Jewish Poet Susskind von Trimberg (far right) shown wearing a Jewish hat (Codex Manesse, 14th century)

The History of European Antisemitism

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Lesson Objectives

1. Define antisemitism

2. Contextualize antisemitism's ancient beginnings

3. Define the 4 forms of antisemitism

   ○ explore the historical origins of these forms

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Key Terms

Land of Israel: a region in the eastern Mediterranean comprising the ancestral lands of the Jewish people in the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah

Judea: The name for the Jewish territory in the eastern Mediterranean from 323-135 BCE

Jews: Accurate group name for the Jewish people as an ethnic and religious group, from 722 BCE to the present day. The source of the English term "Jew" originates from the Hebrew word "Yehudi", meaning from the Kingdom of Judah, later called Judea until 70 CE.

Temple (in Jerusalem): a building reserved for sacred ritual and prayer; the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is the location of two temples that were the focus of ancient Jewish religious life - the First Temple (c. 10th century BCE-587 BCE) and the Second Temple (C. 516 BCE-70 CE)

ICS **Judaism:** monotheistic religion of the Jewish people

These key terms will help with comprehension of this topic.

Defining Antisemitism

Antisemitism: hatred, discrimination, fear, and prejudice against Jews - as individuals or as a group - based on age-old stereotypes and myths.

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There are many definitions of antisemitism, but they all come down to the same thing: Antisemitism is hatred, discrimination, fear, and prejudice against Jews as individuals or as a group, based on age-old stereotypes and myths.

Ancient World Views Jews as 'Other'

- **12th Century BCE:** Jews + Judaism originated in Land of Israel

- Difference in belief & religious practice set Jews apart; **viewed as "other"**
  - **Monotheism** (the belief in one God)

- **3rd Century BCE**: Hellenistic culture views Jewish customs, like the rejection of Greek gods, weekly Sabbath observance, and circumcision as confusing, barbaric, evil.

Alexander the Great, 356-323 BCE. By the age of 30, Alexander ruled an empire from Greece to India, spreading Greek culture all around the Mediterranean.

Jews and by extension - Judaism - originated around the 12th century BCE in the Land of Israel. Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions in the world. Monotheism was a big departure from the polytheistic beliefs that were prevalent in ancient times.

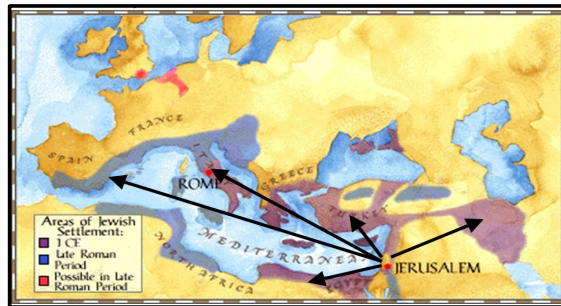## Jews Become a Diaspora

- **70 CE** Romans:
  - **destroyed** Jewish **temple** in Jerusalem
  - **Expelled Jews** from ancestral homeland
  - Rename Judea → **Syria Palaestina**
  - Effectively **cut off access to holiest site**

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Eventually, the Roman Empire became the dominant regional power in the Mediterranean world. Jews had lived peacefully, to an extent, throughout the Empire. However, in a major revolt from 66-70 CE, Jews clashed with Rome over control of Judea, with catastrophic results for the Jews. The Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, renamed the region of Judea "Syria Palaestina" after the Philistines (an ancient people that were historical enemies of the Jews), expelled and enslaved the Jewish inhabitants, and only allowed Jews into Jerusalem for 1 day per year.

Jewish Diaspora Furthers Jewish "Othering"

- Jews become **social and physical outsiders**

- Jewish well-being becomes dependent on societal tolerance

With the loss and exile from their homeland, Jews became a diaspora (a population that is scattered across regions which are separate from its geographic place of origin) making them literal outsiders and reinforcing the "others" status which endangered their lives. Now, not only were they social outsiders but also physical outsiders, reinforcing their status as the perpetual "other." This situation made life precarious for Jews, as their safety and well-being depended on the tolerance of others. While Jews were grappling with their status within the Roman Empire, at the same time, a new religion was developing and growing - Christianity. The Hellenizers' views on Jews would influence Christian thought.

