Course title: The Road to Sepharad An The History of Spanish Jews
Course code: RELI 2101 MASP
Programs offering course: Madrid Open Campus Block
Open Campus Track: International Relations and Political Science
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring Block II 2021

Course Description

Through the study of the human and historical experience of Judaism in Spain, this course focuses on the historical Paths of Sepharad the European routes of Jewish Heritage. Deriving from its origins to the expulsion of Jews in the 15th century, the Sephardic Diaspora and the development of the Judeo-Hispanic culture outside Spain before their return in the 19th century. This course also covers whereby the cultural, architectural and anthropological Jewish heritage has survived as well as the recent studies and initiatives to acknowledge Jewish legacy in Spanish culture.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Learn how to critically synthesize primary and secondary historical sources.
- Critically examine the multifaceted history of Jews of Spain through various ages, global context and cultural perspective.
- Acquire insight into the processes of identity building with emphasis on redefining and negotiation systems in a conflicting context.
- Determine the challenges that pose in reference to the historical diasporic, transnational community through traditions, language, and the question of nation or ethnicity.
- Constructively challenge your assumptions about what it means to be a Jew or a member of any religious faith. How faith intersects with culture.
- Reflect on hybridization both in pre-modern and modern contexts.

Course Prerequisites

There are no specific prerequisites for this course. However, the basic knowledge of history, political science, sociology and economics may enrich the course.

Methods of Instruction

This course will focus on class debates about the assigned readings for each session. We will analyse together both primary and secondary sources. The teacher will complement this information with lectures and audio-visual material.

Assessment and Final Grade

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<tr>
<td>1. Class Preparation and Participation</td>
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<td>2. Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>3. Class Presentation</td>
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<td>4. Final Paper</td>
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Course Requirements

Class Preparation and Participation
The students must actively participate in class and engage in discussions about the assigned readings. Reading materials need to be carefully prepared before the sessions in order for the student to be able to contribute to a coherent and interesting debate.

**Midterm Exam**

At the end of Week 3, the students will take an exam on the contents covered during the first half of the course.

**Class Presentation**

During the last session, students will make a brief presentation of their final paper, explaining their methodology of research, their main objectives, and their conclusions.

**Final Paper**

You must choose among a list of proposed topics (provided by the instructor during the second week of class) on which to write a paper. In case you decide to choose a different topic, it must be approved by the teacher. You will be expected to draw on both primary and secondary sources assigned in class, as well as some secondary sources which were not required reading. The final paper should have an extension of 12 to 15 pages. Due the last day of class.

**Final Exam**

Students will take an exam on the topics discussed in class as well as the required readings to demonstrate their acquired knowledge on the course content.

**Attendance**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:
N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class: 1.1 Presentation: The Beginnings of Jewish history in Spain

From the Roman Empire to the Arab Conquest (711 CE)

In the first session, we will present the contents and methodology of the course. Then, we will examine the beginnings of the Jewish presence in Spain: the arrival of the Jews to Iberia and the first testimonies under the Roman Empire, the long Visigoth period and the Arab conquest of 711. The focus will be on the precarious condition of the Jews under the Visigoths and their role in the Arab conquest.

Readings

- Primary sources Reader, pp. 1-4.
- *Conquest (711 CE)*

Class: 1.2 Golden Age: The Jews in Muslim Spain (8th-11th centuries)

Convivencia: Myth or Reality? The Jews in the “Spain of Three Cultures”

Session two will critically delve into what is considered as the Golden Age of the Jews in Spain: the Muslim rule between the 8th and the 11th centuries. We will examine the political and social position of the Jews under the different Muslim sovereigns. Our focus will be on the famous concept of convivencia (the peaceful living together of Christians, Jews and Muslims in Middle Age Spain). We will try to determine whether it is an appropriate notion to describe medieval Spanish societies, or just a historiographical myth promoting current agendas.

Readings

- Menocal, María Rosa, *The Ornament of the World*, “A grand Vizier, a grand City: Cordoba, 949”.

Week 2

Class: 2.1 A Cultural Golden Age: Jewish Poetry, Philosophy and Mysticism in Medieval Spain
In this session, we will examine in historical and geographical context the cultural productions of the Jews of Spain during the Middle Ages. We will focus on poetry in Muslim Spain (8th-11th centuries), philosophy (especially Maimonides, whose influence in later European philosophy was immense) and mysticism (the creation and development of the Kabbalah in the 13th century under Christian rule).

Readings

- Primary sources Reader, pp. 5-10.

Class:   2.2  The Jews in Christian Spain (12th-14th centuries)

In this session, we will explore the new life of the Jews of Spain in Christian lands after the fall of the Muslim kingdoms at the end of the 11th century. The class will focus on the evolution of their collective position in Christian Spain: from the relative tolerance of the 12th and 13th centuries, which improved their status in late Muslim Iberia, to growing anti-Semitism in the 14th century and the crucial pogroms of 1391.

