</u> M – <i>No Class</i> W – 01/19 F – 01/21</p>	<p>Defining Antisemitism – A Current Debate READ: Bernard Harrison, <i>Blaming the Jews</i>, “Questions of Definition,” pps. 53-81 READ: IHRA Definition of Antisemitism <i>I will model Discussion Leadership Possibilities</i></p>
<p><u>Week 3</u> M – 01/24 W – 01/26 F – 01/28</p>	<p>Criticizing Israel or Criticizing Jews? READ: Rabbi Jill Jacobs, “How to tell when criticism of Israel is actually anti-Semitism,” <i>The Washington Post</i> – PDF on OAKS Student Led Discussion</p>
<p><u>Week 4</u> M – 01/31 W – 02/02 F – 02/04</p>	<p>Anti-Judaism: Jews and the Death of Christ READ: William I. Brustein, <i>Roots of Hate</i>, “The Religious Root,” pps. 49-94 Student Led Discussion</p>
<p><u>Week 5</u> M – 02/07 W – 02/09 F – 02/11</p>	<p>Ritual Murder: The Blood Libel READ: Richard S. Levy, <i>Antisemitism</i>, Vol. 2, “Ritual Murder (Medieval)” and “Ritual Murder (Modern),” pps. 602-608; Robert Weinberg, <i>Blood Libel in Late Imperial Russia</i>, “Introduction,” pps. 1-17 Student Led Discussion</p>
<p><u>Week 6</u> M – 02/14 W – 02/16 F – 02/18</p>	<p>Conspiracy and <i>The Protocols of the Elders of Zion</i> READ: Stephen Eric Bronner, <i>A Rumor About the Jews</i>, “Introduction” and CH2 “Antisemitism for Popular Consumption: Selections from <i>The Protocols of the Elders of Zion</i>,” pps 1-31 Student Led Discussion</p>
<p><u>Week 7</u> M – 02/21 W – 02/23 F – 02/25</p>	<p>Judeo-Bolshevism READ: André Gerrits, <i>The Myth of Jewish Communism</i>, “Introduction” and CH2 “The Myth,” pps. 9-14 and 57-116 Student Led Discussion DUE (Optional): Drafts of Book Response Papers</p>

<p>Week 8 M – 02/28 W – 03/02</p> <p>F – 03/04</p>	<p>The Holocaust and Racial or “Redemptive” Antisemitism</p> <p>READ: Saul Friedländer, <i>Nazi Germany and the Jews</i>, “Introduction” and “Redemptive Antisemitism,” pps. 1-6 and 73-112</p> <p>Student Led Discussion</p>
<p>Week 9 M – 03/07 – <i>No Class</i> W – 03/09 – <i>No Class</i> F – 03/11 – <i>No Class</i></p>	<p><i>Spring Break</i></p>
<p>Week 10 M – 03/14 W – 03/16</p> <p>F – 03/18</p>	<p>Holocaust Denial</p> <p>READ: Kenneth Stern, <i>Holocaust Denial</i>, “Introduction,” pps. 1-24 and Arthur R. Butz, “A Short Introduction to the Study of Holocaust Revisionism”</p> <p>Student Led Discussion</p>
<p>Week 11 M – 03/21 W – 03/23 F – 03/25</p>	<p>Neo-Nazism and the Far-Right</p> <p>Guest Lecture by Dr. Michelle Kahn, University of Richmond</p> <p>READ: <i>TBD</i></p> <p>Student Led Discussion</p> <p>DUE: Book Response Paper – On OAKS at 5:00 PM</p>
<p>Week 12 M – 03/28</p> <p>W – 03/30</p> <p>F – 04/01 – No Class</p>	<p>Divided or Dual Loyalties</p> <p>DUE: A recent news article on American Jews and accusations of divided or dual loyalties/improper relations with the state of Israel <i>(Print this and bring it to class)</i></p> <p>Student Led Discussion</p> <p><i>Class Canceled</i></p>
<p>Week 13 M – 04/04</p> <p>W – 04/06</p> <p>F – 04/08 – No Class</p>	<p>An Economic Cabal</p> <p>Lecture</p> <p>READ: William I. Brustein, <i>Roots of Hate</i>, “The Economic Root,” pps. 177-264</p> <p>Student Led Discussion</p> <p><i>Class Canceled</i></p> <p>DUE: Dr. Kahn Visit Write Up – On OAKS at 5:00 PM</p>
<p>Week 14 M – 04/11 W – 04/13</p> <p>F – 04/15</p>	<p>Philosemitism</p> <p>READ: Yaakov Ariel, CH12 “It’s All in the Bible:” Evangelical Christians, Biblical Literalism, and Philosemitism in Our Times”</p> <p>Student Led Discussion</p>
<p>Week 15 M – 04/18 W – 04/20</p> <p>F – 04/22</p>	<p>Antisemitism and the College Campus</p> <p>READ: Bernard Harrison, <i>Blaming the Jews</i>, CH10 “Israel, the Left, and the Universities,” pps. 265-295</p> <p>READ: <i>A Selection of Your Article Submissions</i></p> <p>Student Led Discussion</p> <p>DUE: Antisemitism on Campus Assignment – OAKS at 5:00 PM</p>

Week 16 M – 04/25	<i>End of Semester</i> <i>Concluding Conversation</i>
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