Modern Diaspora History Syllabus

Elective Course Description

The Jewish Diaspora refers to the 'dispersal' of the Jewish people from their original homeland in what is now Israel, and dates back broadly to the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE/AD. Since then, the Jewish people have wandered through empires and nations, finding homes and developing diverse cultures and traditions, all the while surviving through consistent persecution. Today, we can find organized Jewish communities thriving in over 70 countries worldwide, each with a different culture, historical narrative and community structure, yet exhibiting consistent elements that showcase the power of our Jewish tradition. In this Elective, we will take a journey through modern Diaspora history across the world as we seek to understand where we came from, where we are today, and where we may be going as a Jewish people.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the diversity that exists within the world's Jewish communities
- To develop a more holistic perspective on Jewish culture and history
- To be aware of the differences between Sephardi and Ashkenazi culture and history
- To understand and respect how the formation of Israel has impacted the Diaspora
- To question our assumptions about who Jewish people are
- To learn details about the history and present day lives of lesser-known communities

Units

1. Where in the World are All the Jews? Part 1
2. Sephardi Journeys
3. Ashkenazi Journeys
4. The Impact of Israel
5. Deep Dive into Turkey
6. Where in the World are All the Jews? Part 2

Unit 1: Where in the World are All the Jews? Part 1

Literally, where are we? This introductory Unit will leave you knowledgeable about the whereabouts of the majority of the world's Jews today, what these diverse communities look like, and will leave you eager to jet off to communities worldwide the moment the Unit ends. Inspiration, information and entertainment are guaranteed; flight tickets are not.

Unit 2: Sephardi Journeys

Now we have the foundations built by understanding where Jewish people are today, we take a step back in time to understand the formation of the group known as Sephardi Jews. We look at how this identity was formed, where they went and how this culture manifests itself today.

Unit 3: Ashkenazi Journeys

We continue our journey through modern Diaspora history with an analysis of the group known as

Ashkenazi Jews. We look at how these communities developed over time, the challenges they faced and their significance today.

Unit 4: The Impact of Israel

The Diaspora is defined as those outside of a stated homeland; for the Jews, this manifests itself as Israel. To understand modern Diaspora history and the communities of today, it is essential to understand the impact the formation of Israel in 1948 had on these communities and continues to have today – unsurprising given nearly half the world's Jewish population now lives there!

Unit 5: Deep Dive into Turkey

Jewish food = bagels and salt beef? The Turkish community would beg to differ. Numbering 15,000, Jewish life in Turkey is going strong with many active synagogues, weekly weddings and a large Jewish Day School. But with increasing emigration and a nation in economic turmoil, Turkish Jews face a new crossroads in their rich 500 year Sephardic history: hold with tradition, or progress with new options? This case study explores a most intriguing Jewish community.

Unit 6: Where in the World are All the Jews? Part 2

Our journey through time and around the world ends here, as we discover two of the lesser known Jewish communities, analyzing both their history and their present. Featuring India and China, this final Unit proves once and for all that size really doesn't matter.

Who am I?

Joey is a Jew of Yemeni descent from London, England. He has spent much of the last decade out of the city since gaining his Masters Degree in International Relations, travelling to over 50 countries including two years in Turkey as the Senior Fieldworker for the JDC. He is currently the Director of Abroad Experiences for KAHAL Abroad, where he leads a team who support thousands of people in connecting with Jewish experiences worldwide when they travel, work or study abroad. He is also the 2020 Program Chair for Limmud, the Schusterman ROI Representative for the UK and a graduate of the m2 Senior Educator's Cohort. As a Layleader in the British community, he runs educational and leadership development programs in the UK, the US and across Europe.