Jesus and the Emergence of Christianity

- Historic Jesus of Nazareth was born a Jew and lived as a **practicing Jew** throughout his life

- After crucifixion by Romans, small movement grows around Jesus' oral teachings

- The first Christians **observed Jewish ritual law**
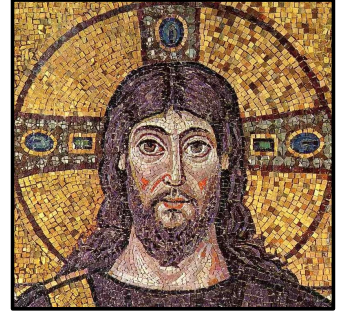
Christianity emerged in the first century CE and centered on the figure of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was Jewish and practiced Judaism throughout his life. During his life, and especially after his crucifixion by the Romans, around 30 CE, a small movement grew around Jesus' oral teachings. This group of very early Christians continued to observe Jewish ritual law. But, within two decades of Jesus' death, they began to separate from their Jewish roots.

Replacement Theology

- Christianity continues to distinguish itself from Judaism through **"replacement theology"**

- **Replacement theology** teaches that Judaism has been superseded or replaced

- Replacement theology has led to the belief that Jews are contemptible for not accepting Christianity
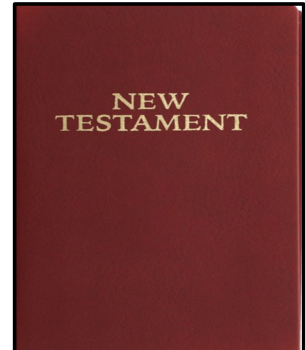
One of the primary ways early Christianity distinguished itself from Judaism was by stating that Jesus' death established a new kind of relationship between God and humanity, making the ritual requirements of Jewish law unnecessary. This belief is known as "replacement theology" which states that Judaism is no longer valid as a result of rejecting the "true" revelation. To reinforce this belief, Christians renamed the Hebrew Bible the "Old Testament," which implies that the Hebrew Bible has been replaced by something new and more accurate.

See-Think-Wonder

SEE: What do you see?

THINK: What do you think is going on?

WONDER: What does the image make you wonder?

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Ecclesia (Christianity) and Synogoga (Judaism)
Freiburg Germany Cathedral Entrance, c. 1300

Ecclesia and Synagoga (Church and Synagogue) are a pair of figures found in Medieval Christian art, personifying the Church (Christianity) and Synagogue (Judaism). They also demonstrate how replacement theology was depicted in art during this time. Even today, they often appear sculpted as large figures on either side of a church or cathedral entry.

Christianity Gains Political Power

- **380 CE:** Christianity becomes **official religion** and unifying force of the Roman empire

- Profound negative effects for Jews

- **438 CE Theodosian Code:** Rome codifies anti-Jewish laws

The Emblem of Christ Appearing to Constantine, by Peter Paul Rubens (1622)

As Christianity spread throughout the ancient Roman world, the social standing of Jews continued to deteriorate. In 380, Christianity was adopted as the official religion of Rome. Christianity was now part of the political power structure and a unifying element for the Empire, which had profound negative effects for Jews.

Judaism lost the legal protections it had once benefitted from and Rome imposed laws designed to limit Jews religiously and economically. In 438 CE, the Roman Empire codified its anti-Jewish laws in what is known as the "Theodosian Code."

image source: https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/102462

Roman Empire Codifies Anti-Jewish Laws

"**No Jew** – or no Samaritan who subscribes to neither religion – **shall obtain offices and dignities**... Indeed, we believe it sinful that the **enemies of the heavenly majesty** and of the Roman laws should become the executors of our laws – the administration of which they have **slyly obtained**... should **have the power to judge** or decide as they wish against Christians..., and thus, as it were, **insult our faith.**"

- A Law of Theodosius II, January 31, 438 CE

Emperor Theodosius II established anti-Jewish laws in 439 CE.

This is an excerpt of a law proclaimed by Theodosius II which demonstrates a few of the concrete laws against Jews in the late Roman Empire, as well as some of the attitudes that formed their basis.

Consider asking students the following:
- How are Jews being described/perceived by Roman law?
- Where do you see elements of a Christian theological view?
- What are Jews prohibited from doing?

This and other legal codes prevented Jews from many different practices which were acceptable for the rest of the population, such as owning slaves, building new synagogues, marrying Christians, and from giving testimony in court against non-Jews. Most of those laws were punishable by the death penalty.

Perpetuation of Rome's Anti-Jewish Laws

- At its height, the Roman Empire encompassed **almost the whole of Europe**

- Subsequent monarchs **adopted Roman legal codes** with embedded antisemitism

- Antisemitic laws and attitudes **continued from ancient world → to Medieval Europe**
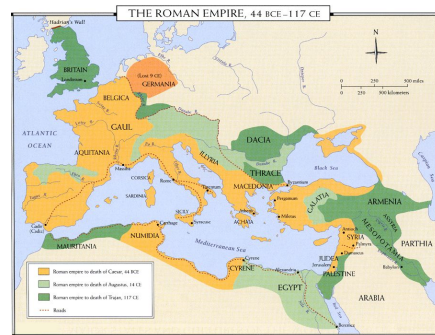
Boundaries of the Roman Empire at their height, 117 CE

Even after the Roman empire broke down in the 5th century, subsequent kingdoms and monarchs continued to use the legal codes of the Roman empire.

