**Course Title:** Facing Antisemitism: Politics, Culture and History

**Course Code:** SSHC500N0

**Subject Area:** History and Social Sciences

**Class Venue:** Birkbeck, University of London

**Module Taught by:**
- Professor David Feldman, Professor of History, Director of the Pears Institute for the study of Antisemitism
- Dr Ben Gidley, Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychosocial Studies
- Dr Brendan McGeever, Lecturer, Department of Psychosocial Studies

**Course Description**

The persistence of antisemitism, both in Britain and globally, is clear for all to see. It manifests in hate crime figures, in opinion surveys, on social media, in political discourse and in murderous attacks on Jewish targets. At the same time, antisemitism provokes controversy. In Britain, since 2015, this controversy has most often focussed on the Labour Party and the Left more broadly. These debates provoke urgent questions that should concern us all. What is antisemitism? How can we recognise and define it? How widespread is it? Where does it come from? Why does it persist? How does antisemitism arise within different political and religious contexts? Is there a difference between anti-Zionism and antisemitism? What is the relationship, in theory and in practice, between anti-racism and opposition to antisemitism?

Taught over three two-hour sessions by acknowledged experts, this academic short course draws on information and concepts from the social sciences and history to enable students to address these questions.

**Entry Requirements**

This is a non-certificated, stand-alone, short course. There are no formal entry requirements. It is open to anyone with an interest in the subject. No formal qualifications or previous knowledge of the subject is required; however, background reading will prove beneficial: a recommended reading list will be provided.

**Aims and Outcomes**

By the end of the course you should have

- A basic knowledge and understanding of the Jewish population in Britain today
- Knowledge and understanding of the main contemporary and historical manifestations of antisemitism, with particular reference to prejudice, representations, discrimination and violence
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the different approaches to measuring antisemitism
 Knowledge of the impact of antisemitism on Jewish people
 Knowledge of the principal cultural and political locations of antisemitism across time
 An understanding of the relationship between anti-racism and opposition to antisemitism across time
 An understanding of the relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism
 Understanding of the ways antisemitism is defined today
 Knowledge and concepts to make judgements about antisemitism.

Course Syllabus

SESSION 1: ‘MAPPING THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM’

This first session explores antisemitism today and its different manifestations. This includes a brief history and sociology of UK Jews to contextualise the nature and experience of contemporary antisemitism. We examine the different ways of tracking antisemitism including quantitative measures such as attitudes, incidents and perceptions and qualitative indicators that focus on discrimination and discourse. We look at the perpetrators of antisemitism and the social groups and political camps where antisemitic attitudes are more prevalent than in the population as a whole. The session emphasises the need for care when dealing with ‘facts’ and figures. We then turn to the overall effects of antisemitism on Jews, from anxiety and alienation in everyday life, to physical violence.

SESSION 2: ‘THE SOURCES OF ANTISEMITISM’

This second session examines the sources of antisemitism. It emphasises that antisemitism does not have a single political home. The session attends to the tradition of Christian anti-Judaism that generated long-lasting myths such as the blood libel and the stereotype of the Jewish money-lender. It surveys antisemitism as it developed on the political right across Europe, from the reaction against the French Revolution through Fascist antisemitism to the rise of the Alt Right in the present day. The session examines antisemitism within the Left and investigates how this form of racism has sometimes found a home within socialist political movements. Finally, the session examines the manifestations and sources of antisemitism among diverse Muslim populations both globally and in Britain.

SESSION 3: ‘FACING ANTISEMITISM: CONTEXTS AND ASSESSMENTS’

The third and final session assesses the significance of different contexts for understanding antisemitism. It explores the changing place of opposition to antisemitism within the anti-racist movement and asks why it sometimes struggles to see Jews among the victims of racism. The session examines the relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, and the importance of instruments such as the IHRA definition of antisemitism and the Equality Act 2010 for defining and combatting antisemitism. Finally, the session looks at the multiple manifestations of antisemitism across Europe today.

Readings for classes and a list for further reading will be available on Moodle from 1 August 2019.