Eastern Europe was one of the great centers of Jewish civilization in the early modern and modern periods. This reading colloquium explores the society that Jews created, a world unto itself but also closely interlinked with the surrounding Slavic and Christian society. Topics include the structure of Jewish community, Jewish religious culture, socioeconomic patterns, government policies, antisemitism, individual and corporate identity, and cultural and literary developments from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. The primary geopolitical context will be the Russian Empire, though we will start in the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and end with a brief glance at Jewish life in independent Poland and the Soviet Union.

This course is the prerequisite for the subsequent research seminar on the history of the shtetl (HST407/507E), offered in the Spring term. This term, we will read more generally about the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe, though the primary sources will often relate to life in the shtetl, and you will be asked to begin thinking about a possible shtetl-related research topic to develop into a paper in Winter term.

Although this colloquium can be taken as an independent course, history majors who take both it and the following 407 seminar on the shtetl will fulfill their two-seminar requirement. History majors who have taken this reading colloquium will have priority for enrollment in the 407 seminar on the shtetl.

Objectives
In this first term of the two-term sequence, you will be introduced to the scholarly literature on the history of East European Jews, as well as some representative primary sources. By the end of the term, you will:

- Be able to identify some of the major historiographical issues in the field;
- Be acquainted with the primary source base available to scholars of the field;
- Understand some of the primary challenges facing historians active in the field;
- Be able to identify the thesis and ancillary arguments of a monograph, scholarly article, or chapter in an edited volume;
- Have identified several subject areas of interest which you will explore further in the Winter term as possible research paper topics.

**Texts** (available at Portland State Bookstore and Campus Bookstore)

Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881* (2005), also available on Google eBooks
ChaeRan Y. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (2002)
The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, ed. Gershon Hundert (2007): Hundreds of fascinating articles by the leading scholars of the field, including some entries on primary topics of interest (e.g., “Russian Empire”; “Yiddish language”; Poland before 1795”). We will read extensively in it, and I encourage you to browse through it and make use of the articles, bibliographies, multimedia, and other resources. URL: [www.yivoencyclopedia.org](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org)

All other secondary readings, and all primary sources, will be available on D2L.

**Requirements**

1. **Attendance**: The success of this class depends on the collective responsibility and effort of all students. You are expected to be present at every class session, and to participate actively in discussion. *This grade also includes at least one one-on-one meeting with me during office hours or at another mutually agreed upon time.* (15%)

2. **Historian’s journal**: This is an opportunity for you to discuss the assigned secondary readings and identify the major issues and ideas that each reading raises (see separate assignment handout on D2L). You must upload it to D2L by noon every Tuesday (except for the first and last weeks of term, and the week the paper is due), and will be graded on it. Length: about 2 pp. per week. (8 weeks x 3% = 24%)

3. **Discussion leading**: For eight out of the ten class sessions, students will lead class discussion for at least the first half of each class. You will work in pairs and must meet beforehand in order to plan your strategy. This is not as easy as it seems! You cannot just throw out a few ideas and expect your fellow students to run with them. You must prepare a set of questions and topics that will generate discussion, and be prepared to keep discussion going for a good chunk of class time. You should plan to focus your discussion on the primary sources but include the secondary readings as well. You must submit an outline at least one day before class. (10%; graded individually)

4. **Analysis of scholarly journal article (1000-1400 words)**: You will find an article (or chapter in an edited volume) of interest to you and write a sustained analysis of it. See separate assignment handout on D2L. Due 11/19 at 5:00 pm. (30%)

5. **Preliminary annotated bibliography**: You will compile a preliminary bibliography, with annotations, of secondary works relating to a theme that you identify as a possible research paper topic. Ideally the bibliography will include at least 5 books and 5 articles. It is highly
recommended that you meet with me to discuss your research interests and possible paper topics. Due 11/28 at 5:00 pm. (20%)

**NOTE:** Page totals are calculated assuming 1-inch margins, 12-point font, and double spacing. Late work will be marked down one grade step per day.

**Graduate Students**
Graduate students are required to do all of the above assignments except for the historian’s journal. You will hand in three article analyses over the course of the term (one in October and two in November, or vice versa), each one worth 20%. Your bibliography will be worth 15%.

**Overview**

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<td>10. The Soviet Union to 1939; Interwar Poland and Lithuania</td>
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WEEK 2:

- Introduction to Jewish history
- The early modern Polish context

**Primary sources:**

1. Extended Privilege Granted to the Jews of Great Poland (1453)


**Medieval antecedents; Judaism as a religion and way of life**


**The field of Jewish history; the historiography of East European Jewish history**


**The Jews in early modern Poland**

Bartal, chaps. 1-2 (pp. 14-37)
M. Rosman, “Poland: Poland before 1795,” in YEJEE


**Useful if you have no knowledge of Judaism**

WEEK 3: New religious and cultural currents

*Primary sources:*


Bartal, chaps. 4 and 8

*Hasidism*

D. Assaf, “Hasidism: Historical Overview” and J. Dan, “Hasidism: Teachings and Literature” in YEJEE


*Misnagdim*

A. Nadler, “*Misnagdim*” in YEJEE

*Haskalah*

I. Etkes, “*Haskalah*” in YEJEE

WEEK 4: The Jews and the Russian state

*Primary sources:*


2. Nicholas I, “Delineation of the Pale of Settlement” (1835) in *The Jew in the Modern World*

Bartal, chaps. 5 and 9: “Russia and the Jews” and “The Days of Springtime” (pp. 58-69; 102-111)

M. Stanislawski, “Russian Empire” in YEJEE

Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I*, chaps. 1-2: “Conscription of the Jews” and “Political Offensive” (pp. 13-48)

C. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (Hanover, NH, 2002), chap. 2: “Bringing Order to the Jewish Family” (pp. 73-130)


WEEK 5: Jewish economic patterns; community and traditional life

*Primary sources:*


2. *Tkhines* (Yiddish-language women’s devotional prayers)

Bartal, chap. 3: “Towns and Cities: Society and Economy, 1795-1863” (pp. 38-46)

A. Teller, “Economic Life” in YEJEE
Freeze, Jewish Marriage and Divorce, chap. 1: “Marriage: Creating the Jewish Family” (pp. 11-72)

M. Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I, chaps. 5-6: “Metamorphoses of Authority” and “Economic Transformations” (pp.123-182)


**WEEK 6: Integration, acculturation, assimilation**

**Primary sources:***

1. O. Rabinowich, “Russian Must Be Our Mother Tongue” (1861) in *The Jew in the Modern World*

2. Society for the Promotion of Culture Among the Jews, “Program” (1864) in *The Jew in the Modern World*


Bartal, chap. 7: “‘Brotherhood’ and Disillusionment: Jews and Poles in the Nineteenth Century” (pp. 82-89)

T. Endelman, “Assimilation” in YEJEE

B. Horowitz, “Society for the Promotion of Culture among the Jews of Russia” in YEJEE

B. Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002), chap. 6: “The University as Melting Pot?” (pp. 257-307)

H. Murav, *Identity Theft: The Jew in Imperial Russia and the Case of Avraam Uri Kovner* (Stanford, 2003), Introduction and chap. 3: “Kovner and Russophone Literature” (pp. 1-10, 59-82)
WEEK 7: Antisemitism and Jewish-Christian relations

**Primary sources:**
3. Pogrom songs, in The Literature of Destruction Bartal, chaps. 12-13: “‘The Jew is Coming!’: Anti-Semitism from Right and from Left” and “‘Storms in the South,’ 1881-1882” (pp. 134-156)


Nathans, Beyond the Pale, chap. 7: “A Silent Pogrom” (pp. 257-307)


WEEK 8: Jewish culture

**Primary sources:**
2. Y.L. Peretz, “The Dead Town” (1895), in A Treasury of Yiddish Stories

A. Holtzman, “Hebrew Literature” in YEJEE

D. Katz, “Yiddish in the Twentieth Century” in YEJEE

M. Krutikov, “Yiddish Literature After 1800” in YEJEE

B. Harshav, The Meaning of Yiddish (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990), chap. 6: “The Historical Perspective of Modern Yiddish Literature” (pp. 139-160)
R. Wisse, I. L. Peretz and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture (Seattle, 1991), Introduction and chap. 1 (xiii-xvii, 3-35)

WEEK 9: Jewish politics

Primary sources:

Bartal, chaps. 10-11 and Conclusion: “Between Two Extremes: Radicalism and Orthodoxy” and “The Conservative Alliance: Galicia under Emperor Franz Josef”


Freeze, Jewish Marriage and Divorce, chap. 5


WEEK 10: The Soviet Union to 1939; Interwar Poland

Primary sources:
2. Isaak Babel, short story TBA
Z. Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, 2001), chaps. 2-3 (pp. 59-114)

D. Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture, 1918-1930* (New York, 2004), chap. 2


E. Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington, 1983), chap. 1: “Poland” (pp. 11-83)