

HIS/JDS 226
Modern Jewish History: Dilemmas of Difference

Satisfies: GLO, SBS

Thematic Categories: "Arts, Ideas & Culture,"
"Law, Politics & Social Justice," "Race, Religion, Gender & Sexualities"

Tu/Thurs 11:30 AM - 12:50 PM

Professor Eric Miller

This course examines the history of the Jews in the West from the decline of the Roman Empire (5th century) to the beginning of the modern period (18th century). Our focus will begin in the Middle East and Babylonia with the consolidation of rabbinic writings and authority which become a normative form of Judaism. Attention will be given to the rise of growth of European (Ashkenazi) Jewish settlement within a Christian world. We will also examine the parallel history of the Jews of the East under Islam, and the convergence of the two in Muslim and Christian Spain (Sepharad). Lectures and discussions focus on the cultural and intellectual exchanges that took place between Jews and the societies in which they lived, as well as on the changing social, political, legal, and economic roles of Jews. We will analyze the various religious movements and concepts that developed within the Jewish world, examining the social and religious context that give rise to their diversity, as well as their lasting impact on later (modern) forms of Judaism. Classes are in lecture format interspersed with frequent discussion of readings and ideas, along with a mid-term, final exam, and two research papers.