Forms of Antisemitism

1. Religious

2. Economic

3. Political

4. Racial

Poster for the infamous Nazi propaganda film, "The Eternal Jew"

The ancient origins of antisemitism laid the groundwork for the emergence and persistence of various forms of antisemitism throughout history. Those forms are: religious, economic, political, and racial.

Religious Antisemitism

Prejudice against Jews based on the perception that Jewish religious beliefs and practices are harmful or pose a threat to society.
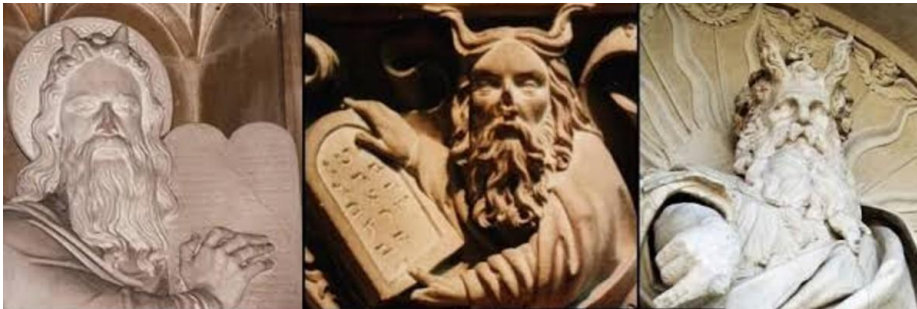
Depictions of Moses with horns in medieval Christian art

The first form of antisemitism is religious antisemitism. Religious antisemitism is prejudice against Jews based on the perception that Jewish religious beliefs and practices are harmful or pose a threat to society.

Christianity Depicts Jews as a Threat

- Jews accused of **deicide** (killing of a god)
  - Church taught that Jews, not the Roman authorities, killed Jesus

- Jews seen as threat to **Christian purity**

- Jewish **customs being seen as nefarious**

- Jews being **associated with the devil/evil**

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By the early medieval period, Christianity had emerged as the dominant force in both daily and political life. This power structure reinforced the belief that Christians were superior to Jews. As a result, Jews came to be seen as a potential threat to the social order. Depicting Jews as a threat became central to European culture. These various rationalizations were used to justify oppression and violence against Jews throughout history. With regards to the deicide charge, know that since World War II, various Christian denominations have taken steps to disavow this charge. For example, in 2011, Pope Benedict exonerated Jews from all blame for the crucifixion and death of Jesus in his book, Jesus of Nazareth.

The Crusades: 1096-1272

- Crusaders set off to free Jerusalem from Muslim control

- Jewish communities en route attacked

- Crusaders relied on **religious prejudice to justify violence** against Jews

"Taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders" by Emile Signol

One of the main historical examples of religious antisemitism was the Crusades. By the 11th century, as a result of becoming a diaspora, Jews had settled across many regions of Europe and the Middle East. In 1096, Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade to liberate the Holy Land from Muslim rule. Between 60,000-100,000 people answered the Pope's call and set off toward Jerusalem. Unfortunately, a number of Jewish communities lay en route to the Eastern Mediterranean and were consequently attacked by the crusaders. Although the Crusaders set off to fight the Muslims, they quickly incorporated attacking Jews as part of their mission, since Jews were just seen as people who rejected Jesus. As the Crusaders made their way through France and Germany, they burned synagogues, forced conversions, brutally massacred Jews, and incited anti-Jewish riots.

Painting: *Taking Of Jerusalem By The Crusaders, 15th July 1099,* by Emile Signol

The Crusades: 1096-1272

"Now it came to pass that as [the crusaders] passed through the towns where Jews dwelled, they said to one another: 'Look ...in our very midst, are the Jews—they whose forefathers murdered and crucified him [Jesus] for no reason. Let us first avenge ourselves on them and exterminate them from among the nations so that the name of Israel will no longer be remembered, or let them adopt our faith and acknowledge the offspring of promiscuity.'"

- Solomon bar Simson Chronicle, 1140

This is an excerpt from a primary source known as the "Solomon bar Simson Chronicle." The chronicle is a Jewish account of the First Crusade.

Consider asking students: What religious antisemitic notions did the crusaders use to justify their actions?

