



University of  
New Haven

## *The Jewish Experience in Prague*

### SECTION I: Course Overview

**Course Code:** REL341PRG

**Subject Area(s):** Religious Studies

**Prerequisites:** None

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Total Contact Hours:** 45

**Recommended Credits:** 3

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course gives students a historical and cultural overview of Prague's long-standing Jewish population. At the same time, the course time provides an introduction to the diversity of Jewish history, religion, culture, languages and thought. Time periods and events examined in this course include: the settling of Jews in medieval Prague, impact of conflicts on Bohemian Jews, and the “golden age” of Prague’s Jewish community. This course will also analyze antisemitism and the mass deportations during the World War II in the Holocaust period, as well as the Communist persecution and reconstruction of the Jewish life after the Velvet Revolution. The course includes several field studies to unique historical areas and meetings with representatives of the contemporary Jewish community.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Outline the specific history and legends of Prague Jewish communities.
- Gain insight into Jewish history, religion, culture, languages and thought.
- Analyze the historical causes and consequences of religious persecution and prejudice during the Nazi and Communist dictatorships.
- Specify what is the key to the survival of the Jewish people in difficult times.

### SECTION II: Instructor & Course Details

#### INSTRUCTOR DETAILS

**Name:** TBD  
**Contact Information:** TBD  
**Term:** SEMESTER

## **GRADING & ASSESSMENT**

The instructor will assess your progress towards the above-listed learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted and will count towards your final grade. The following section (Assessment Overview) will provide further details for each.

<b>Engagement</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Oral Presentations</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Research Paper</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>

## **ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW**

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Your course instructor will provide further details and instructions during class time.

**Engagement (20%):** Engagement in class is expected of all CEA CAPA students. Guidelines for engagement can be found on the list of academic policies.

**Oral Presentations (20%):** Students will produce during the semester two oral presentations. At the beginning of the course, each student will be assigned presentation dates. Each week, selected students will be required to present on the topic of the respective session. The oral presentation should be approx. 20 min. long and should include PowerPoint presentation based on academic sources. Further instructions will be provided in class.

**Research Paper (20%):** Students will produce during the semester one written research paper in length of 10-15 pages (250 words per page) on one of the course topics of own choice. The title and structure of the research paper will be approved by the instructor. The paper can be based on the course readings, but must be supplemented by at least 2-3 other external academic sources. After submitting and receiving feedback from the instructor, students will present the results of their paper verbally (no PowerPoint required) to other students.

**Midterm and Final Exam (20% each):** The two exams are designed to establish and communicate to the students the progress being made towards meeting the course learning objectives listed above. Both exams are comprised of questions and exercises that test students' abilities in three important areas of competency: the amount of information mastered; the accuracy of the information presented; and the significance ascribed to the facts and ideas integrated across students' study in this course. The midterm and final exams cover concepts from the course readings, in-class discussions, and field visits and have multiple choice questions, short-answer questions, and essay-response questions.

## **ACTIVE LEARNING**

CEA CAPA courses are designed to include a variety of active learning component that will take you out of the classroom and allow you to explore your local, host city. This course includes:

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- I. *Old Town Square, Jewish Quarter*; II. *Old-New Synagogue, Maisel Synagogue, Pinkas Synagogue, Old Jewish Cemetery, Klausen Synagogue, Spanish Synagogue*, III. *Czernin Palace*.

## REQUIRED READINGS

The reading assignments for this course are listed below. All required readings must be completed according to the due date assigned by the course instructor. You will not need to purchase these readings; the instructor will provide these selected readings to you in class (either in paper or electronic format) and/or through CEA CAPA's online Moodle classroom.

**SELECTED READING(S):** The selected readings for this course are listed below. You will not need to purchase these readings; the instructor will provide these selected readings to you in class (either in paper or electronic format).

