

## PARADISE LOST? HISTORY OF JEWISH-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



1960, Casablanca (Morocco)



July 12, 1948, al Ramla (Palestine)

Fall semester, 2025

Monday, 1-3 pm, room 131

Professor Claire Marynower

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### Description

From the 7th to the 18th century, the majority of the world's Jews lived in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, under Muslim rule. This course will revisit the long history of this coexistence and the Jewish condition in Muslim lands, in its various aspects—legal, religious, social, economic, political, cultural—and its ambivalences. Jews were not considered equals and faced forms of discrimination that varied according to time and place.

We will then examine how colonization marked a break in the history of these societies, from Algeria, which experienced the most extensive colonial intervention, granting Jews French nationality, to Yemen and Morocco, where Jews remained the "protected" people (*ḍimmī*) of the Muslim authority. The departure of Jews from the Arab and Muslim world will be discussed in the context of decolonization, combined with other factors, foremost among them Zionism. The final part of the course will focus on the birth of Zionism, Jewish immigration to Palestine, the creation of the State of Israel, and the conflicts that seem to have become the matrix of Jewish-Muslim relations in the Middle East since 1948.

This course aims to deconstruct the contemporary understanding of Jewish-Muslim relations as necessarily antagonistic by reintroducing historical depth. The historical perspective will be combined with anthropological notions and methods to better reconstruct the richness and complexity of these relationships.



## Requirements and Valuation of Assignments

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### 30%: attendance and class participation (including an oral presentation)

Active and well-prepared participation is expected. This is a seminar and as such, your preparation and participation in class discussion is of the utmost importance. We will discuss at every session the assigned reading: take time to carefully read it and take notes (2 to 3h/week). You should be able to identify the author's main thesis, the different arguments and the empirical material used to prove it.

Once in the semester you will present the assigned reading orally: introduce the author, sum the text up, identify its contribution to the field, discuss its main ideas and lead class discussion. I advise you to lay out 3-4 questions concerning the readings that you consider to be worthy of discussion. As the leader of the discussion it is your responsibility to make sure that each author's argument is examined and its relevant strengths and weaknesses discussed.

**30%: Research paper** on any topic dealing with the history of Jewish-Muslim relations in the MENA (up to 5,000 words, including bibliography). You are expected to have at least 5 bibliographic references (academic works) and to cite your sources precisely in footnotes. For footnotes and bibliographies, please follow the rules indicated here:

<https://www.trentu.ca/history/programs/undergraduate/history-online-workbook/footnotes-and-bibliographies>

You can find helpful guidelines on the website of Trent University undergraduate history program:

- <https://www.trentu.ca/history/programs/undergraduate/history-online-workbook/research-essay-organization>
- <https://www.trentu.ca/history/programs/undergraduate/history-online-workbook/writing-strong-paragraphs-introductions-and>
- <https://www.trentu.ca/history/programs/undergraduate/history-online-workbook/creating-effective-outline>

**40%: Final test, April 14, 1.30 to 3 pm** (you can choose between too essay topics).

We will be discussing topics in this class that may evoke powerful emotions for you, but it is a priority that you treat your colleagues and their views with respect even as you engage in vigorous debate. Note that respect does not necessitate agreeing with or validating opinions that you don't share, but it does mean that you need to avoid insulting or being dismissive of the positions of others.

## Class and Reading Schedule

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### Session 1, January 20: Introductory Class

- (1) Introduction of the class: goals, structure, content and expectations.
- (2) The Uses and Abuses of a Millennia-Long History

### Session 2, January 27: The Medieval History of Jews in Muslim Lands and its Modern Uses

Mark R. Cohen, "The 'Golden Age' of Jewish-Muslim Relations: Myth and Reality"



Aomar Boum, "The Performance of Convivencia: Communities of Tolerance and the Reification of Toleration" [Morocco]

More readings

Mark R. Cohen, "The Neo-Lachrymose Conception of Jewish-Arab History"  
David Nirenberg, "What Can Medieval Spain Teach Us about Muslim-Jewish Relations?"

