Course title: Racism and Anti-Semitism in Western History
Course code: HIST 4001 PRAG
Programs offering course: Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Fall 2020

Course Description

This course explores the historical development of racial prejudice and antisemitism, from their roots in the classical and mediaeval worlds to the rise of National Socialism in the early 20th century. It analyses the way religious, cultural, linguistic and physical/biological forms of exclusion have overlapped and reinforced each other. It is one of the principal contentions of this course that National Socialism’s exterminatory antisemitism is not merely a product of centuries of anti-Jewish prejudice; rather, racial antisemitism must be understood as something which evolved in close symbiosis with racial prejudices directed against Indigenous Peoples, Africans – slave and free – and colonial peoples from the early modern period onward, culminating in the historically-particular form of exterminatory racial antisemitism which formed the necessary precondition of the Holocaust. A focus of the course is the rise of exclusionary racial, anti-Semitic and nationalist discourses in Central Europe from the middle of the 19th century until the Final Solution. Throughout the course, students are expected to analyze disparate and contradictory perspectives on the history of racism using primary sources as well as theoretical conceptualizations. Students critically examine divergent conclusions and – through a focused, discriminatory and judicial critique of these sources – produce evidence to creatively integrate these divergences into something which reflects the student’s unique perspective.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Differentiate and analyze the complexity of the many of the most important intellectual and historiographical controversies concerning the study of racism, slavery, imperialism, nationalism and anti-Semitism through different research approaches.
- Produce reasoned critique of the development of racial thinking from antiquity to the 20th century and distinguish the connections between anti-Semitism and various forms of exclusionary racial discourses within European history using primary sources.
- Outline and appraise the complex process of development racial concepts and trace and discriminate the complex lineages of National Socialist racism and genocide in these discourses – but especially in the histories of slavery, imperialism and eugenics.
- Produce sophisticated evidence and justification for creating own unique perspective and informed opinion.

Course Prerequisites

This course requires previous experience (at least two 200-level courses) in the following fields: history (European history or colonial history) or religious studies.

Methods of Instruction

The course is taught through a combination of formal lectures (always presented with an extensive PowerPoint slide show), group student presentations (again, it is expected these will use PowerPoint or some other presentation software) and open-ended group discussions.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Seminar Presentation 1 15%
2. Seminar Presentation 2 15%
3. Mid-Term Take Home Exam 25%
4. Final Take-Home Exam 25%
Course Requirements

Seminar Presentation 1

Students will give two seminar presentations throughout the course: the first presentation on one of Seminars 1-4. Presentations will be given in small groups and will be around 15 minutes long accompanied by facilitated group discussion. It is expected that you will use PowerPoint or similar visual support.

Seminar Presentation 2

As above, but on one of Seminars 5-8.

Mid-Term Take Home Exam

A midterm take-home, requiring two short essay responses (c. 750-1000 words each) to questions arising from the first half of the course, will be due at the beginning of the second session of Week 6 of the course.

Students will be asked analytical questions arising from the lectures and the seminar program – Seminars 1-4 – of the first half of the course.

Final Take-Home Exam

A final take-home, requiring two short essay responses (c. 750-1000 words each) to questions arising from the second half of the course, will be due at the beginning of the final class of Week 13 of the course.

Students will be asked analytical questions arising from the lectures and the seminar program – Seminars 5-8 – of the second half of the course.

Class Participation

Assessment of students’ participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students are required to actively, meaningfully and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions and all types of in-class activities throughout the duration of the class. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed, in advance of each class session. This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Students are responsible for following the course content and are expected to ask clarification questions if they cannot follow the instructor’s or other students’ line of thought or argumentation.

Class participation also includes students’ active participation in Canvas discussions and other additional tasks related to the course content as specified by the instructor.

Students will receive a partial participation grade every three weeks via Canvas Participation Assignment.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program.

If you will miss a class for any reason, notify the Program Coordinator and your instructor beforehand via Canvas. You are responsible for any materials covered in class during your absence, and except in the specific cases listed below, credit will not be granted for missed assessments.

Excessive absences will result in a notification letter, and finally a warning letter, sent to you and your home school, based on the following:
**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

Class: 1.1  
Course Introduction; Racial Thinking from Antiquity to the 20th Century.

The first class of the first week lays down requirements for completing the course. There will be a brief introductory quiz and class discussion. Presentation and reading groups for the first half of the course will be assigned.

Class: 1.2  

The first lecture looks at attitudes towards both black Africans and Jews in Graeco-Roman
antiquity, asking the question as to whether the ancient world had any genuine equivalents of “racism” to e.g. Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups in its modern sense.

**Required Readings:**

---

**Week 2**

**Class: 2.1 Jews and Africans in the Christian Middle Ages**

The middle ages were the age of Christendom and were marked by a rising elite and popular antipathy towards Jews and Judaism. However, mediaeval civilization was no monolith, and attitudes to Jews varied according to time, place and circumstance. The latter part of the middle ages sees the position of Jews and other outsiders influenced by a new phenomenon: the rise of the nation state. This period continued to be characterized throughout by surprisingly positive attitudes towards black Africans.