Identifying Markers & Segregation of Jews (13th Century)

- **Lateran Council IV** (1215): decreed Jews wear special dress (hats/yellow badges)

- Jewish quarters (a.k.a. **ghettos**): instituted to segregate Jews from rest of population

In the 13th century, Jews were marginalized not just through law but also through social restrictions that were based on the false idea that the Jews would corrupt Christians. For example, the Fourth Lateran Council, convened by Pope Innocent III in 1215 decreed that Jews must wear distinguishing clothing in order to ensure that a Christian does not accidentally marry a Jew. In parts of Germany, all Jews were required to wear cone-shaped hats. In other countries, they were required to wear yellow badges on their clothing to identify them as Jews (see images). This was almost 730 years before the Holocaust. It also became common practice for Jews to be forced to live in separate areas of towns, and excluded from all activities in mainstream society. These Jewish quarters - commonly referred to as 'ghettos' - were often gated and locked at night. The English word 'ghetto' is believed to be derived from the Italian word giotto, meaning "foundry", since the first Jewish quarter in Venice was near a foundry that once made canons.

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image of yellow badges: https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/germanness/ghis:image-231

Blood Libel Myth (Originated 12 Century)

- **Blood libel:** the false belief that Jews use human blood for religious rituals

- Jews blamed, tortured, and massacred based on false claims

- Accusations often focused on the Jewish holiday of Passover

A 1493 woodcut of the story of Simon of Trent (1472-1475), an Italian child whose death was blamed on the leaders of the city's Jewish community. Katz Ehrenthal Collection, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

During this time, Jewish religious customs were viewed as evil. An example of this is a myth is known as "blood libel", which is the false belief that Jews use Christians' blood for ritual purposes. This image depicts one of the most infamous blood libel cases - Simon of Trent. Simon was an Italian child born in 1472, and when he was a toddler, he disappeared. One of Trent's Jewish families was blamed for his disappearance. As a result, several of the town's prominent Jews were arrested and tortured until they confessed to the ritual murder of young Simon. Fifteen Jews were sentenced to death and burned at the stake. As this false notion continued to spread across Europe, Christians began to believe that blood from Christian children was needed as an ingredient in the making of matzah, a ritual bread which Jews eat during the holiday of Passover. The use of wine during the Passover meal also made Christians believe that blood was involved. Due to these beliefs, if a child went missing, it was often Jews who were blamed.

image: The woodcutting shown in this slide was first printed in a historical work called the Nuremberg Chronicle, published in that city about twenty years after the accusations were made.

Art Associating Jews with the Devil/Evil

- Due to high illiteracy, clergy **relied on visuals** to teach about non-believers

- Jews depicted with **devilish features** (horns, forked tail, talons)

- **Judensau** (German for "Jew's sow"): art motif portraying Jews engaging in derogatory interactions with pigs
  - pigs hold symbolic connotations of impurity and uncleanliness within Jewish culture

It was easy for Christians to believe these outlandish accusations about Jews, in part, because of the way Jews were depicted in the broader culture. For example, art played an important role during the Medieval period. Since most of the peasants could not read, they relied on sermons delivered by the clergy and visual representations to gain knowledge about their religion - including their perception of Jews. Jews were frequently depicted as evil figures - with devilish features, such as horns, talons, and a forked tail - reinforcing the negative association between Jews and the devil. Another popular motif, known as "Judensau" (Jew's sow), portrays Jews engaging in lewd interactions with pigs - an animal which holds symbolic connotations of impurity and uncleanliness within Jewish culture. The derogatory nature of the motif stems from religious prejudice and reinforces negative stereotypes concerning Jews.

Art Associating Jews with the Devil
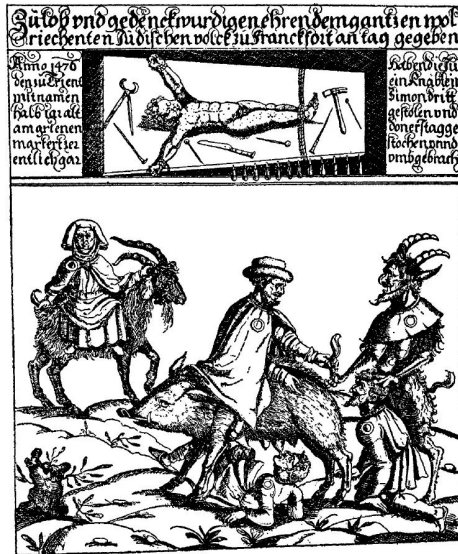
The Jews in Christian Art: An Illustrated History (New York: Continuum, 1996), 337.

This 15th century image is an example of both blood libel and Judensau associated.

Image: *15th century German depiction of Jews associated with the devil*

Teacher Content Warning: Please note that the visual content in this source contains more mature elements. Please consider if this is appropriate for the age group and setting in which you teach. If so, consider using the alternate image provided on the next slide.

