The Jewish Gangster in America
Professor Robert Rockaway
Spring Semester 2020

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is a survey of the life and crimes of major Jewish gangsters in the United States from the end of the 19th century to the mid-20th century. The course consists of lectures, readings, and documentary films that relate to the lives of these men, their motivations for engaging in a life of crime, their criminal activities, and their relationship with their families, the Jewish community, and the government.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are expected to attend the lectures and do the assigned readings.

Research Paper:

Each student will be required to write a research paper on a subject, theme, topic or period covered in the lectures, reading materials, and documentary films. The paper should be double spaced, no more than 5-8 pages in length, and contain source notes. During the first three weeks of class, students must inform me in person or by e-mail about the subject of their paper and the sources they intend to use. The paper must be turned in on or before the last week of class. Further details about the paper will be given in class.

The final grade is based on class attendance and participation, the mid-semester exam, and the research paper. Note: All Students are allowed three (3) unexcused absences. Students who have more than three unexcused absences will have points deducted from their final grade.

Grade Breakdown
Attendance and participation: 10%
Mid-semester exam: 40%
Research paper: 50%

The following books are available in paperback and may be purchased, but you are not required to do so:

Albert Fried, The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Gangster in America (1980)
I placed these books as well as others dealing with Jews and organized crime on reserve for this class in the Melman Library of Jewish history in the Carter Building next to the International Student office. These books can only be read or photo copied in the library.

**WEEK, TOPICS, and READINGS**

1. Introduction and description of course

**Overview of Jewish Criminality**

**Reading:**
Joel Slonim, "The Jewish Gangster," *The Reflex* 3 (July 1928), 36-41

2. The Jews in the United States before 1914

**Reading**

**Jewish Criminality and Gangsterism in America before-1914**

**Documents:**
Thomas Byrnes, *1886: Professional Criminals of America*: David Goldstein, #30; Abe Greeenthal, #152; Herman Greenshal, #153; Julius Klein, #191; Michael Kurtz, #80; George Levy, #185; Frank Lowenthal, #182; Emmanuel Marks, #187; Albert Wise, #203

3. PURIM VACATION DAY (March 10)

**Jews and Crime in New York City before World War I**

**Reading**

4. Prohibition in America, 1919-1933

**Document:** “18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution”

**Prohibition in America**

**Documentary Film:** Ken Burns, *Prohibition*, part 2

5. American Jewry in the 1920s

**Reading:**
Sorin, 179-193

**Prohibition in New York City, 1920-1933**

**Reading:**
Joselit, *Our Gang*, 140-156
6. A Rogue's Gallery of New York's Prohibition Era Jewish and Italian Mobsters

**Reading:**

**MID-SEMESTER EXAM (APRIL 1)**

**PASSOVER VACATION** (April 5-April 18)

7. Prohibition in America II

**Documentary film:** Ken Burns, *Prohibition*, part 3

Prohibition: The East Coast (Newark, Philadelphia, Boston)

**Reading:**

8. Prohibition: The American Midwest (Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Minneapolis-St. Paul)

**Required Reading:**

**INDEPENDENCE DAY (APRIL 29)**

9. Discussion of Jake "Greasy Thumb" Guzik, (Chicago); Moe Dalitz (Cleveland), Alex "Shondor" Birns (Cleveland), Isidore "Kid Cann" Blumenfeld (Minneapolis), Davey Berman (Minneapolis), Leon Gleckman (St. Paul, Minnesota)

Perils and Pitfalls of the Gangster Life

**Required Reading:**

10 The Family Came First

**Required Reading:**
Rockaway, Ibid., 182-219.

**Document**
Jake Guzik, letter from prison

Defenders of Their People

**Required Reading:**
Rockaway, "Gangsters Against the Nazis," *Tablet Magazine* (July 18, 2018).
"Gangsters for Zion," *Tablet Magazine* (April 19, 2018)
TAU International Academic Guidelines

Rules and Respectful Behavior
- No cell phones permitted in class unless approved by instructor for use
- Tardiness to class is not permitted
- As our courses bring together students from many different styles of learning and from a wide variety of home institutions, we ask that students remain respectful to and patient with fellow classmates at all time as some students may be more familiar with certain course material or procedures than others.

Learning Accommodations
In accordance to University guidelines, students with learning disabilities or accommodation requests must submit official documentation from their home country/university (translated into English by notary) to TAU International in advance of arrival describing in detail any specific needs they have. Students must also bring a copy of this documentation with them on-site and give it to their faculty on the first day of class while introducing themselves so that the faculty know who they are and what sorts of needs they may have. Without official documentation, TAU may not be able to honor accommodation support. With supporting documentation, TAU International and its faculty cannot guarantee that all accommodations received at the home school can be similarly met at TAU but certainly does the best it can to make any suitable accommodations possible. For example, TAU is usually not able to offer note-taking services in English or advance viewing of classroom presentations, exams, or assignments. It may be an option to provide a student with additional tutoring or support outside the classroom as needed. Students should be aware that this additional support cannot be guaranteed and is based on teacher availability in the subject as well as the specific student level. If available, the cost of additional tutoring or support will be the sole responsibility of the student.

In-class Exams
TAU does not permit, under any circumstances, taking any in-class (including mid or final) exams early or later than the scheduled exam day. When selecting courses, it is thus very important to note if there is an in-class midterm or final exam as this date/exam cannot be changed. It is also the student’s responsibility to clarify exam dates with the professors at the beginning of a course, with the understanding that not all exam dates can be decided up front as it can sometimes depend on the pace of the course and class learning. It is the student responsibility to plan to be present for all courses including the final day of class for this reason. Early departures from the program are not approved, nor are early or exception in-class exams.

TAU International Absence Policy
Attendance is mandatory in all of the courses including Hebrew Ulpan. Faculty can and will take attendance regularly. Missing classes will be reflected in the final grade of the course. Up to three justified and properly documented absences from classes may be accepted (for example: emergency matter or illness, both of which will require a doctor’s note). Such cases of absence should be reported to the faculty immediately and again, a doctor’s note is required. Teachers are entitled to treat any absence without documentation as unexcused. Some of our summer courses
such as the Internship Seminar require more practical in-class work; thus, attendance policies may be stricter in these cases and students then must adhere to the stricter attendance policy as outlined by the faculty/syllabus.

Students are required to arrive on time for classes. Teachers are entitled to treat any single case of lateness and/or repeated lateness as an unjustified absence.

Please note that according to official TAU Academic Policy, if a student's behavior or attendance during the summer is disagreeable his/her course and program participation may be cancelled at the discretion of TAU with no due refund.

**Students are responsible for reading and adhering to the policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook posted here at all times.**