**Class: 2.2**

Seminar 1 – Was There Racism in Classical Antiquity? - looks in more detail at attitudes towards race in Graeco-Roman antiquity, focusing strongly on the recent historiographical debate on the work of Benjamin Isaac.

**Required Readings:**
- Excerpts from Diodorus Siculus and Herodotus on Ethiopians; Diodorus Siculus and Tacitus on the Jews - in Kennedy et. al., *Race and Ethnicity*, 82-191 (Ethiopia); 243-46; 253-56 (Jews).

---

**Week 3**

**Class: 3.1 Jews and Outsiders in Early Modern Europe; The Mediaeval Blood Libel.**

The lecture for this week focuses on the breakup of medieval Christendom with the coming of the Protestant Reformation and the rise of the new nation state, and the meaning of these changes for “outsider” groups like the Jews, the Spanish *moriscos* and other religious and ethnic minorities.

**Class: 3.2**

Seminar 2 – The Ritual Murder Accusation in Mediaeval Europe - examines the rise of the ritual murder accusation and later related “Blood Libel” in Crusading Europe. It asks one of the fundamental methodological questions to be explored in this course: is it anachronistic to talk of “anti-Semitism” in the European middle ages and early modern period?

**Required Readings:**
- Langmuir, Toward a Definition of Antisemitism: 311-52.

---

**Week 4**

**Class: 4.1 Race, Racism and Slavery in the Early Modern World.**

Most historians of race and racism trace the origins of these doctrines in their modern form to the rise of the Atlantic slave trade in the 16th and 17th centuries. Students will watch and take notes on sections of the 2007 BBC documentary *Racism: A History – Part 1: The Colour of Money*. A discussion of issues raised in the documentary will follow.

**Class: 4.2**

The Seminar 3 presentation and discussion poses the fundamental question, “Racism or Slavery: Which Came First?”

**Required Readings:**
Week 5
Class: 5.1 Racism and Enlightenment: From Voltaire to Hitler?

The lecture examines attitudes towards both blacks and Jews during the “Age of Enlightenment.” The contradiction of holding that “all men are created equal” – whilst fighting a revolution in the North American colonies that enshrined the rights of slave owners – will be one focus of this lecture.

Class: 5.2

Seminar 4 – From Voltaire to Hitler: Did the Enlightenment Lead to the Holocaust - examines the famous thesis of the German Critical Theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, whose *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* held that the instrumental scientific rationality of the Enlightenment led ultimately to the death camps of the Third Reich. The theories of Zygmunt Bauman – who rooted genocide and Nazism as symptoms of the crisis of industrial modernity – are also scrutinized.

**Required Readings:**

Week 6

Early nineteenth century America – a slave-owning society rapidly expanding into territories occupied by peoples deemed “racially inferior” – was to be the laboratory for ideas which would have a rapid a profound impact on the development of European racism. The lecture explores the connections between slavery, Jim Crow laws, Manifest Destiny and notions of biological racism.

Class: 6.2


The Midterm take-home exam falls due at the beginning of Class 2. This must be submitted double-spaced and in 12-point font, and consists of two essays, each of c. 1000 words.

**Required Readings:**

Week 7
Class: 7.1 Race and Language in the Romantic Age –

**Inventing the Aryan and Semite; Gobineau and the Racial Theory of Civilisation.**

The revolt against the universal rationality of the Enlightenment saw the Romantic movement’s celebration of all that was early, primitive and unique. The German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder hailed unique languages as the most fundamental expression of the *Volksgeist* of particular peoples. The lecture examines how Herder’s originally pluralist and anti-racist notions of language would later be corrupted to form the basis of a new type of racism – one which would define Christian Europeans as “Aryans: - and Jews as their eternal antitype.

Class: 7.2

Seminar 5 – Gobineau and the Inequality of the Human Races - focuses on one of the most important pioneers of European racism, Comte Joseph de Gobineau, and on his influence on other key racist thinkers: the composer Richard Wagner; Henry Hotze, the apologist for the Confederacy; Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Vacher de Lapouge

**Required Readings:**
- Biddis, *Father of Racist Ideology*: 103-180, 244-64.

Week 8
Class: 8.1 The Darwinian Revolution;

The Darwinian Revolution was to prove a watershed in the development of European racism. Despite Darwin's passionate and lifelong commitment to the cause of anti-slavery and the amelioration of the condition of former slaves in Britain's Caribbean colonies, Darwinian ideas would henceforth furnish the language of racist discourse. For a new generation of racist thinkers, the inferiority of Europe's colonial subjects – and America's black “other” – would be seen as a function of these peoples’ closeness to mankind's ape-like ancestors. Concepts like “the survival of the fittest” and eugenics would influence the way Europe's elites viewed their own lower classes. The lecture and discussion will examine these issues, looking also at the conflict between Darwinian monogenesis and Anglo-American polygenesis.

