

# NHC 2016 Course Proposal Submission Form

<b>Submission Date</b>	2015-12-20 16:01:08
<b>Applicant #1 Full Name</b>	Liora Halperin
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Preferred Phone Number</b>	
<b>Skype or Google+ Name (specify the name and the service)</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>How many times have you attended the NHC Summer Institute?</b>	5 to 9 times
<b>Please provide a brief bio and description of your teaching style (intended for the Course Committee). If you have taught at the NHC or other retreats or events before, tell us what you most recently taught, where, and when, as well as what you took from the experience.</b>	<p>I am an Assistant Professor of History and Jewish Studies and the Endowed Professor in Israel/Palestine Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder, where I teach classes about Jewish history and the history of Israel/Palestine. I have also taught in Jewish community and adult education settings near my home in Boulder and around the country, including at the Wexner Heritage Program in 2014 (in Dallas) and 2015 (in Denver), the Boulder JCC, and synagogues in various cities. I attended the Havurah Institute between 2001 and 2006 and is excited to be coming back as a teacher for the second time and teaching a class on her own for the first time (after co-teaching a successful and well-enrolled course with Sarah Beller in 2015 about Israel/Palestine).</p> <p>I organize my teaching around reading of texts in hevrutah interspersed with group discussion, group conversations, and thought exercises like journaling and writing ideas on sheets of paper on the wall. The texts to be discussed (usually excerpted from their original length) are modern historical (and in some cases contemporary) texts, texts that we can read critically and in context and which can provoke conversations about interpretation and meaning. I might begin with some overview that helps give people the context they need to read the texts, and gives participants questions to think about as they work in hevrutah or groups.</p> <p>My experience teaching with Sarah Beller at the NHC last year made clear to me how important it is to weave together historical texts with personal reflections and discussion, assuming that all text study is somehow personal and all insights about the past have implications for the present. As the descriptions of each session show, we will be continually be moving back and forth between historical and personal questions.</p> <p>In this class, I will blend together discussions about ourselves, our lives, and our experiences, with inquiries into provocative historical texts. I focus on helping participants get into the mindset of the people who lived at the time the historical texts were written, while creating space for seeing how insights into the past can trigger or provoke thoughts about the present and how insights about the present affect the way we approach history.</p>

**Please provide a brief bio (50-100 words) that will appear on the NHC website if your course is offered.**

Liora is an Assistant Professor of History and Jewish Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder where she also holds a professorship in Israel/Palestine Studies, the only so-named position in the country. Liora teaches Jewish History and the history of Israel/Palestine in both university and community settings and excited to be coming back to the NHC this summer to teach her own course after co-teaching a course last summer.

**Are you applying to present this course with another teacher?**

No

**Course Title**

Beyond Ashkenazim: Jews, Race, and Ethnicity, Past and Present

**Course Description**

Most American Jews are of Ashkenazi (Central-East European) ancestry, look white by the current norms of American culture, and have family histories related to Jewish life in majority Christian cultures. But large parts of the world Jewish population are not Ashkenazi: 50% of Jews in Israel are of Sephardi or Mizrahi origin, more than 50% of Jews in France are non-Ashkenazi as well (mostly North African). These Jews often have darker skin, speak or spoke languages like Ladino and Judeo-Arabic, and/or have heritage and family legacies related to living under Islamic rule. What is the history of these communities? How did they develop under the multiethnic Ottoman Empire? How did their experiences change with the rise of Arab nationalism in Iraq, Algeria, Morocco, and elsewhere in the Middle East and the rise of Zionism in Europe and then elsewhere in the Jewish world? What is the place of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in the State of Israel and how has historical discrimination against them shaped the contours of Israeli politics? What does the existence of non-Ashkenazi Jews in the United States and beyond mean for our contemporary conversations about memories of the Holocaust, the politics of Israel/Palestine, white privilege, Islamophobia, and social justice?

**Course Categories**

Contemporary Issues  
History and Culture  
Text Study for Everyone

**Additional Information (prerequisites, books or materials to bring, materials fee, etc.)**

No prerequisites or materials

**Format**

Regular course (Four 1.5 hour sessions)

**Scheduling Preference**

Morning

## SESSION 1

### Session 1: Brothers and Sisters in the East

This session will begin with an introduction to Jewish ethnicity. What do we mean when we say that we or other Jews are Ashkenazi, Sephardi, or Mizrahi? Why might we use these terms (or decide not to use these terms) for ourselves or others? What associations do we have with members of these different Jewish groups?

In the remainder of this session, we'll talk about the complicated history of Ashkenazi-Sephardi-Mizrahi relations by discussing the Alliance Israelite Universelle, an organization founded in Paris in 1860 with the goal of bringing Western-style education to the Jews of the Ottoman Empire and North Africa, who were seen as backwards and in need of civilizing. When we read texts marking Eastern Jews as backwards, lacking, in need of improvement, do we sympathize with the texts? Do we critique the texts? When Jews seem to be asking like colonizers with a civilizing mission how do we think of them? How do these texts from the late 19th century resonate with our thoughts about foreign aid, community service, and ethnic solidarity today?

Sources may include:

A Rabbi of Istanbul Condemns the Teaching of European Languages (1858).

Alliance Israelite Universelle, "Appeal to all Israelites," (1860) and "The Alliance Israelite Universelle."

Yisshaq Ben Ya'is Halewi, "A Critique of Popular Moroccan Jewish Culture."

