Encounter with the West:
Modernization and Secularization of the Jews in Islamic lands (XIXth-XXth centuries)

Prof. Esther Benbassa

This course will examine the process of modernization in which Jews of the Islamic lands were engaged during the XIXth and XXth centuries not only as a consequence of the growing influence of the West in these regions (via direct or indirect colonisation) but also as a result of the voluntarist policy of local Jewish elites. Case studies will include the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans and North Africa. A special attention will be devoted to the deep transformation and secularization of Jewish culture in these countries.

1. Wednesday, September 3: The beginnings of Westernization in the Ottoman Empire and its impact on Sephardi Communities


2. Monday, September 8: Jewish life in Islamic lands before the colonisation


3. Wednesday, September 10: French colonization in North Africa and the Jews


4. Monday, September 15: How the European Jewish elite discovered the Jews of Islamic Lands in the era of Orientalism


5. Wednesday, September 17: The role of European Jewish philanthropy in the Westernization of the Jews of Islamic Lands. The impact of the Western model of education.


6. Monday, September 22: Entering the era of modernization: internal dynamics


7. Wednesday, September 24: The Décret Crémieux: how Algerian Jews became French citizens


8. Monday, September 29: Social, economic and cultural changes inside the communities

• David Biale, *op.cit.* pp. 945-969.

9. Wednesday, October 1st: Jews and Muslims in the new context

• Michel Abitbol, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-345.
• N. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands, op.cit.*, pp. 47-64.

10. Monday, October 6: Paths of politization


11-12. Wednesday, October 8 and Wednesday October 15: The Holocaust and Migrations

• J. Beinin, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-178.


• Ella Shohat, "The Invention of the Mizrahim", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, n° 1 (Autumn 1999), pp. 5-20.


14. Wednesday, October 22 Jews and Arabs in Europe at the time of the Second Intifada

Term papers due


Course Requirements

Class attendance and active participation in discussion.
Oral presentation of one session’s reading.
Final paper: 15-20 pages research paper in English on individual topics. You should make an appointment to see me before October 1st to discuss your chosen topic.

Books to purchase


