

Thinking Historically

HIS 195/POL 150 *Antisemitism and the Politics of Prejudice: Religion, Israel, & U.S. Foreign Policy* will fulfill the “Thinking Historically” component of the Westmont General Education curriculum.

Following the course, students will be able to:

1. *Read primary sources historically – asking and answering basic questions about historical sources (historical context, author, audience, genre); drawing historical conclusions from the sources and assessing their reliability and usefulness; and reflecting on how their own background shapes their interpretation.*

Throughout the semester, students will read and work critically with primary and secondary historical texts. Each lecture will be framed by primary source material specifically selected for their contrasting voices, different viewpoints, and unique perspectives. These sources, including Martin Luther’s *On the Jews and their Lies*, the plagiarized forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Émile Zola’s open letter *J’Accuse!*, and Karl Marx’s essay “On the Jewish Question,” among others, will also form the basis of student-led in-class discussions on how the source relates to the broader class theme and lecture.

Students will also evaluate primary and secondary sources and appropriately integrate them into their research. They will complete a primary source-based essay during the semester (choosing from several primary source options), and will be asked to use a range of secondary sources to contextualize their primary source selection. This essay, which will be evaluated based on the students’ abilities to analyze historical context, author bias, genre, and intended audience, will be worth 15% of their grade.

By using both primary and secondary sources in each lecture, class discussions, and their written assignments, students will be able to recognize and understand source subjectivity and its contribution to a more balanced historical perspective.

2. *Appreciate the contextuality of historical narrative and interpretation – understanding that the ways in which historians tell the story is shaped by their context (intellectual, social, etc.) and recognizing that interpretations of history are subject to change; they will understand the term “historiography” and its implications.*

By studying the history of one type of prejudice—antisemitism—through the use of primary sources, each class will discuss individual interpretations, multiple viewpoints, and competing memories of past events. Analyzing these competing narratives (both by eye witnesses and historians) will enable students to challenge previous notions of the past as simply black and white and to grasp the complex process of historical change. Students will also study the methods historians use in Antisemitism Studies and the debates which currently exist within the historiography. For instance, in the class “Socio-

and Robert Fine's and Philip Spencer

students will represent a country

often 'Christian') antisemitism is still the main source of global antisemitism. Demonizing the state of Israel or delegitimizing the Jewish people (because of Israeli government policies) is quickly becoming a close second. As Christ followers equipped with humility and a willingness to learn, students will be reminded of their responsibility to be both truth seekers and knowledge bearers—to complicate set narratives and ask questions—as they become the next generation of Christian educators and enactors of justice in the world.