"General Instructions for Teachers," Alliance Israelite Universelle, (1903).

L. Gueron, "The Goal of Moral and Material Regeneration," (Tunis 1908).

M. Fresco, "The Survival of Judeo-Spanish: Constantinople," (1908).

## SESSION 2

### Session 2: The Rise and Fall of the Arab Jew

Over the course of less than half a century, Jews in Arab and Muslim lands of the Middle East went from being one of the most integrated Jewish populations in the world, fully participating in the language, culture, and politics of their host countries, to a group that left en masse, in the wake of both rising anti-Jewish sentiment and strong encouragement from the new State of Israel. At the core of this transformation was the twin rise of Arab nationalism and Zionism and growing beliefs among both local Arabs and Jews in Israel that all Jews were Zionists (even those who weren't).

What did it mean to be an "Arab Jew"? What did that look like culturally? How did Jews participate in local Arab nationalism and came to be seen as outcasts by these same nationalist movements? How did the rise of Zionism, originally a European Jewish phenomenon, resonate in different parts of the Arab world? As we think about this history today, how do realizations about the history of Jews in Arab lands change the way we think about Jewish identities and Jewish-Arab relations today?

Sources may include:

"An anti-Zionist Appeal from Istanbul" (1909).

"Our Duties as Jews and as Ottomans': An Ottoman Zionist Vision for the Future" (1909).

"A Debate on Zionism in the Ottoman Parliament," (1911).

Naim Kattan, "Speaking Judeo-Arabic in Mixed Company" (1940).

Yusuf Harun Zilkha, "Zionism Against Arabs and Jews" (1945-1946).

### SESSION 3

#### Session 3: Ashkenazim, Mizrahim, and Palestinian Arabs

The vast majority of Jews to leave the Arab world (Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, and beyond) came to Israel between 1948 and the early 1960s. Despite their great internal diversity, they were collectively regarded as “Mizrahim” (“Orientals”) and, testimony indicates, discriminated against relative to the large wave of Ashkenazi immigrants (many of them Holocaust survivors) entering Israel at this time. Mizrahi Jews, who were often housed in temporary tent camps and low quality housing, were also explicitly and implicitly asked to discard cultural markers that made them appear Arab, whether the Arabic language, or Arab clothing and customs. Over time, divisions between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim in Israel led to the groups taking distinct political positions, with Ashkenazim making up the bulk of the Labor party but Mizrahim flocking in large numbers to bringing the conservative Likud into power in 1977.

How does thinking about Jewish ethnicity complicate our discussions about Israel/Palestine? What does it mean that some Jews are (or were) also Arab? Does revealing divides among Jews within Israel change the way we think about Israel, Palestine, or our relationship to Israel/Palestine as American Jews?

Sources may include:

“Accusations of Discrimination Against Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in Israel” (1948)  
Jacqueline Shohet Kahanoff, “Bridge to the Oriental Immigrants” (1956)  
David Sitton, “A Call for Deepening ‘The Mizrahi Consciousness’ Among Us” (1958)  
Avraham Abbas, “From Ingathering to Integration” (1959)  
Ella Shohat, “Reflections by an Arab Jew” (2000s)

### SESSION 4

#### Session 4: Jews and Race

In recent years, Jews have gotten reengaged in race politics as allies of the Black Lives Matter movement and as opponents of Islamophobia standing in solidarity with American Muslims and Arabs. In the discussions about white privilege that have become an important part of these conversations, many of us have begun to ask: Are Jews White? Are Mizrahi Jews white? Does the existence of non-white Jews (whether Mizrahi Jews, Ethiopian Jews, Jews by choice and their descendants, and adopted children raised as Jews) change the dynamics of how we talk about Jews, race, and privilege? How do we disentangle Jewish ethnicity in the age of race politics?

Sources may include:

Matt Bar, “I’m Not White, I’m Jewish” (Song)  
Paul Kivel, “I’m not white, I’m Jewish. But I’m White”  
<http://academic.udayton.edu/Race/01race/white14.htm>  
Sigal Samuel, “I’m a Mizrahi Jew: Do I Count as a Person of Color?”  
<http://forward.com/opinion/318667/im-a-mizrahi-jew-do-i-count-as-a-person-of-color/>  
Comments on Ta-Nehisi Coates’ Blog about whether Jews are White--  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2009/06/you-can-not-win/19370/#article-comments>

**Will this course include some form of a presentation or performance to the Institute community?**

No

**Please provide any other information that you think we should have when considering this proposal. (This may include links to blogs or web sites, videos, reviews, music, images) or other resources about you or that you feel would assist the committee in making its decision. You may also send additional documents or files to [courses@havurah.org](mailto:courses@havurah.org). Please reference this application in your message.**

Much of the material from this course is drawn from a successful course on "The History of Jewish-Muslim Relations" that I taught at the University of Colorado Boulder in Fall 2015. This version of the course, in keeping with the NHC ethos that I love so much, will emphasize personal reflection, hevrotah discussion, and engagement with texts both on a historical and a personal level. It is certainly possible to modify the course if it seems that certain of the sessions are more appealing than others and there is a desire to expand those to occupy more time within the structure of the course.

More info about me: [www.liorahalperin.com](http://www.liorahalperin.com)

Mailing address listed above is good from January 1-June 30. If you need a mailing address for the period after June 30, please contact me by email to ask for it.