- Řehák, Robert. *Mysterious Bond: A story about the exceptional relationship between the Czech and Jewish nations*. Plzeň: Sutnarbooks, 2021
- Gershom Scholem, "The Idea of the Golem," On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, trans. Ralph Manheim, New York: Schocken, 1965, 158–204
- Kieval, Hillel J. *Pursuing the Golem of Prague: Jewish Culture and the Invention of a Tradition*, in: *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 1-23
- Rybár, Ctibor. *Jewish Prague: Guide to the Monuments*, Most: Spektrum, 1991
- Yahil, Chaim et al. "Czechoslovakia," in: Berenbaum, Michael; Skolnik, Fred (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Vol. 5 (2nd ed.). Detroit: Macmillan Reference 2007, pp. 353–356
- Kafka, Franz. *A Report for An Academy*. Transl. Ian Johnston. Online: <https://www.kafka-online.info/a-report-for-an-academy.html>, pp. 1-7
- Langer, Jiří. *Nine Gates: The Chassidic Mysteries*. Transl. Stephen Jolly. Lutterworth Press 2022, chap. 1 and introduction by František Langer
- Bauer, Yehuda: *Rethinking the Holocaust*. New Haven/London 2001, chap. I. and III (pp. 38-67)
- Scholem, Gershom. "Kabbalah," in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., Vol. 11, pp. 586-677
- Snyder, Timothy. *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books, 2010, pp. 5-15; 320-355
- Heitlinger, Alena. *In the Shadows of the Holocaust and Communism: Czech and Slovak Jews Since 1945*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006, pp. 51-69
- Gruber, Ruth and Jelinek, Yeshayahu, "Czech Republic," in: Berenbaum, Michael; Skolnik, Fred (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Vol. 5 (2nd ed.). Detroit: Macmillan Reference 2007, pp. 369
- Berenbaum, Michael; Skolnik, Fred (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Vol. 1-22 (2nd ed.). Detroit: Macmillan Reference 2007, selected chapters

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## RECOMMENDED READINGS

The recommended reading(s) and/or text(s) for this course are below. These recommended readings are not mandatory, but they will assist you with research and understanding course content.

- Bauer, Yehuda. *Out of the Ashes, The Impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989
- Beller, Steven. "The Hilsner Affair: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism and the Individual in the Habsburg Monarchy at the Turn of the Century" in: Pynsent, R.B. (eds) T. G. Masaryk (1850–1937). *Studies in Russia and East Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989, pp. 52-76
- Brenner, Michael. *A Short History of the Jews*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2010
- Bronek, Jan. *Jewish Prague*. Prague: Eminent, 2012
- Burton, Richard. *Prague, A Cultural History*, Northampton: Interlink, 2003
- Čapková, Kateřina. *Czechs, Germans, Jews – Where is the Difference? The Complexity of National Identities of Bohemian Jews, 1918-1938*, in: *Bohemia*, 46, no. 1 (2005), pp. 7-14.
- Chazan, Robert. *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010
- Herzl Theodor. *A Solution of the Jewish Question/ Abad Haam: The First Zionist Congress*, in: Paul Mendes-Flohr/Jehuda Reinharz (ed.): *The Jew in the Modern World*. New York 1995, 533-538; 541-543
- Judt, Tony. "From the House of the Dead. An essay on Modern European Memory," in *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. Penguin Books, New York, 2006
- Kieval, Hillel J. *Languages of Community, The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000
- Kieval, Hillel J. *Negotiating Czechoslovakia. The Challenges of Jewish Citizenship in a Multiethnic Nation-State*, in: Richard I. Cohen et al. (ed.): *Insiders and Outsiders. Dilemmas of East European Jewry*. Oxford/Portland 2010, pp. 103-119.
- Kochan, Lionel. *Making of Western Jewry 1600-1819*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. (Chapter 6: Prague and Bohemia, From Recovery to Reduction and Chapter 9: Expulsion from Prague)
- Kovtun, George J. *Masaryk & America : testimony of a relationship*, Washington, D.C. : Library of Congress : For sale by the Supt. of Documents, U.S. G.P.O., 1988.
- Mendelsohn, Ezra. *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983
- Moses, Stéphane a. Wisking-Elper, Ora. *Gershom Scholem's Reading of Kafka: Literary Criticism and Kabbalah*, in: *New German Critique*, No. 77, Special Issue on German-Jewish Religious Thought, 1999, pp. 149-167
- Pappenheim, Bertha. *The Jewish Woman*, in: Paul Mendes-Flohr/Jehuda Reinharz (ed.): *The Jew in the Modern World*. New York 1995, pp. 287-289.
- Rothkirchen, Livia. *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005
- Scholem, Gershom. *Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism*, Jerusalem: Schocken Publishing House, 1941
- Segal, Eliezer. *Introducing Judaism*. New York: Routledge, 2009
- Strack, Hermann, Stemberger Gunter, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Frederick: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1997
- Webber, Jonathan. *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*. Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 1994
- Selected materials: Jewish Museum in Prague - to be distributed by instructor

## KEY RESOURCES

*The instructor reserves the right to make changes or modifications to this syllabus as needed*

In order to ensure your success abroad, CEA CAPA has provided the academic resources listed below.

