

**Jews and Money**  
**JUDS0683/RELS0880B**  
**CRN: 16280**  
**Fall, 2016**  
**Brown University**

In the West, there has always been a complicated relationship between Jews and money. On the one hand, Jews have disproportionately prospered in many places where they were given equal economic and political rights. On the other, though, economic success was often accompanied by more virulent anti-Semitism. In the first part of this course we will examine, both theoretically and empirically, the complex relationship between Jews, capitalism, socialism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism. In the second part of the course we will return to the one aspect of the “cultural capital” that is sometimes said to have helped Jews to prosper: their religious tradition. In this part we will examine traditional Jewish religious teachings on wealth and poverty in their historical contexts both to flesh out some of the issues raised in the first part of the course and, more importantly, to provide a fresh set of intellectual resources for considering our own approach to these issues in modern America.

**Instructor**

Michael Satlow, Professor, Judaic Studies Program and Department of Religious Studies.

**Goals**

By the end of this course, you should:

1. Have acquired a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of different ways of explaining the nexus between Jews, capitalism, socialism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism;
2. Know how, when, and why the anti-Semitic image of Jews as money-hungry came into being and even flourished in some contexts;
3. Be able to apply what you have learned about the Jewish experience to understand more generally the interactions between minorities, racism, and the economy;
4. Have acquired some ways of understanding and explaining the relative economic success of Jews in the modern West;
5. Have a new perspective on issues of wealth and poverty (e.g., ownership, charity, the value of wealth, the ethics of work) that frequently challenge modern assumptions;
6. Have improved your abilities to write; critique the writing of others; and read and reason critically.

**Texts**

You should purchase the following books, all available at the Brown Bookstore:

Gary Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition*  
Gluckel and Marvin Lowenthal, *The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln*  
Adam Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race*  
Jerry Muller, *Capitalism and the Jews*  
Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*  
James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*

Required texts should cost about \$100. I have also ordered Carmel Cheswick, *Judaism in Transition*. This is an optional book that some of you will read toward the end of the semester. For several classes we will look at biblical materials. You can use any translation, although I suggest the New Jewish Publication Society translation, especially as annotated in *The Jewish Study Bible*.

Nearly all other readings (marked with a \*) are on online reserve. .

We will be using Canvas (canvas.brown.edu) extensively. All assignments will be submitted and returned electronically.

### **Expectations**

I believe that learning is most effectively done by means of a process: (1) reading or engaging with other evidence with a particular question in mind; (2) individual thinking and articulation (usually in writing) of thoughts; (3) discussion with others; (4) self-reflection and revision. In order to succeed in this course, and to contribute to the learning of your classmates, for every class (unless instructed otherwise) you are expected:

- (1) to have done the reading in advance;
- (2) to attend class;
- (3) to write a short (2-4 paragraph) response to a prompt on Canvas, usually due by Monday at 10 PM. These discussions will be open for the entire class to read;
- (4) to write a short revision of your own response (and to comment on other entries) in light of our discussions that week. These are usually due by Friday at 5 PM.

There will be three moments in the course that will give you an opportunity to synthesize and apply what you have learnt in the class and to work on your formal academic writing. Two are short (5 page) papers, one due on September 29 and the second on October 25. Both will require peer review. The third assignment is a take-home final (that you will help design) that should help you to reflect on the learning you have done throughout the semester. This is due by Monday, December 19, at noon, our scheduled exam time (submitted on Canvas).

### **Time Expectations**

The following “good faith” estimate of time expectations is required on all Brown syllabi by the Dean of the College:

*Our accrediting agency requires an expectation of 180 hours of coursework in order to receive four credit hours. This figure will be reached in this class through the following expectations:*

- (1) *Class meeting (36 hours);*
- (2) *Reading for class (6 hours/week \* 12 weeks = 72 hours)*
- (3) *Weekly writing assignments (2 hours/week\*10 weeks=20 hours)*
- (4) *Short paper writing (10 hours/each\*2=20 hours)*
- (5) *Peer review and revisions (12 hours)*
- (6) *Take-home final (20 hours)*

### **Grading**

I do not like grading. I believe that grades neither give a good incentive for you to experience genuine learning nor that a single letter captures the totality of your learning. I would like, and I would like you to like, to see grading as an afterthought to your learning. I will not focus on your grade and I will help you to do the same. Toward that end, I will read and respond (but not formally grade) as many drafts of the papers as you wish to submit. When you are ready to submit a final for a grade, just let me know: all final drafts of the two papers must be in by December 6.

Since I do need to give a grade, I will use these percentages in my calculations: preparation, weekly writing responses and revisions (30%); two papers (20% each); final (30%). I am open to other suggestions, though, if they would be more effective in helping you to learn. Please do not hesitate to speak to me about this in the first month of the semester.

### Schedule

This is our tentative schedule. All readings are due before the date shown; in cases when we will be discussing a reading over multiple dates more specific instructions will be provided in class and on Canvas.