Readings

- Primary sources Reader, pp. 11-17.

Week 3

Class:   3.1  The Road to 1492: The Long 15th Century and the Expulsion

After the pogroms of 1391 and the massive conversion that followed it, the status of the Spanish Jews rapidly deteriorated. In this session we will examine their ambivalent situation in the 15th century, the first laws of purity of blood, and the social condition of the conversos (converts to Christianism). Finally, we will analyze the causes and the circumstances of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 under the Catholic monarchs.

Readings

- Primary sources Reader, pp. 18-36.

Class:   3.2  Midterm exam

Visit to Center Sefarad in Madrid

Week 4

Class:   4.1  Was Modern Racism Born in Spain? Inquisition and Purity of Blood: The Conversos

In this session, we will address a controversial question in the scholarship on racism: were the Spanish laws of purity of blood, first promulgated in the 15th century to deal with the caste of the recent converts to Christianism, the first instance of modern, biological racism in history? These laws, in force until the second half of the 19th century, excluded from public service and socially stigmatized those of Jewish ancestry. We will need to explore as well the role of an institution created to buttress this racist ideology: the Spanish Inquisition.

Readings

- Primary sources Reader, pp. 37-42.
The Jews forced to leave Spain in 1492 created new communities in Morocco, Italy, Portugal, Holland and, especially, the Ottoman Empire in the first decades of the 16th century. They not only maintained a common self-awareness as Spanish Jews, but also built a new identity as Sephardic Jews which started emerging in these decades. In this session, we will explore the beginnings of the Sephardic diaspora, the trials and tribulations of the resettlement of the Spanish Jews in new lands, and the configuration of a diasporic identity among these communities. We will also consider the Sephardic settlements in North America.

Readings

- Primary sources Reader, pp. 43-46.

Assignment: Class presentations.

Week 5

Class:  5.1 Sephardic Culture(s) of the Diaspora

A Sephardic City: Salonica

The Sephardic Jews in the diaspora kept the language and many of the customs with which they left Spain. In this session, we will examine their rich culture and their tongue, still alive today. We will also focus on a privileged microcosm of the Sephardic diaspora: the city of Salonica, where Judeo-Spanish culture flourished for almost five centuries in contact with Christian and Muslim communities. Salonica, once called the “Jerusalem of the Balkans,” was a city with a majority Jewish population, probably the only case in the world before the foundation of Israel. We will look at the life, the experience and the historical evolution of this Sephardic community.

Readings

- Bunis, David M., "Judeo-Spanish Culture in Medieval and Modern Times", in *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*.
- Primary sources Reader, pp. 47-61.

Class:  5.2 The Sephardic Experience Up to the Shoah

In this session, we will survey the history of the Sephardic communities of Europe, Africa, America and Asia in modernity, between the 18th and the 20th centuries. We will focus on the effects of intellectual and political modernization (the Enlightenment, rationalism, secularization, economic transformations and the emergence of the nation-state) on these communities and their collective identity. Finally, we will explore the (usually underemphasized) Sephardic experience in the Shoah, and its fatal consequences for most Judeo-Spanish communities in Europe.

Readings

- Abramson, Henry, “A Double Occlusion: Sephardim and the Holocaust”, in *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*.

Week 6

Class:  6.1 Spain and the (Sephardic) Jews in the Modern Era (19th - 21st Centuries)

In this session, we will explore the attitudes towards the Jews, and especially the Sephardic Jews, in modern Spain. By the end of the 19th century, almost four centuries after the expulsion, some Jews started settling themselves in Spain. However, they were received with ambivalence, even coolness. At the same time, some Spanish intellectuals discovered around the same time the
Sephardic Jews of the Ottoman Empire, and were fascinated by the fact that they still spoke Spanish. We will follow the path of this recognition from the projects for the return to Iberia in the first third of the 20th century to the recent 21st-century law granting Spanish citizenship to Sephardim of Spanish origin, including the ambiguous and rather dismissive role of Franco Spain during the Second World War and the extermination of the Sephardic Jews.

Readings
- Ojeda-Mata, Maite, “‘Spanish’ but ‘Jewish’: Race and National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Spain”.
- Linhard, Tabea Alexa, Jewish Spain, Chapter 3.
- Primary sources Reader, pp. 62-71.

Class: 6.2 Conclusion

In the last session, students and instructor together will sum up the content of the class and draw some conclusions from the whole range of subjects explored.

Assignment: Final exam

Course Materials
Readings
Students will be provided with a course reader prepared by the instructor in pdf format. It will include texts from the following sources:


**Further Reading**