Class: 8.2

Class 2’s lecture and discussion seminar examine rise of anti-Semitic parties and politics in Europe from the 1870s to the end of World War I. We look at the Dreyfus Affair of the 1890s and discuss the revival of the mediaeval blood libel from the mid-19th to the early 20th centuries: the Damascus Blood Libel and the Hilsner and Beilis trials. The rise of anti-Semitic and anti-Slav political parties in the Habsburg Empire and the Second German Reich is examined against the social, political and economic context of late 19th and early 20th century nationalism and imperialism.

Required Readings:
- Barta, Tony. "Mr Darwin's Shooters": 116-137.
- Finzsch, Norbert. “It is scarcely possible to conceive ...”: 97-115.

Week 9
Class: 9.1 Colonialism, Imperialism and Genocide.

When Hitler and Himmler articulated plans for the conquest and colonisation of the East, they drew explicit parallels and justifications from American westward expansion and British colonial policy in India. However, the connections between Nazi colonial practices in German South-West Africa in the early 20th century are far more direct. The class discussion and documentary will explore Hannah Arendt’s contention that the violence of European colonialism was an essential forerunner of the violence and racism of 20th century totalitarianism.


Class: 9.2

Seminar 6 – From ESL to ASL: Race, Empire and the American Civil War - will look at the crucial split in British anthropology in the 1860s between the anti-slavery, monogenist Ethnological Society of London – heir to the old Anti-Slavery and Aborigine's Protection Societies - and the pro-slavery, pro-imperialist and polygenist Anthropological Society of London. This watershed event in the history of racial though is examined in the context of the American Civil War and Britain’s deepening imperial commitment.

Required Readings:

Week 10
Class: 10.1 The Black Hundreds and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion;

White Men’s Countries: The Jim Crow South, Apartheid South Africa and White Australia.

On Monday, November 26th, there will be a guest lecture by Dr Marina Swoboda, a Russian specialist formerly of McGill University, currently teaching at Anglo-American University in Prague. Marina will talk about the rise of Russian popular political anti-Semitism in the late 19th century, and the authoring of the so-called Protocols of the Elders of Zion and its use during the Russian Civil War (1918-21).
The discussion seminar examines the rise of the so-called “White Men’s Republics”: unprecedented polities in which citizenship was dependent upon race. We trace the origins of these ideas to the post-war Jim Crow South. We demonstrate that by the early years of the 20th century, the concept of a global union of white races – standing in the face of the external threat of a rising tide of colour, and the internal threat of racial miscegenation – had taken hold amongst politicians and intellectuals in the United States and the British “White Dominions.”

**Required Readings:**

**Week 11**

Class: **11.1** Nationalism, Racism and Eugenics; The Tiergarten 4 Programme.

Students will watch the second part of the documentary series *Science and the Swastika: The Deadly Experiment* (2001), which examines Nazi eugenics Tiergarten 4 programme. T4 was the Nazi’s attempt to put “negative eugenics” into practice by murdering Germany’s mentally and physically handicapped population. A class discussion will follow.

Class: **11.2**

Seminar 7 examines the intersections between racism, nationalism and eugenics in both the United States and Europe in the period leading up to the First World War – and beyond. We will explore the way in which racist thinkers like Madison Grant and Vacher de Lapouge married the racial theories of Gobineau with eugenics, anti-Semitism and the defence of Jim Crow and immigration restriction.

**Required Readings:**
- Mazower, Dark Continent: 77-105.
- Spiro, Defending the Master Race: 143-166, 297-327.

**Week 12**

Class: **12.1** The Nazi Synthesis; Nazism, Lebensraum and Colonial Genocide.

The lecture demonstrates how the racism of Hitler, Himmler, Rosenberg and their followers represented the coming together of several streams of racialist thinking: anti-Semitism, biological racialism, Social Darwinism, colonial racism and eugenics. The radicalising effects of the violence and social militarisation of World War I and the Russian Revolution – from which the theory of “Judaean-Bolshevism” and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* forgery emerged – was an essential element in “the Nazi Synthesis.”

Class: **12.2**

The final seminar explores the controversy regarding the relationship between the genocidal violence of the Second and Third Reichs, with a particular focus on Nazi Lebensraum theories and the Namibian genocide of 1904-7 – the so-called “Kaiser’s Holocaust.”

**Required Readings:**

**Week 13**

Class: **13.1** Final Exam

*The final take-home exam falls due at the beginning of Class 1.*

This must be submitted double-spaced and in 12-point font, and consists of two essays, each of c. 1000 words.

Class: **13.2**
The final class will be a relaxed and informal discussion about the history of racism and the relevance of this course to the contemporary world.

Course Materials

Readings

- Finzsch, Norbert. “'It is scarcely possible to conceive that human beings could be so hideous and loathsome': discourses of genocide in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America and Australia.” Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 39, No. 2. (2005): 97-115.
- Lorimer, Douglas A. Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth


**Recommended**


**Online Resources**

- Josephus, Against Apion, 2.8 – the relevant excerpt translated in conveniently at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Against_Apion
- Thomas of Monmouth’s account of the Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich (a ritual murder accusation from 1173) - http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1173williamnorwich.asp
- A ritual murder accusation from Blois, 1171 - http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1171blois.asp

**Media Resources**

**Films**