Art Associating Jews with the Devil

The Jews in Christian Art: An Illustrated History (New York: Continuum, 1996), 337.
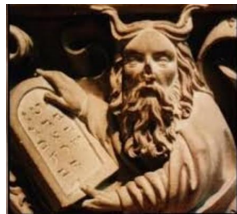
Depiction of Moses with horns in medieval Christian art

Anti-Semitic sculpture of a Jew sow, created around 1270, facade of the Knights' Collegiate Church of St. Peter, Bad Wimpfen, Baden-Wuerttemberg

Alternate image(s) option

Ask students what religious antisemitic notions are represented in these two medieval images?

- Simon of Trent, representing the myth of **blood libel**. You may notice that the boy is positioned in the manner of crucifixion, which also hearkens back to the **deicide claim** and its power
- The man suckling on the pig represents Judensau - this is at once both mocking/disdainful towards Jews, while also emphasizing their **perceived impurity**
- The sculptures of Moses with horns draws **direct connections between Jews and the Devil**

Pause for Reflection

- What is something that has stood out to you about religious antisemitism?

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Optional: Pause here and allow time to reflect

Economic Antisemitism

Belief that Jews perform harmful economic activities or that economic activities become harmful when performed by Jews.


Illuminated manuscript of Jewish money lenders in France at the time of Louis XI c. 1270

The second form of antisemitism is economic antisemitism, which is the belief that Jews perform harmful economic activities or that economic activities become harmful when performed by Jews, originated in the medieval period and exists still today.

How Jews Entered the Business of Moneylending

- **11th century**: significant restrictions on how Jews could earn a living

- Many Jews become **moneylenders** due to **Christian prohibition** on usury

- **Usury**: lending money at high interest rates

- Money lending and finance become **identified as "Jewish" occupations**
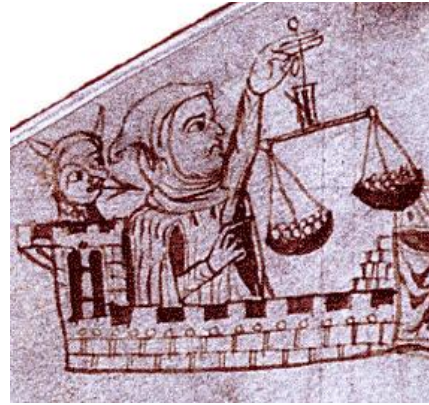
Depiction of Jews with demonic figures engaged in commerce, England, 1233

How did money lending and finance became identified as "Jewish" occupations? In the 11th century, many medieval European legal systems prohibited Jews from owning land, farming, or joining craft guilds. With few economic opportunities available, many Jews turned to marginalized occupations - such as tax/rent collecting and money lending. These jobs would be done on behalf of wealthier Christians - who would use Jews as middlemen in order to bypass religious laws against usury (lending money at interest). People in the society disliked paying taxes or being in debt, and the Christian population resented the Jewish debt collectors. Christian leadership furthered the resentment by positioning Jews as a scapegoat for the common person's financial troubles. Eventually usury - and finance more generally - became primarily identified as "Jewish practices."

Shylock: The Most Famous Jewish Moneylender

- Shylock characterized as **greedy**, **cruel**, willing to take advantage of others to achieve financial gain

- There were **no Jews in England** during Shakespeare's time

- "Greedy Jewish merchant" was already **entrenched stereotype**
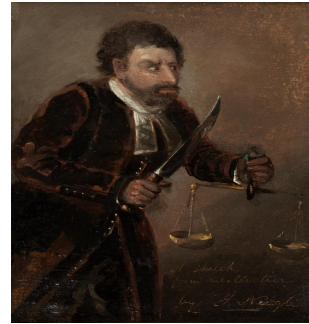
Portrayal of Shylock (1821)

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**INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING OPPORTUNITY WITH ELA:**

One of the most famous Jewish money lenders of all time is Shylock, the character in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. During the play, Shylock lends money to Antonio on the condition that he is paid with "a pound of flesh" if Antonio defaults on the loan. When Antonio fails to pay his debt, Shylock becomes enraged and attempts to get the pound of flesh he was promised. In the end, Shylock is forced to forfeit all of his possessions and convert to Christianity - a clear example of the play's endorsement of forced conversion and intolerance towards Judaism.

Note that there were no Jews living in England during Shakespeare's time - they had been expelled from England 300 years earlier. Nevertheless, Shakespeare knew his audience would understand the reference because the "greedy Jewish merchant" was such a powerful and already entrenched stereotype.