- **UNH Online Library:** As a CEA CAPA student, you will be given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH). You may access the UNH online library [here](#). You must comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.
- **CEA CAPA Classroom – Moodle**

**COURSE CALENDAR**  
*The Jewish Experience in Prague*

SESSION	TOPICS	ACTIVITY	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Course Introduction</b> Review Syllabus, Classroom Policies <i>Field Study to the Old Town &amp; Old-New Synagogue</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Course Overview Lecture &amp; Discussion <i>Field Study: Old Town &amp; Old-New Synagogue</i></p>	<p><b>Readings:</b> Review syllabus No oral presentations</p>
2	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Medieval Jewish Life in Bohemia and Moravia</b> Introduction: History of the Jewish People from Biblical Times to Medieval Era</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Lecture &amp; Discussion</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b> Řehák, <i>Mysterious Bond</i>, pp. 6-31 Oral presentation due</p>
3	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jewish Religion in the Czech Lands</b> Fundamental Jewish Religious Texts and Traditions: Torah, Midrash, Talmud, Siddur, Jewish Festivals</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Lecture &amp; Discussion</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b> <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>, selected chapters Oral presentation due</p>
4	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Golden Age of Jews of Prague</b> Golden Age of Rudolf II, Maharal of Prague, The Idea of the Golem</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Lecture &amp; Discussion</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b> Kieval, <i>Pursuing the Golem</i>, pp. 1-23 Scholem, <i>The Idea of the Golem</i>, pp. 158-204 Oral presentation due</p>
5	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jewish Quarter in Prague</b> <i>Field Study to the Jewish Quarter</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Field Study: Jewish Quarter Josefov</i></p>	<p><b>Readings:</b> Rybár, <i>Jewish Prague Guide</i>, selected chapters No oral presentations</p>
6	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Religious Freedoms, Integration &amp; Antisemitism in Austria-Hungary</b> Maria Teresa &amp; Joseph II, Franz Kafka, Jewish Identity</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Lecture &amp; Discussion</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b> Kafka, <i>A Report for An Academy</i>, pp. 1-7 Oral presentation due</p>
7	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jewish Life in Masaryk's Czechoslovakia</b> Tomas G. Masaryk and Jews, Jiří Langer</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Lecture &amp; Discussion <i>Midterm Exam Review</i></p>	<p><b>Readings:</b> Yahil, <i>Czechoslovakia</i>, pp. 353-356 Řehák, <i>Mysterious Bond</i>, pp. 46-51 Langer, <i>Nine Gates</i>, chap. 1 &amp; intro. Oral presentation due</p>

8	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b> <i>Film Screening: The Cremator</i>		
9	<b>Holocaust</b> Jews during Protectorate of Bohemia & Moravia <i>Meeting with Holocaust Survivor</i>	Lecture & Discussion <i>Meeting with Holocaust Survivor</i>	<b>Readings:</b> Bauer, <i>Rethinking the Holocaust</i> , pp. 14-67 Oral presentation due
10	<b>Jews after 1945 &amp; during Communism</b> Czechoslovak Military Help <i>Documentary Screening Prague Between Star and a Crescent (1999)</i>	Lecture & Discussion <i>Documentary Screening</i>	<b>Readings:</b> Snyder, <i>Bloodlands</i> , pp. 5-15; 320-355 Heitlinger, <i>In the Shadows</i> , pp. 51-69 Oral presentation due
11	<b>Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Jewish Thought in Central Europe</b>	Lecture & Discussion	<b>Readings:</b> Scholem, <i>Kabbalah</i> , pp. 586-677 (readings will be divided among the students) Oral presentation due
12	<b>Czech Diplomacy and Jews</b> <i>Field Study to the Czernin Palace</i>	Lecture & Discussion <i>Field Study to the Czernin Palace</i>	<b>Readings:</b> Řehák, <i>Mysterious Bond</i> , pp. 58-71 No oral presentations
13	<b>Reconstruction of Jewish Identity after 1989</b> <i>Field Study to the Jewish Community</i>	Lecture & Discussion <i>Field Study to the Jewish Community</i>	<b>Readings:</b> Gruber, Jelinek, <i>Czech Republic</i> , p. 369 No oral presentations <b>Research Paper due</b>
14	<b>Jews and Non-Jews in Czech Lands and Interfaith Dialogue</b> <i>Course Review</i>	Lecture & Discussion Concluding Discussion <i>Course Review</i>	Review for final exam Oral presentation due
15	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> <i>Research Paper presentations</i>		

## **SECTION III: CEA CAPA Academic Policies**

To see all CEA CAPA academic policies outlined, please follow the following links. Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including the academic policies outlined online. CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time.

Class & Instructor Policies can be found [here](#)

General Academic Policies can be found [here](#)