

# HI235

## **Blaming the Other: Racism and Antisemitism in Germany and the USA from the 1920s until Today**

Seminar Leader: PD Dr. Frank Wolff

Email: [f.wolff@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:f.wolff@berlin.bard.edu)

Course Times: Mon and Fri 10:45-12:15

Office Hours: Fr. 12:30-14:00 and by appointment

### **Course Description**

In the formation of modern racism and antisemitism the 1920s were a watershed period. Traditional sets of antisemitic and racist ideas intersected with new nationalist rhetoric while social inequalities persisted or even intensified. Economic crises, increased globalization, repressive migration policies as well as the shock waves from modern means of communication added to the picture. Many societies responded by blaming minorities for both the speed and the stagnation of social change. Does this sound familiar? Revocations of experiencing “another 1920s” have accompanied public discourse ever since. But through the decades and in different places, the outcomes of crises varied dramatically – ranging from human rights campaigns to genocide. This course wants to depart from the view of stereotypes as simply irrational, and inquire to what extent “blaming the other” appeared to make sense in specific conditions and contexts. It understands ethnic and cultural scapegoating as integral parts in an intellectual history of hate: to invent and to blame “the other” for shortcomings of modern states and societies. Based on visual and textual sources on public discourse, law, and politics, it will compare and connect German and American history from the 1920s until today. It will focus on the racialized construction of “the other” during the interwar period, on the function of stereotypes in the dynamics of the Holocaust, on the construction of ethnic imaginaries in the Cold War and in decolonization, and on racism and antisemitism in contemporary migration societies. Finally, this course also aims to bring together historical evidence with the individual experiences of students, in order to integrate history into a process of social learning.

### **Requirements**

The course has two main goals: (a) to learn about and to discuss the formation of racism and antisemitism in Germany and the US from the 1920s until today, and (b) to inspire and enable reflection on the historical trajectories of individual encounters with hate in today’s world. This will be achieved by individual students research projects which rest on (a) an active learning environment and (b) your oral and written reflections. Together, this will lead to an online publication in the form of a blog entry on a website on “Studying Hate at Bard College Berlin” which we will develop over the course of this class (student research projects).

Therefore this seminar is focused on dialogue and debate. Participants are required to actively participate in the sessions (also see section: Attendance). In online sessions please turn on your camera to facilitate our exchange. Active participation includes the careful preparation of the required reading and of your follow-up questions which we can discuss in class.

After each thematic bloc (see section: Schedule) we will meet in a “Response Session” in which student working groups will respond to the topics discussed in the thematic bloc. Each student will join one working group. You will hold your responses in class as presentations with a length of 15 minutes, followed by a group discussion on your response and on how to integrate our conclusions into our reflection on hate. These discussions will also feed into our developing conceptualization of the website.

During your participation in the class you will develop your student research project. In it you will specify one topic from your personal surrounding (complex experience, public debate, larger event, media discussion) in which racism and/or antisemitism played a role. The goal is to develop a complex understanding of what happened in this instance and how it is shaped by the intersectionality and historical trajectories of exclusionary thought and practice.

Core requirements:

- preparation of required reading
- active participation in critiques and discussion
- conducting individual student research projects
- punctual submission of assignments

You are also expected to:

- Turn off phones during the entire class and workshop time
- Be prepared to present assignments/presentations without reminder
- Engage in critiques and discussions

### **Academic Integrity**

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

### **Attendance**

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) will not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Beyond that, further absence can result in a grade reduction of 5% per missed session towards the final grade.

### **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2021:**

Some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

### **Assessment**

My goal in this class to provide an inspiring and open learning environment for you and to help you develop your student research projects with the best possible result.

Please use my office hours to talk about your observations, concerns, and your ideas for the development of your student research project. You are welcome to submit draft versions of your final essay before submission (please allow enough reading time). You should seek consultation on your performance and project at least twice during the semester.

### **Assignments**

The course includes three written assignments to develop your student research project. In it, you will focus on one larger current encounter with racism and/or antisemitism (a public debate, a hate event, a speech, etc.), to develop an analytical approach to it, to define its components, and to examine its novelties and historical trajectories (precursors, motivations, effects, practices, legitimization strategies, etc.).

These written assignments build on each other and lead to a final paper which (with further editing after grading) is to be published on the project website (also see section: Essay Deadlines).

1. A one page abstract introducing and shortly discussing ideas your topic for your student research project (400 words).
2. A mid-term paper reflecting on hate as an object of study in a theoretical form (ca. 1,500 words).
3. A final essay on your student research project to reflect on hate as a field of analysis by contextualizing an individual encounter/debate/event through the analysis of its components and historical trajectories (ca. 3,000-4,000 words).
4. Possible short assignments (response papers) depending on the development of the class.

### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

Assignments that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

### **Grade Breakdown**

Participation: 40% (20% for weeks 1-7 and 20% for weeks 8-14)

Midterm essay: 20%

Final essay: 40%

### **Schedule**

Each given week will meet Monday and Friday 10:45-12:15AM. If possible, the classes will take place in-person on campus. Depending on general guidelines, classes will be scheduled online.

#### **Step I: General Introduction**

##### Week 1

**01.02. Introduction to topic, course, and assignments** – no required reading

#### **Step II: Defining Our Approach**

**05.02. - Defining and relating concepts**

Reading:

Bernasconi, Robert. "Racism." In *Key Concepts in the Study of Antisemitism*, edited by Sol Goldberg, Scott Ury, and Keith Ian Weiser, 245–56. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

Week 2

**08.02. - Approaches to studying hate**

Reading:

Stern, Kenneth S. "The Need for an Interdisciplinary Field of Hate Studies." *Journal of Hate Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 7–35.