1821 Shylock portrait: Painting by John Neagle
https://www.pafa.org/museum/collection/item/edmund-kean-shylock

Ford and The Dearborn Independent
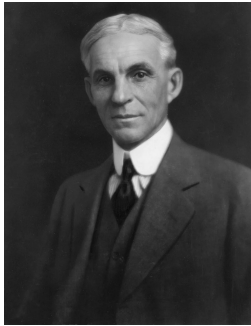
"Business is to [a Jew] a matter of goods and money, not of people. If you are in distress and suffering, the Jewish heart would have sympathy for you; but if your house were involved in the matter, you and your house would be two separate entities...the Jew would naturally find it difficult, in his theory of business, to humanize the house...he would say that it was only "business."

    – Henry Ford, *The International Jew*, Issue of June 5, 1920

Fears about Jewish economic activity have continued well into the modern period. For example Henry Ford - founder of the Ford motor company and one of the most famous industrialists of the modern age - was responsible for circulating virulently antisemitic material in his own newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*. The series of 91 articles drew on medieval antisemitic tropes, describing Jews as ruthless, money hungry and in control of "the world's finances." These articles were collected and published in a book entitled, *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*. The book became widely read, was translated into several languages, and served as a point of inspiration for later Nazi leadership. As a result, Ford's newspaper and subsequent book played a role in the rise of antisemitism in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

Pause for Reflection

- What is something that has stood out to you about economic antisemitism?

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Optional: Pause here and allow time to reflect

Political Antisemitism

Hatred, discrimination, and exclusion of Jews as a supposed political threat

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The third form of antisemitism is political antisemitism, which is: hatred, discrimination, and exclusion of Jews as a supposed political threat. This form of antisemitism often manifests through the belief that Jews wield excessive power and influence and that they exploit it to advance their own hidden political agenda.

The Jewish Question & Emancipation in Western & Central Europe (1789-1878)

- **Jewish question:** political status of Jews within a country
- **Jewish emancipation:** removal of political restrictions on Jews
- In return for emancipation, Jews had to **change aspects of cultural/communal life**
- **1791:** France first European country to emancipate Jews

An 1806 French print depicts Napoleon Bonaparte emancipating the Jews

The French Revolution declared that "liberty, fraternity, and equality" were for all French citizens. But, were Jews "really" French? Were they also entitled to political rights? This became known as the "Jewish Question." The "answer" to the Jewish question started to take shape shortly after the revolution. In 1791, spurred on by the ideals of the Enlightenment, the Jews of France were emancipated - meaning, political restrictions were removed and they could be seen as equals and participate fully in society. However, in return, Jews had to make changes to various aspects of their cultural and communal life. For example, Jews needed to stop using traditional Jewish names, register their religious communities with the government, and refrain from using Hebrew or Yiddish language in business transactions. France was the first European country to Emancipate its Jewish population (about 40,000 people). Within a century, French Jews emerged as eager, and in some cases, prominent citizens. Many other Western and Central European countries emancipated their Jewish populace in subsequent years.

Emancipation in Eastern Europe (1917)

- **Pale of settlement**: area of Russian empire where Jews were permitted to live

- **Pogroms:** antisemitic violent riot, usually government sanctioned

- **1917:** Jews of **Eastern Europe** finally emancipated

Figure 40. Five of the 49 victims of the Kishinev Pogroms in 1903. From a memorial album, J.N.U.L., Jerusalem.

The trend of emancipation was not the case for Jews of of Eastern Europe - particularly in Imperial Russia - where the majority of the European Jewish population lived. Before emancipation, the Tsarist government forced Jews to settle only in a certain area of Russia, the so called "pale of settlement." Most Jews lived in great poverty and only some members of the small Jewish upper class were permitted to live in Moscow or St. Petersburg. The discrimination against Jews increased during the 19th century. To divert popular discontent against difficult economic conditions and autocratic control, Russian authorities used Jews as a scapegoat and encouraged antisemitic violence and riots- known as pogroms. Many pogroms took place over the next 3 decades. As a result, about two million Jews left Russia between 1881 and 1914, mostly emigrating to the US. It was only with the Russian Revolution in 1917 that the Jews finally became emancipated in Eastern Europe.

Backlash to Emancipation (1878-1933)

- As Jews became professionally successful, this created **sense of resentment**
  - thought to be **"stealing jobs"** from Christians
  - **over-represented** in important fields

- As Jews became politically active, viewed as **proponents of radical/dangerous views**

- Despite efforts to assimilate, Jews viewed as **continued threat** to European society

It was only a few decades later, by the mid 19th century, that controversy around emancipation began to grow. As Jews became successful in new professions, this gave resentful members of society the impression that Jews were "stealing" jobs that were previously reserved for Christians or that Jews were being over-represented in important fields (such as law, medicine, and journalism). Additionally, as Jews gained opportunities to be more politically active, others saw Jews as being proponents of radical and dangerous views. And as successful as Jews were in acculturating to their host societies, they continued to stay connected to other Jews and retain aspects of their cultural identity. Critics claimed that Jews reaped the benefits of emancipation while still being a separate group - thereby continuing to be a threat from within to European society.

