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Jews in the Russian Empire (with a focus on Ukraine)

**Lviv Summer School
Jewish History, Multiethnic Past,
and Common Heritage: Urban Experience in Eastern Europe
July 13 – August 7, 2015
Center for Urban History. Lviv, Ukraine**

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

This intensive 5-lecture mini-course (12 academic hours) introduces key broad themes that explore modernization and anti-modernization, urbanization and migration, secularization and acculturation and a new stratification of the Jewish society in East Europe. While it looks at the Russian empire and its western borderlands and Austrian Empire and its eastern borderlands, it focuses on Ukraine in its to-date geographical boundaries that include Galicia and Bukovina. The course does not have any prerequisites and provides broad contextualization of the self-imposed and empire-orchestrated reforms within the Jewish society against the backdrop of the Late Imperial Russia and the “long nineteenth century.” Students’ progress will be evaluated by a final in-class test based on short essay-type 10-15 lines answers to 5-7 questions.

Session one

Imperial integration: from the estates through conscription

Following the top-down enlightenment-inspired imperial attempts to reform the Jewish communities in France, Austria and Prussia, the Russian imperial authorities began their controversial reform of the newly acquired Polish Jews. They began with enrolling Jews into urban estates (*sosloviiia*), legalizing their presence in the empire, institutionalizing the Pale of Jewish Settlement, and acculturating them through the military (*rekrutchyna*). This session explores the rationale behind the imperial reform of the Jews and compares acculturation patterns in Western and Eastern Europe, with a special focus on Polish and Ukrainian territories.

Readings: John Klier, *Russia Gathers her Jews* (Chapter 3, pp. 53-80); YPS, *Jews in the Russian Army* (Chapter 1 and 2: pp. 24-89).

Session two

Traditional society on its path to Orthodoxy (I): Hasidism and its leadership

While most of courses on the Jewish modernity focus on acculturation and secularization processes thus ignoring the overwhelming majority of the traditional Jewish society, this session delves into new forms of religious and social life in Ukraine brought to life by the rise of the Hasidic movement. Students will familiarize with the institutes of the tsadikim and Hasidic courts, will discuss the emerging Hasidic dynasties in their relation to the shtetls (Chernobyl, Ruzhyn, Sadahora, Makariv, Hornostaypol, Talno, Skvira, and Uman) and will analyze theological and social appeal of the Hasidic masters. This session will also explore the tri-partite structure of the Jewish community that included the followers of the Hasidim, the anti-Hasidic *misnagdim* and *maskilim* and the vast majority of the neutral traditional Jewish community.

Readings: "Hasidism," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (available on-line); Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk* (Ch. 2, pp. 55-88).

Session three

Traditional society on its path to Orthodoxy (II): Litvaks-misnagdim and the yeshivah (Talmudic academy) movement

The Talmudic academies (*yeshivas*) in Eastern Poland and Ukraine has long been the center of rabbinic culture—Lublin, Ostroh, Kutu, Brody produced dozens of key rabbinic scholars who became chief rabbis in Prague, Krakow, and Frankfurt. Yet the nineteenth-century developments in the world of Talmudic academies radically changes Jewish religious leadership, the way of studying, the access to traditional books and book production, and the role of the higher Talmudic education among the traditional-minded Jews. Looking at the split between the Hasidic-oriented Ukraine and the misnagdic-oriented Belorussia and Lithuania, this session explores the rise of the new Jewish Orthodoxy as a cultural, religious, and eventually a political power. Students will also explore the reasons behind the relative absence of Reform (or progressive) Judaism east from Lviv/Lemberg and north from Odessa.

Readings: Shaul Stampfer, *Families, Rabbis and Education* (Chapters 7, 10, 11, pp. 145-166, 211-251).

Session four

The making of the Jewish intelligentsia: from the Rabbinic seminary to the literary classics

Seeking to reorganize the traditional Jewish community, the Russian administration established the Rabbinic seminaries in Vilna and Zhitomir to train the future Crown rabbis (Rus.: *kazennye ravviny*), who were to become the imperial Jewish bureaucrats. While some graduates became Crown rabbis, expert Jews (Rus.: *uchenye evrei*), censors of Hebrew books and teachers at state-sponsored Jewish schools, most of the graduates became journalists, scholars, lawyers, and writers, and some, including Mendele Moykher Sforim, became key-note writers. This session would explore the environment in the rabbinic seminaries –and a new

liberal environment in the Russian empire that legalized Jewish press and created the basis for the rise of tri-lingual Jewish literature in St. Petersburg, Vilna, Odessa, Kyiv, Kremenets, Zhytomyr, and Lviv.

Readings: Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale* (Ch. 6, pp. 201-256); Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture* (Chapter 3, pp. 67-113)

Session five

Jewish proletarians in the Russian revolution

Rapid industrialization of the Russian empire at the end of the nineteenth century triggered pauperization and urbanization of the lower estates and brought hundreds of thousands of impoverished Jews to the cities, especially to Ekaterinoslav, Kremenchuh, Yuzovka, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Odessa. This session will focus on the spread of the new Marxist ideology among the Jews, the rise of the socialist Bund and its role in the workers movement and will challenge the stereotype of the Jewish overrepresentation among the leadership of the revolutionary and socialist-oriented political parties.

Readings: Ezra Mendelssohn, *Jews and the Left* (Chapters 3 and 4, pp. 78-121); Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics* (Chapter 3, pp. 134-170).