

Samuel Kassow

Modern Secular Nationalism, Ancient Memories: The Case of the Jews

Course Syllabus

The purpose of this course is to use the modern Jewish experience in order to introduce students to the complexities and challenges of understanding and defining the development of modern nationalism. The course will consist of two major parts. The first part will examine theories of nationalism and then survey the rise of modern nationalist ideologies in Europe. The second part will take up the Jews as a “case study”. In what ways does the development of modern Jewish nationalism conform to various topographies of nationalist ideology? How was modern Jewish Nationalism influenced by non-Jewish models and doctrines? By the same token, in what ways was the Jewish experience “sui generis” or unique? How can a case study of modern Jewish nationalism clarify wider aspects of nationalism as a political issue?

The course assumes that in studying the development of Modern Jewish Nationalism, and especially Zionism, the student will come to understand the complexities and apparent paradoxes that mark the rise of modern national identities. On the one hand Zionism strove to make the Jews a “normal” people, yet on the other hand modern Zionism drew much of its inspiration from the traditional conviction that Jews were a “special” people and that their modern liberation movement had to create a model state and not just, to quote Ahad Ha’am, a “kind of Jewish Latvia” (i.e., just another tiny ethnic nation state. We apologize in advance to any Latvians). In many ways Zionism was a strikingly modern movement that borrowed freely from the national awakenings of neighboring peoples and that offered new models of leadership and new modes of mobilization and propaganda. But on the other hand, Zionism also was inextricably linked to an ancient religious tradition, to the Bible and to powerful national memories and myths. While other national movements also appropriated and invented convenient “usable pasts” and fashioned stirring “imagined communities”, it was modern Jewish nationalism more than any other that had to renegotiate and redefine the complex interplay of religious and ethnic identities and motifs.

Students will begin by surveying some of the recent scholarship on Nationalism and then discuss some of the major issues that have preoccupied scholars. Is nationalism a largely modern phenomenon, an invented instrument that uses modern forms of communication to create “imagined communities”, mobilize backward masses, facilitate industrial development and bolster the power of self-anointed elites? Or must one modify this linkage of nationalism and modernity in order to admit such decidedly pre-modern antecedents and models as the Bible, the Reformation and atavistic ethnic bonds? The

first part of the course will also examine and redefine the common distinction between “ethnic” or “civic” nationalism. It will consider the complex role of religion in modern nationalism, as well as the reasons why some nationalisms proved to be more aggressive and exclusive than others. Studies will then study the complex interplay of ideology and nationalism as they consider critiques from the Left and from the Right.

Part One

Defining a Nation

Week One

Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, (Cornell University Press, 2009) Chapter One, pp. 1-8

Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” excerpts in Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay eds. The Nationalism Reader (Humanity Books, 1995), pp. 143-156

Walker Connor, “A nation is a Nation, is a State is an Ethnic Group” in Walker Connor, Ethnonationalism, pp.89-118

Week Two

Anthony Smith, The Nation in History (Brandeis, 2000), entire(79 pp.)

Adrian Hastings, The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism (Cambridge, 1997) , pp.1-5, 14-34

Miroslav Hroch, “Why did they win? Preconditions for successful national agitation”,[http://www.flwi.ugent.be/btng-rbhc/archive/2004-04/pp 645-655.html](http://www.flwi.ugent.be/btng-rbhc/archive/2004-04/pp%20645-655.html)

Part Two

The ideological context of modern European Nationalism

Week Three

From Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay eds. The Nationalism Reader:

Rousseau “On the Government of Poland” excerpt pp. 30-35

Kant Metaphysics of Morals pp. 38- 48

Fichte Address to the German nation pp, 62-71

Acton Nationality pp. 108-119

Mazzini Duties of Man 87-98

Herder Reflections on a Philosophy of History of Mankind 48-60

Week Four

Defining European nationalism from the Left

Voltaire, "Jews" in Paul Mendes Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz eds. The Jew in the Modern World (Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 304-305

Marx "On the Jewish Question" Excerpts from Paul Mendes Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz eds. The Jew in the Modern World (Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 324-327

Lenin "Right of Nations to National Self Determination" (excerpts) Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay eds. The Nationalism Reader, pp. 208-216
Otto Bauer "The Nationality Question and Social Democracy" in Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay eds. The Nationalism Reader, pp. 183-192

Week Five

Defining European nationalism from the Right

Hitler Mein Kampf excerpts in Paul Mendes Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz eds. The Jew in the Modern World, pp. 637-640

Mussolini "Fascism", Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay eds. The Nationalism Reader , pp. 222-230

Charles Maurras "The Future of French Nationalism" in Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay eds. The Nationalism Reader, pp. 216-222

Part Three

Modern Jewish National: How Secular? How Modern?