Emancipation and Assimilation: An Impossible Goal
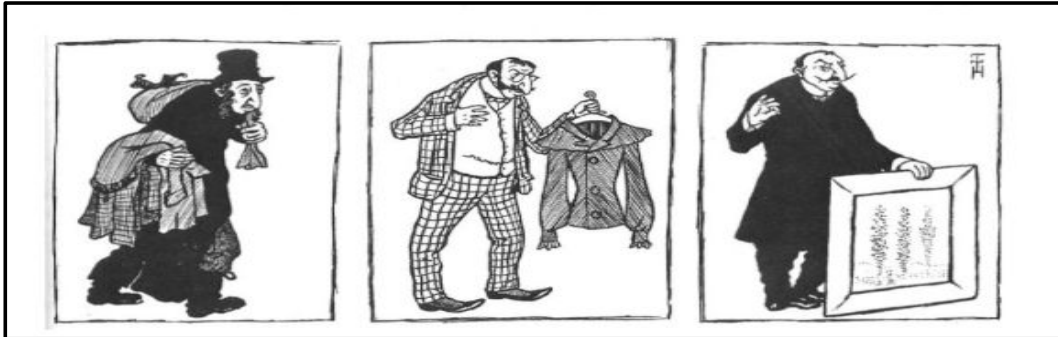
Moische Pisch   Moritz Wasserstahl   Maurice Lafontaine

"An upstart Jew cannot change his true identity as readily as he changes his clothes and his name. Neither the Enlightenment nor Emancipation would confer respectability nor hide his Jewish nose."

This is a political cartoon from a 1903 German weekly satirical magazine, *Simplicissmus*.

Consider asking students to describe what they notice is happening in each frame of the cartoon.

"The Protocols of the Elders of Zion"

- **Forgery** describing the false plan of Jews to bring about world domination

- Became **internationally popular**

- One of the most **widely cited** pieces of antisemitic propaganda
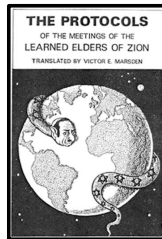
Perhaps the most notorious and influential example of political antisemitism is the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which was published in Russia in 1905. This book claimed to be a record of a secret Jewish plot that would cause the collapse of all Christian countries and bring about Jewish world domination. In truth, the book was a clever forgery by Russian secret police who wanted the public to believe that anti-czarist revolutions were controlled by Jews. Despite being exposed as a fraud, the publication became extremely popular and was quickly disseminated internationally. Between 1920 and 1927, Henry Ford (who we spoke about early), published the document in the *Dearborn Independent*. "The Protocols" was also highly influential on Hitler and the Third Reich, and was even taught in schools in Nazi Germany. More than any other document, the Protocols laid the foundation for the types of global conspiratorial claims leveled at Jews today.

Pause for Reflection

- What is something that has stood out to you about political antisemitism?

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Optional: Pause here and allow time to reflect

Racialized Antisemitism

Prejudice or hatred of Jews as a supposed racial group that is perceived to be a "biological" threat to a more "superior white race."

Nazi chart comparing supposedly "Aryan" and "Jewish" facial features

The last form of antisemitism is racialized antisemitism is prejudice or hatred of Jews as a supposed racial group that is perceived to be a "biological" threat to a more "superior white race."

Birth of "Scientific" Racism (1800's)

- Misuse of Darwin's idea of evolution to create **hierarchy of races**

- White Aryan race being superior; **Jews constituting dangerous race**

- By virtue of race, Jews could **never assimilate**

The formation of racial antisemitism can be traced back to the 1800's. In 1859, British scientist Charles Darwin published "the Origin of the Species" which laid out his theory of evolution and natural selection. Racists and antisemites combined earlier ideas about racial hierarchies with Darwin's ideas about evolution in the natural world and applied them to contemporary society. They pointed to Darwin's ideas about biological competition and natural selection to support their beliefs in white superiority. One of these people was Wilhelm Marr. Marr was the man who coined the term "antisemitism" to describe his racial opposition to Jews. In his 1862 pamphlet, Marr states that there is a hierarchy of races, at the top of which are white Europeans or Aryans, and at the bottom of which are the dangerous and alien race of Jews. Therefore, by virtue of being born different, Jews could never truly assimilate into society. These ideas have never been true. Modern science shows that there's only one human race and any biological differences are between different ethnic groups and are only minor variations such as skin color.