**Session 3, February 3: Jews and Muslims in the Middle East, "Between Brothers and Others"**

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Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman, "Yemen: religion, magic, and Jews"  
Michelle U. Campos, "Shared Urban Spaces" [Ottoman Palestine]

More readings

Julia Phillips Cohen, "On the Streets and in the Synagogue: Celebrating 1892 as Ottomans" [mainly actual Greece and Turkey]  
Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman, "Muslim Society as an Alternative: Jews Converting to Islam" [Yemen]  
Mark Wagner, "Muslim-Jewish Sexual Liaisons Remembered and Imagined in 20th-Century Yemen"

**Session 4, February 10 : Jews and Muslims, the British Empire and its Aftermath**

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Eirik Kvindesland, "Jewish networks between the Persian Gulf and Palestine, 1820-1914" [Iran, Bahrein, Palestine]  
Orit Bashkin, "Nationalism and Patriotism: Vision of the Nation" [Iraq]

More readings

Michelle U. Campos, "Mizrah Uma`arav (East and West): a Sephardi cultural and political project in post-Ottoman Jerusalem" [Mandatory Palestine]

**Session 5, February 17: Jews and Muslims in the French Empire**

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Avner Ofrath, "'We shall become French: Reconsidering Algerian Jews' citizenship, c. 1860-1900"  
Emily Gottreich, "Rethinking the Islamic City from the Perspective of Jewish Space" [Morocco]

More readings

Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "Dividing south from north: French colonialism, Jews, and the Algerian Sahara" [Algeria]  
Aomar Boum, "Centering the Margin. Family Networks, Occupational Mobility, and Saharan Jews" [Morocco]

**Session 6, February 24: The Beginnings of Zionism and the Question of Palestine**

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Yuvan Evri & Hillel Cohen, "Between Shared Homeland to National Home: The Balfour Declaration from a Native Sephardic Perspective"  
Anat Kidron, Separatism, coexistence and the landscape: Jews and Palestinian-Arabs in mandatory Haifa"

More readings

Jonathan Marc Gribetz, "Arab-Zionist Conversations in Late Ottoman Jerusalem: Sa'ïd al-Husayni, Ruhi al-Khalidi and Eliezer Ben-Yehuda », 306-329  
Yair Wallach, "Rethinking the *yishuv*: late-Ottoman Palestine's Jewish communities revisited"

\*\*\*\*\* March 3: holidays \*\*\*\*\*

**Session 7, March 10: Anti-Semitism, Fascism and the Jews in MENA region during the 1930s and WWII**

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Israel Gershoni, "Why the Muslims Must Fight against Nazi Germany: Muḥammad Najātī Ṣidqī's Plea"

More readings

Orit Bashkin, "The Barbarism from Within—Discourses about Fascism amongst Iraqi and Iraqi-Jewish Communists, 1942-1955"

Wagenhofer, Sophie, "Contested Narratives: Contemporary Debates on Mohammed V and the Moroccan Jews under the Vichy Regime"

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**Session 8, March 17: The Departure of Jews from the Arab and Muslim World and its Narratives**

Ella Shohat, "The invention of the Mizrahim"

Moshe Behar, "Palestine, Arabized Jews and the Elusive Consequences of Jewish and Arab National Formations"

More readings

Yoram Bilu & André Levy, "Nostalgia and Ambivalence: The Reconstruction of Jewish-Muslim Relations in Oulad Mansour"

Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, "Zionist or Refugees: The Historical Aspect of the Uprooting of the Jews from Arab Countries and Their Immigration to Israel"

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**Session 9, March 24: Jews and Muslims in Israel/Palestine after 1948**

Nur Masalha, "The Memoricide of the Nakba"

Amal Jamal, "Jewish sovereignty and the inclusive exclusion of Palestinians: Shifting the conceptual understanding of politics in Israel/Palestine"

More readings

Dafna Hirsch, "'Hummus is best when it is fresh and made by Arabs': The gourmetization of hummus in Israel and the return of the repressed Arab"

Ronald Ranta & Yoatan Mendel, "Consuming Palestine: Palestine and Palestinians in Israeli food culture"

Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, "Memory for forgetfulness: Conceptualizing a memory practice of settler colonial disavowal"

Yair Wallach, "The racial logic of Palestine's partition"

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**Session 10, March 31: Jewish-Muslim Relations in Israel/Palestine Today**

Esther Webman, "Rethinking the Role of Religion in Antisemitic Discourses"

Lana Tatour & Adan Tatour, "Toward an Anti-colonial Approach to Violent Crime among '48 Palestinians"

More readings

Michelle U. Campos, "The Jerusalem Light Rail in Historical Perspective: Urban Transportation and Urban Citizenship between Ottomanism and Apartheid"

Chaim Noy, "The Political Ends of Tourism: Voices and Narratives of Silwan/the City of David in East Jerusalem"

Oren Yiftachel, "Deepening apartheid: The political geography of colonizing Israel/Palestine"

Raef Zreik, "War and Self-Defense: Some Reflections on the War on Gaza"

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**Final Test April 14**

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**Final Research Paper due April 28**