**12.02. - Encounters of debating racism and/or antisemitism**

Assignment:

Project abstract (developing the individual student research project)

**Submission deadline for project abstract "Outline of the individual student research project"**

**Step III: Re-Inventing the Stranger in the 1920s**

Week 3

**15.02. - The quota laws**

Reading:

Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton, NJ [et al.]: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005, ch 1.

**19.02. - Racism and/or antisemitism?**

Reading:

Fink, Reuben. "Visas, Immigration, and Official Anti-Semitism." *The Nation* 112 (June 22, 1921): 870–72.

Week 4

**22.02. - Experiences of denied equality**

Reading:

Lease, Gary. "Anti-Semitism in Weimar Germany: The German-Jewish View." *German Politics & Society* 14, no. 1 (38) (1996): 111–28.

**26.02. - Response**

Assignment:

Presentation Group A

**Step IV: Jim Crow in Nuremberg?**

Week 5

**01.03. - Transnational influence**

Reading:

Wiesen, S Jonathan. "American Lynching in the Nazi Imagination: Race and Extra-Legal Violence in 1930s Germany\*." *German History* 36, no. 1 (February 16, 2018): 38–59.

**05.03. - Cooperative hate**

Reading:

Kühl, Stefan. "The Cooperation of German Racial Hygienists and American Eugenists before and after 1933." In *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed and the Reexamined*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck, 134–51. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

Week 6

**08.03. - International Women's Day – no session**

**12.03. - Response**

Assignment:

Presentation Group B

### **Step V: Belonging as Practice**

#### Week 7

#### **15.03. - Public health and immigration**

##### Readings:

Kraut, Alan M. "The Perennial Fear of Foreign Bodies." *Modern American History* 2, no. 1 (2019): 53–57.

Young, Julia G. "Making America 1920 Again? Nativism and US Immigration, Past and Present." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 5, no. 1 (2018): 217–35.

#### **19.03. - Body politics of belonging**

##### Reading:

Gilman, Sander. "The Jewish Nose: Are Jews White? Or, The History of the Nose Job." In *The Jew's Body*, 169–93. New York, London: Routledge, 1991.

#### Week 8

#### **22.03. - Urban politics of belonging**

*Guest speaker: Prof. Dr. Paige Glotzer (Univ. of Wisconsin)*

##### Reading:

Glotzer, Paige. "Who Bankrolled Jim Crow?" Public Seminar, September 22, 2015.

<https://publicseminar.org/2015/09/who-bankrolled-jim-crow/>.

**Submission deadline for midterm essay "Reflecting on Hate as an Object of Study: Opportunities and Challenges"**

#### **26.03. - Response:**

##### Assignment:

Presentation Group C

Spring Break 29.03-05.04.

### **Step VI: Mutual Perceptions**

#### Week 9

#### **05.04 – Easter Monday – no session**

#### **09.04. - Perceptions of the holocaust**

##### Reading:

Excerpts from: Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Dial Press, 1963, tbd.

#### Week 10

#### **12.04. - Perceptions of holocaust survivors**

##### Readings/video testimonials:

USC Shoah Foundation: Witnessing Jim Crow,

<https://iwwitness.usc.edu/sfi/Activity/Detail.aspx?activityID=2742>

Individual videos will be available through Google Classroom

#### **16.04. - Response**

##### Assignment:

Presentation Group D

### **Step VII: Inclusion and Exclusion: Complex Identity Formations**

#### Week 11

**19.04. - Antisemitism as a cultural code**

Reading:

Volkov, Shulamit. "Readjusting Cultural Codes: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism." *Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 51–62.

**23.04. - Transnational Black Feminism**

Readings:

Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." In *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal: An African American Anthology*, edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, 2nd ed., 515–22. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

Florvil, Tiffany N. "Emotional Connections: Audre Lorde and Black German Women." In *Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies*, edited by Stella Bolaki and Sabine Bröck-Sallah, 135–47. Amherst, Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015.

Week 12

**26.04. - Beyond Germany and the USA**

*Guest Speaker: Dr. Brendan McGeever (Birkbeck)*

Reading:

Virdee, Satnam, and Brendan McGeever. "Racism, Crisis, Brexit." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, no. 10 (2017): 1802–19.

**30.04. - Response**

Assignment:

Presentation Group E

**Step VIII: Commonality or Exceptionalism?**

Week 13

**03.05. - Memories of murder**

Videos:

USHMM: Keeping the Memory Alive: Personal Reflections on the Legacies of Racial Violence and Genocide (2018): <https://youtu.be/199ZOkkp-e8>

**07.05. - A common cause?**

Reading:

Cousin, Glynis, and Robert Fine. "A Common Cause: Reconnecting the Study of Racism and Antisemitism." *European Societies* 14, no. 2 (2012): 166–85.

Week 14

**10.05. - Response**

Assignment:

Presentation Group F

**14.05. - Final Discussion**

Completion Week 17.5.-21.5.

**Submission deadline for final essay (individual research projects) "Analyzing hate practices: Contextualizing the trajectories of current issues"**

**Essay Deadlines**

All written assignments are to be submitted through Google Classroom. The deadlines are:  
Research project abstract: 2. February 2021, 11:59PM.  
Midterm essay: 22 March 2021, 11:59PM.

Final essay: 23 May 2021 (for senior students 18 May 2021), 11:59PM.

## **Library and Book Purchase Policies**

All texts for required reading will be provided as digital copies through Google Classroom.

Even though not necessary for your participation in the course, I recommend to acquire and read the following two books in preparation of our class:

Fredrickson, George Marsh. *Racism: A Short History*. 5. print. Princeton, NJ: Univ. Press, 2015.

Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Dial Press, 1963 (or any other edition of it).