Nazi Racial Theory of Jews (1935)

- Believed **"Jewish blood"** would **corrupt** pure Aryan race
- Wanted German society to be **based on "race"**
- Nuremberg laws applied to **all Jews**, regardless of religious adherence
- Part of larger plan to **eliminate** Jews from German society

A chart detailing legal status by "race" according to the Nuremberg Laws, 1935

Racial antisemitism was the primary manifestation of antisemitism in Nazi Germany. According to Nazi racial theory, Jews constituted a biologically inferior race which was thought to corrupt the pure German-Aryan stock through "race-mixing" and intermarriage. In 1935, the Nazi government passed the Nuremberg Laws, restricting marriages and sexual relations between those deemed racially German and those with Jewish backgrounds. Only "Aryans" could be citizens. Jews were stripped of citizenship and denied their political rights. As part of this move, Jews' passports were invalidated, making their escape much harder, if not impossible. Eventually, those deemed legally Jewish by blood needed to self-identify with yellow stars. Given that these laws were based on a racialized understanding, the laws applied equally to religious Jews, non-religious Jews, converts from Judaism to other religions, and those who were not considered Jewish according to Jewish law but had some amount of Jewish ancestry. As this chart outlines, the Nazis took great pains to define who was and was not racially acceptable. A year after these laws were passed, they were broadened to include

those of Romani and African descent.

Racialized Antisemitism in the U.S.

Excerpt from speech by Senator Ellison DuRant Smith of South Carolina on passing the 1924 Immigration Act

"Who is an American? ... If you were to go abroad and someone were to meet you and say, 'I met a typical American,' what would flash into your mind as a typical American, the typical representative of that new Nation? Would it be the son of an Italian immigrant, the son of a German immigrant, the son of any of the breeds from the Orient, the son of the denizens of Africa? ...Thank God we have in America perhaps the largest percentage of any country in the world of the **pure, unadulterated Anglo-Saxon stock**...It is for the preservation of that splendid stock that has characterized us that I would make this not an asylum for the oppressed of all countries, but a country to assimilate and perfect that splendid type of manhood that has made America the foremost Nation in her progress and in her power... **[L]et us shut the door** and assimilate what we have, and **let us breed pure American citizens** and develop our own American resources."

Racialized antisemitism also made its way to the United States, where many Jews had been immigrating since the 1880s. In response to this large wave of Jewish immigration, the congress passed the 1924 immigration act, which explicitly aimed to exclude Eastern European Jews and Southern Italian Catholics, in addition to other non-white ethnic groups.

Here you can see an excerpt from a speech by Senator Elison DuRant Smith of South Carolina, who pushed for the passing of this act.

Read the quote and consider what words and phrases represent racialized antisemitism.

Possible responses:
- "Pure, unadulterated Anglo-Saxon stock" "splendid stock" - this represents the idea the Jews and other ethnicities would disrupt the purity of the white race
- "breeds…denizens…asylum" - dehumanizing language for all non-white ethnicities represents perceived white superiority
- "breed pure American citizens" - refers to white Americans, disqualifying

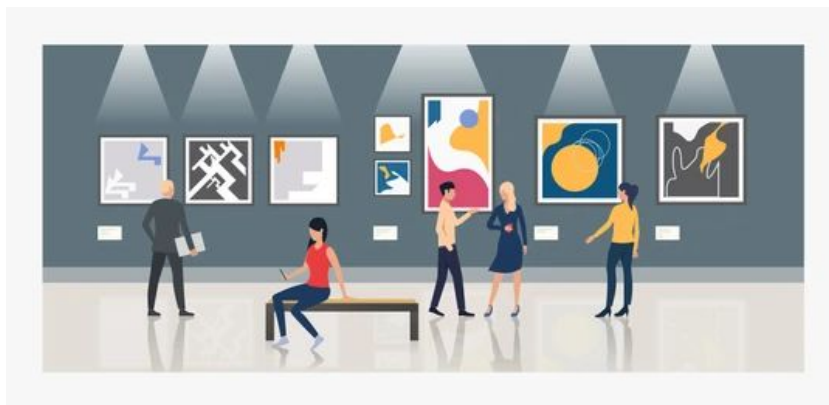- anyone viewed as non-white as a "real" American

Pause for Reflection

- What is something that has stood out to you about racial antisemitism?

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Optional: Pause here and allow time to reflect

Student Activity: Gallery Walk

Please refer to lesson plan for activity materials and ideas for how to execute this activity with students.

Exit Questions

1. How has your understanding of antisemitism developed or changed?

2. What is one historical example that stood out to you? Why?

3. What is one modern example that stood out to you? Why?

4. Did you experience any particular reactions, emotions, or realizations in the process of learning about the different forms of antisemitism?

5. How can this understanding of history help you in your life moving forward? Are there positive impacts you can make with this information?

6. How is antisemitism similar to persecution that other groups have faced? How is it unique?