<b>September 8</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>September 13</b>	<p><b>Jews and Money in Contemporary America</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Pew Research Organization, <i>A Portrait of Jewish Americans*</i>; <i>Connected to Give: Faith Communities*</i>; <i>Connected to Give: Synagogue Movements*</i>            When you read, focus on the issues of Jewish economic status and the connections (causal or correlative?) between that and (a) religious practice and (b) philanthropy. Is there anything distinctive about these connections and, if so, how can one explain it?</p>
<b>September 15</b>	<p><b>Jews and Money: Genealogy of the Problem</b>  <b>Reading:</b> K. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”*; Muller, <i>Capitalism and the Jews</i>, 1-71            Marx, as will become clear, is responding to an essay by Bruno Bauer. Using the Muller reading to set the context, focus on Marx’s essay: What is his argument? What are his assumptions and goals? What evidence does he use?</p>
<b>September 20</b>	<p><b>Jews and Capitalism</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Milton Friedman, “Capitalism and the Jews”*; Muller, <i>Capitalism and the Jews</i>, 72-132            Are Marx and Friedman addressing the same problems? How and why do their explanations differ?</p>
<b>September 22</b>	<b>Is Judaism a Capitalist Religion?</b>

	<p><b>Reading:</b> Jill Jacobs, “Work, Workers, and the Jewish Owner” (a responsum)*; Aaron Levine, “The Living Wage and Jewish Law,” <i>Tradition</i> 41:4 (Winter 2008): 8-32*; Y. Y. Lifshitz, “Foundations of a Jewish Economic Theory,” <i>Azure Online</i> Autumn, 2004, no. 18*</p> <p>This will introduce you to Jewish legal thinking (halakhah). What are the <i>halakhic</i> positions espoused in these readings? How does Levine respond to Jacob’s position?</p>
September 27	<p><b>Is Judaism a Socialist or Communist Religion?</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Margalit, “Social and Intellectual Origins of the Hashomer Hatzair Youth Movement, 1913-1920,” in <i>Essential Papers on Zionism</i>, 454-472*; Muller, <i>Capitalism and the Jews</i>, 133-188.=</p> <p>At the same time that Jews are stereotyped as capitalists, they are also stereotyped as hard-core socialists or communists. How did that stereotype arise and is there any merit to it?</p>
September 29	<p><b>Jews as Capitalists: Toward a Historical Model</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Dov Ber Borochoy, “The National Question and the Class Struggle,”*; Muller, <i>Capitalism and the Jews</i>, 189-218</p> <p>This class brings our first unit to a close: Can we articulate a model to explain the interrelationship between Jews and money in modern society?</p>
October 4	<p><b>Cancelled: Rosh Hashanah</b></p>
October 6, 11	<p><b>Case Study 1: Merchant of Venice</b>  <b>Reading:</b> <i>Merchant of Venice</i>; J. Shapiro, <i>Shakespeare and the Jews</i></p> <p>Was Shakespeare anti-Semitic? Why do you think the image of Jews as moneylenders became popular?</p>
October 13, 18	<p><b>Case Study 2: Gluckl</b>  <b>Reading:</b> <i>The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln</i></p> <p>This is a long book and you need not need it all carefully. Focus only on the economic issues. What does this book reveal about the economic life and sensibilities of this Jewish woman?</p>
October 20, 25	<p><b>Case Study 3: England and the United States From Europe to America</b>  <b>Reading:</b> A. Mendelssohn, <i>The Rag Race</i></p> <p>Where and why did Jews succeed in the garment industry? Did their historical experience or religious values play a role?</p>
October 27	<p><b>Paper Workshop</b></p>

<b>November 1, 3</b>	<p><b>Biblical Foundations</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Genesis 1-3; Exodus 19:5; 21:2-11; 25:1-2; Deuteronomy, 14:27; 15:1-18 ; 2 Samuel 12:1-4; Psalms 24:1-2; 50:10-12; 72; 89:11; Proverbs 10:4-5; 11:16; 13:8, 22, 25; 10:15, 22; 14:22-29, 15: 18:16; 19:4-7; 22:7; Geoffrey P. Miller, “Property in the Bible”*  What is the biblical concept of ownership? Is it better to be rich or poor?</p>
<b>November 8, 10</b>	<p><b>Ancient Charity</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Anderson, <i>Charity</i>; Exodus 22:21-23; 23:9-11; Leviticus 23:22, 25; Deuteronomy 24:17-22; Mishnah <i>Peah</i>; Alyssa Gray, “Redemptive Almsgiving and the Rabbis of Late Antiquity,” <i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i> 18 (2011): 144-84*  What is “redemptive almsgiving”? What role do the poor play in these texts?</p>
<b>November 15</b>	<p><b>Zohar</b>  <b>Readings:</b> Green, <i>A Guide to the Zohar</i>, 63-100*; texts to be distributed  What is the Zohar’s view of wealth and poverty? Is it better to be rich or poor?</p>
<b>November 17</b>	<p><b>Usury</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Deuteronomy 15: 7-11; 24: 10-15; Exodus 22: 25-27; Leviticus 25:25-36; Haym Soloveitchik, “Usury and Moneylending,” in <i>Collected Essays</i>, 1:41-168*  How and why did Jews come into the business of moneylending and how, halakhically, did they respond?</p>
<b>November 22</b>	<p><b>Charity in Medieval Egypt</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Mark Cohen, <i>Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Europe</i>*; Moses Maimonides, “Gifts to the Poor,” <i>Mishneh Torah</i> (trans. I. Klein, <i>The Code of Maimonides</i>, vol. 7, 48-93.*  This is a case study on how Jews in Egypt addressed their economic situation and challenges using the resources of their tradition. Where did they innovate and why? Is Maimonides’ system of laws realistic?</p>
<b>November 29, December 1</b>	<p><b>Contemporary Issues</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Everyone will read Michael Broyde, “The Giving of Charity in Jewish Law”*; Students will read either Chiswick, <i>Judaism in Transition</i> or Aryeh Cohen, <i>Justice in the City</i></p>

<b>December 6</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>
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