

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

UG Course Syllabus

Fall 2026

Jewish Communities in China: Within the Wider Currents of Jewish, Chinese, and Global History

HUMA2000F

3 Credits

No pre-requisites

Name: Rotem Kowner

Email: rotkow@gmail.com

Office Hours: Wednesday, 14–17: By email appointment; Location: Rm 3381, Academic Building

Course Description

This course introduces the rich history of Jewish communities in China over the past millennium and situates their experiences within the broader contexts of Jewish, Chinese, and global history. The course begins with an overview of the origins of Judaism and the formation of the Jewish diaspora. It then examines the emergence of the Kaifeng Jewish community in the tenth century, followed by the modern development of Jewish communities of different origin in cities such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Harbin. Later sessions focus on the arrival and survival of Jewish refugees in China during the Holocaust. The course concludes with the renewal of China–Israel relations and the contemporary revival of Jewish life in China. Through memoirs, films, and individual assignments, students will develop a nuanced understanding of Jewish history, diaspora dynamics, and the long-standing connections between Jewish communities and China.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1	Identify and explain Jewish history and its relationship to Chinese history
2	Describe and evaluate the rise, fall, and resurrection of Jewish communities in China
3	Analyze the concepts of “diaspora,” “ethnicity,” and “identity”
4	Assess the concept of historiography and evaluate the reliability and validity of historical sources
5	Analyze the concept of genocide and examine the Holocaust within a comparative historical framework
6	Explain and contextualize Israel-China relations
7	Apply analytical skills in global and transnational Jewish studies

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessments:

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
Course participation	25%	-
In-class test	25%	11 th week
Presentation	25%	13 th week
Writing assignment	25%	13 th week

* Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within two weeks of the due date.

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
In-class test	ILO 1, ILO 2, ILO 3, ILO 4, ILO 5, ILO 6, ILO 7	A 45-minute test using multiple choice questions on the main topics, terms, and concepts learned, to be held three lessons before the end of the course
Presentation	ILO 1, ILO 2, ILO 3, ILO 5, ILO 6, ILO 7	Ten-minute presentation of the personal project, main concepts, and findings held in the final lesson
Written assignment	ILO 1, ILO 2, ILO 3, ILO 5, ILO 6, ILO 7	A 2,000-word essay on one topic selected from a list of ten course related subjects, to be submitted at the end of the course

Grading Rubrics

Detailed rubrics for each assignment will be provided. These rubrics clearly outline the criteria used for evaluation. Students can refer to these rubrics to understand how their work will be assessed.

Final Grade Descriptors:

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of subject matter, expertise in problem-solving, and significant creativity in thinking. Exhibits a high capacity for scholarship and collaboration, going beyond core requirements to achieve learning goals.
B	Good Performance	Shows good knowledge and understanding of the main subject matter, competence in problem-solving, and the ability to analyze and evaluate issues. Displays high motivation to learn and the ability to work effectively with others.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate knowledge of core subject matter, competence in dealing with familiar problems, and some capacity for analysis and critical thinking. Shows persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.

D	Marginal Pass	Has threshold knowledge of core subject matter, potential to achieve key professional skills, and the ability to make basic judgments. Benefits from the course and has the potential to develop in the discipline.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the subject matter and lacks the necessary problem-solving skills. Shows limited ability to think critically or analytically and exhibits minimal effort towards achieving learning goals. Does not meet the threshold requirements for professional practice or development in the discipline.

Course AI Policy

Restrict ways of using generative AI tools for assessment for search for sources and proofreading

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Required Texts and Materials

Eber, Irene. *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Survival, Co-Existence and Identity in a Multi-Ethnic City*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012.

Evron, Yoram, and R. Kowner, eds. *Israel-Asia Relations in the Twenty-First Century: The Search for Partners in a Changing World*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2024.

Friedländer, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 2 vols. New York: HarperCollins, 1997–2007.

Goldstein, Jonathan, ed. *The Jews of China*, 2 vols. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999–2000.

Goldstein-Sabbah, Sasha R. *Baghdadi Jewish Networks in the Age of Nationalism*. Leiden: Brill, 2021.

Johnson, Paul. *A History of the Jews*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Kowner, Rotem, ed. *Jewish Communities in Modern Asia: Their Rise, Demise and Resurgence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2023.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.