In this section of the course we will chart the development of modern Jewish nationalism through a study of the interplay of Jewish and non-Jewish history in Modern Europe. We will begin with a special consideration of Pinsker and Herzl and survey the impact of growing disappointment in the prospects of long term integration of the Jews into European society. Our study will return to the theoretical suggestions of Miroslav Hroch as we examine the role of writers and historians in the growth of modern Jewish nationalism. We will then consider various tensions within Zionism and the various attempts to create socialist, religious and integral nationalist versions of the movement.

Week Six

The Rise of Modern Jewish Nationalism: some general issues

Hedva Ben Israel "Zionism and European Nationalisms: some comparative aspects" in *Israel Studies* 8.1 (2003) 91-104

Aviel Roshwald "Jewish Identity and the paradox of Nationalism" in Michael Berkowitz

Ed. Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of Jews in 1900 and Beyond(Brill, 2004) pp. 11-25

Mitchell Cohen, “A Preface to the Study of Jewish Nationalism” in *Jewish Social Studies, The New Series*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 73-93

Week Seven

The role of the historian

Heinrich Graetz: “Judaism can be understood only through its History” in Michael Meyer ed. *Ideas of Jewish History*(Wayne State, 1987) pp. 217-247

Simon Dubnow “Letters on the Old and the new Judaism”, Letters One, Two, Three and Four in Koppel Pinson ed. *Simon Dubnow, Nationalism and History* (Jewish Publication Society, 1958), pp. 76-142

Week Eight

The role of the writer

Yitzhak Leybush Peretz “Bontshe the Silent”; “Devotion Without End”; “Roads that lead away from Jewishness”; Mendele Moykher Sforim, “The Calf”; Sholem Aleichem, “Dreyfus in Kasrilevke”, “Hodl”

All in Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg eds. *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories*(Penguin, 1990)

Y.L.Gordon “Awake my People”, “For Whom Do I toil”; H.N. Bialik, “City of Slaughter” in Paul Mendes Flohr and Jehuda Reinhartz eds. *The Jew in the Modern World*, pp. 384-386, 410-412

Week Nine

Rediscovering Language

Benjamin Harshav, *Language in a Time of Revolution* (Stanford, 1999), entire

Week Ten

The Zionist Project

Introduction, pp. 15-100

Pinsker Autoemancipation pp. 181-198

Herzl The Jewish State pp. 204-222

Ahad Ha’am “Flesh and Spirit” pp. 256-261

All in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*(Harper and Row, 1959), pp.

Week Eleven

Labor Zionism

Ber Borochov, "Our Platform" pp. 360-368

Aaron Dovid Gordon, "People and Labor" pp. 372-375

David ben Gurion, "The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution" pp. 606-620

Joseph Hayim Brener, "Self Criticism" pp. 307-314

All in Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea

Hayim Hazaz, "The Sermon" in Robert Alter ed. Modern Hebrew Literature(Behrman, 1975), pp. 267-291

Week Twelve

Religious and Revisionist Zionism

Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, "Message to the First Zionist Congress", Hertzberg pp. 398-401

Rabbi Yehile Michael Pines, "Jewish nationalism can not be Secular", Hertzberg pp. 411-416

Abraham Isaac Kook, "Lights for rebirth", Hertzberg, pp. 427-432

Zeev Jabotinsky Testimony before the Peel Commission pp. 559-572

Week Thirteen

Diaspora nationalism: the case of the Bund

Film: Image Before My Eyes

Excerpt from Bronislav Grosser's "From Pole to Jew" in Lucy Dawidowicz ed. The Golden Tradition(Syracuse, 1996), pp. 435-441

Bund Decisions on the Nationality Question, 1899-1910 in The Jew in the Modern World pp. 419-423

Week Fourteen

America: a New Zion?

The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 p468

Louis Brandeis "Zionism is consistent with American patriotism" pp. 496-497

Mordecai Kaplan, "The Reconstruction of Judaism" pp. 499-502

The Jew in the Modern World

Horace Mayer Kallen "Jewish Life is National and Secular" pp. 526-528

Mordecai Kaplan, "The Future of the American Jew" pp. 534-542

Solomon Schaechter. "Zionism: A Statement" , pp. 502-504

All in Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea