



CIEE in Ferrara, Italy

Course name:	The Italian Jewish Culture: A Journey through History from the Renaissance to the Present Time
Course number:	HIST 3005 FERR / RELI 3001 FERR
Programs offering course:	Language and Culture
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Fall 2019

Course Description

The course will examine the history of Italian Judaism, through its cultural and religious peculiarities. It will survey the history, from the Renaissance period to Modern times, the current condition of this cultural minority and its ties to Italy. The course will focus on the history of the Jewish communities of Ferrara and Venice, two notable examples of Italian Jewry, from the first Jewish presences to the golden Renaissance period, through the so called “era of the Ghettos”. Furthermore, the course will provide the skills to analyse the Emancipation that characterise Italian Judaism, from the Fascist Regime to our times.

The course provides the students with basic notions of Judaism and it examines the evolution and development of the relationship with the cultural majority. It presents the major Jewish protagonists of Italian history and literature, such as Dona Gracia Nasi, Giorgio Bassani and Primo Levi. The city of Ferrara, the area of the former Ghetto, its monuments, the place and the Museum of National Judaism and the Shoah, will be an integral part of the lessons.

Learning Objectives

Learn basic notions of Judaism. Acquire the skills to analyse and recognise the religious, social and cultural peculiarities that characterise Italian Judaism.

Learn the impact of this cultural minority on Italian society; relate history of Italian Jews to the history of Italy.

Improve reading, talking and writing critically about Judaism and history of Italian Jews.

Become more familiar with the principal resources and tools for scholarly research in Jewish Studies (books, articles, web-sources).

Course Prerequisites

The course has no prerequisites.



Methods of Instruction

Lectures supported by PowerPoint combined with seminars (for which students are assigned weekly reading tasks), site visits and research challenges. Students will be encouraged to take part in discussion of Italian Jewish culture, history and social impact. Strong emphasis on the history of the Jewish communities of the city of Ferrara and Venezia.

Online Resources

All required readings, slides, supplemental digital resources and additional information will be available online at Canvas.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Oral presentation:	10%
2. Midterm exam:	25%
3. Final exam:	25%
4. Term paper:	15%
5. Class participation:	25%

Course Requirements

Oral Presentation

Students will have to select a topic, carry out a research and then provide a critical analysis of it for the other students (15 minutes), based on methods learned in class.

Midterm Exam

Students are required to answer essay questions on the material studied during the first half of the course, as well as comment on extracts for primary source documents. The exam will extend for 2 hours from the starting time.

Final Exam

Students are required to answer essay questions on the material studied during the first half of the course, as well as comment on extracts for primary source documents. The exam will extend for 2 hours from the starting time.

Term Paper

Students will have to carry out a case study of one aspect studied during the course. They will go further on the subject-matter selected for oral presentation, which deals with



a particular theme of the Italian Judasim and they will discuss it with the course instructor during office hours or in *ad hoc* tutorials.

Paper outline must include one-paragraph thesis statement and at least two printed secondary sources.

All essays must be typed on a computer and double-spaced (c. 1.000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliography). Students are expected to print the term paper and also to send it to the instructor via email. Late submissions will be penalised by a grade for every day late. Extensions are granted only in special circumstances, such as serious illness or bereavement.

Class Participation

Students are expected to attend regularly and participate actively in class. If a student miss more than 2 lessons, he/she will be penalised by half a grade for each lesson missed. The instructor will keep a record of attendance throughout the course, which will include the results of the quick-write test administered at the beginning of each class. Students will be expected to do the readings and assessments in advance, so as to be familiar with images and artists and to be able to participate in the discussion.

Students are reminded that plagiarism (presenting another person's work as one's own) is completely unacceptable and if attempted will result in the student receiving a FAIL for the term paper. To avoid this, always make sure that references and other people's ideas are cited correctly. If you are unsure about how to cite a reference, check with the course instructor.

Laptops, mobiles and other electronic devices are not allowed in the classroom.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1	Cluster I: Defining Judaism and the peculiarities of Italian Jews
Lesson 1	Introduction: Who is a Jew?
Lesson 2	Italian Judaism, the origins and the places of a peculiar minority Reading: S. Simonsohn, <i>Italy</i> , in <i>Jewish Art and Civilization</i> , Hong Kong, 1972, pp. 92-110.

Week 2	Cluster II: The Renaissance period, between persecution and prosperity
Lesson 3	1492, the expulsion from Spain and migration routes Reading: Roth C., <i>History of the Jews of Italy</i> , Philadelphia, 1946, pp. 252-262.
Lesson 4	“A safe haven”, Ercole I d'Este and his liberal policies, the flourishing of Ferrara and the Sephardic community. Reading: A.VV., <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> , Jerusalem, 2006, Vol. 6, pp. 762-764, p. 785-787. S. Simonsohn, <i>Italy</i> , in <i>Jewish Art and Civilization</i> , Hong Kong, 1972, pp. 110-132.
Week 3	
Lesson 5	Doctors and bankers, Jewish occupations by choice and by law Reading: Roth C., <i>History of the Jews of Italy</i> , Philadelphia, 1946, pp.103-112.
Lesson 6	A gate on the Mediterranean sea, Venice and his Jewish communities: Italian, Sephardic and Ashkenazi. Reading: A.VV., <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> , Jerusalem, 2006, Vol. 20, pp. 499-503; Finlay R., <i>The Foundation of the Ghetto: Venice, the Jews, and the War of the League of Cambrai</i> , in <i>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society</i> , Vol. 126, No. 2 (Apr. 8, 1982), pp. 140-154.
Week 4	
Lesson 7	Day trip to Venice. Visit to the Jewish museum, the synagogues and the former ghetto area Reading: Kashtan A., <i>Synagogue architecture of the Medieval and Pre-Emancipation periods</i> , in <i>Jewish Art</i> , Israel, 1971, pp. 115-117; Roth C., <i>History of the Jews of Italy</i> , Philadelphia, 1946, pp. 177-186. The day tour is worth 2 lessons: if missed, it will be considered as 2 lessons missed



Lesson 8

Cluster III: The “age of the Ghettos”, geographic separation and cultural contacts

From the Venetian ghetto to the Papal Edict: history and politics of segregation

Reading: Ruderman D., *At the Intersection of cultures: the historical legacy of Italian Jewry*, in *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, California, 1989, pp. 1-21.

Week 5

Lesson 9

Midterm exam

Lesson 10

Life in the ghetto, an island with ties to the outside world
The lesson will be held in the area of the former ghetto of Ferrara.

Reading: Malkiel D., *Empiricism in Isaac Lampronti’s Pahad Yizhaq*, in *Materia Giudaica* anno X/1, 2005, pp. 341-351;
Roth C., *History of the Jews of Italy*, Philadelphia, 1946, pp. 187-193.

Week 6

Lesson 11

Identity and assimilation, the problem of forced conversions

Reading: Linzer Schwartz L. and Isser N., *Some Involuntary Conversion Techniques*, in *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1 (winter, 1981), Bloomington Indiana, 1981, pp. 1-10

Lesson 12

Cluster IV: Emancipation, a new role in the Italian society

The Statuto Albertino and the campaign for the unification of Italy

Reading: Toscano M., *The Jews in Italy, from the Risorgimento to the Republic*, in *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, California, 1989, pp. 25-33.

Week 7



Lesson 12 Being Italian: the participation of the Jews to the social, cultural and the political life of the new nation.

Reading: Roth C., *History of the Jews of Italy*, Philadelphia, 1946, pp. 474-488.

Lesson 13 Cluster V: From the fascist regime to the II World War

The rise of the Fascist Regime, Italian Jews and politics, between nationalistic aims and Zionism

Reading: Toscano M., *The Jews in Italy, from the Risorgimento to the Republic*, in *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, California, 1989, pp. 34-42; Roth C., *History of the Jews of Italy*, Philadelphia, 1946, pp. 509-517.

Week 8

Lesson 14 **Oral presentation**

Lesson 15 Racial Laws, the loss of rights, being “others” in their own nation. The history of Giorgio Bassani and the Garden of the Finzi-Contini.

Reading: Fink G., *Growing Up Jewish in Ferrara: The Fiction of Giorgio Bassani*, in *Acculturation and Its Discontents: The Italian Jewish Experience Between Exclusion and Inclusion*, vol.10, Toronto, 2008, pp. 211-228.

Deadline for the Term Paper outline send by e-mail by Wednesday 23, 21 p.m

Week 9 Cluster V: From the fascist regime to the II World War

Lesson 16 Persecution and deportation, the tragic days of the Italian Shoah: the roundup of Rome's ghetto, Italian internment camps

Reading: Roth C., *History of the Jews of Italy*, Philadelphia, 1946, pp. 536-550



Lesson 17

Jewish resistance: the role of Italian Jews in the partisan fight. The Jewish Brigade and the liberation of Italy.

Reading: AA.VV., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem 2006, Vol. 15, p. 271, pp. 664-668, Castronuovo N., *Natalia Ginzburg: Jewishness as Moral Identity*, Leicester, 2010, pp. 113-116; Nidam-Orvieto Y., *Matilde Bassani Finzi*, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/bassani-finzi-matilde>

Week 10

Cluster VI: A difficult return, life after war

Lesson 18

The tales of the survivors and their efforts to build a better nation. The figure of Primo Levi as witness and narrator, and his impact on the Italian society.

Reading: Cicioni M., *Primo Levi: Bridges of Knowledge*, Oxford, 1995, pp. 21-32.

Deadline for the Term Paper

Lesson 19

Narrating the past, imagining the future: the National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah, and his role in Italian society. The lesson will be held at the Meis museum, Ferrara.

Reading: Clark D., *Jewish Museums, From Jewish Icons to Jewish Narratives*, in *European Judaism*, Vol. 36, 2003, pp. 4-17.

Week 11

Lesson 20

Final Exam

Readings

Students are provided with a course reader which contains all the weekly reading materials. Students will be expected to bring their syllabus and readings to class. Students will have to do the readings prior to the lecture, in order to be familiar with the topics of the lesson and participate actively in the discussion.



Although the material may not always be of direct relevance to the essay topics, the articles are useful to read as examples of “how to write” about works of art and material culture in general.

Books and essays included in the reader

AA.VV., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 2006.

Bassani G., *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, London, 2007.

Bonfil R., *Change in Cultural Patterns of Jewish Society in Crisis – The Case of Italian Jewry at the close of the Sixteenth Century*, in *Essential Papers on Jewish culture in Reaissance and baroque Italy*, New York, 1992.

Emancipation and Jewish Response in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Italy, in *European History Quarterly*, n.16 (1986), pp. 403-439.

Hughes H.S., *Prisoners of Hope – The silver age of Italian Jews, 1924-1974*, Cambridge, Mass., 1983.

Levi P., *If this is a man*, 1991.

Levi P., *The periodic table*, New York, 1995.

Roth C., *History of the Jews of Italy*, Philadelphia, 1946.

Ruderman D., *At the Intersection of cultures: the historical legacy of Italian Jewry*, in *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, California, 1989.

Sarfatti M., *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy. From Equality to Persecution*, Madison, Wisconsin, 2007.

Toscano M., *The Jews in Italy, from the Risorgimento to the Republic*, in *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, California, 1989.