



Jews and Race: Writings on Identity and Difference, 1880–1940 (The Brandeis Library of Modern Jewish Thought)

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Many people think of Jews as victims of a particular sort of racism, not as active participants in the development of racial thinking in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet many Jews did take up racial discourse and used it to analyze Judaism, Jewish history, and the contemporary condition of world Jewry. Race discourse generated by Jews was in part apologetic, a response to racial antisemitism; however, it also served other political and ideological needs.

Focusing primarily on works written at the height of the racial hygiene and eugenics movements in Europe and North America, this diverse anthology shows how Jewish scholars and popular writers in Europe, North America, and Palestine developed racial interpretations of Judaism and Jewish history, thereby raising fascinating and thorny issues about the nature and history of racial discourse in Europe and America. Designed for class adoption, the volume contains annotations and an introduction by the editor.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Published as part of Brandeis’ exciting new Library of Modern Jewish Thought, Jews and Race is fascinating and challenging reading.”—*Tablet*

“As editor Mitchell B. Hart aptly demonstrates in this fascinating new primary source reader, there is much for students of Jewish intellectual, social, cultural, and even political history to learn from reading this literature. . . . Designed for course adoption, the collection as a whole raises fundamental questions about the origin, the meaning, and the legacy of these ideas themselves, as well as about the historical context(s) in which they were articulated, which was clearly transnational. . . . What is most exciting about this new reader is that it allows students to examine the sources themselves, seeing firsthand how modern Jews engaged this potent discourse.”—*H-JUDAIC*

Review

“Jews and Race is a provocative and fascinating collection of primary sources on a highly sensitive historical subject. Situated on the cusp between intellectual, cultural and social history, these sources demonstrate that there is far more to ‘Jewish thought’ than philosophy and theology, and that racialized identities have been a major component of modern Jewish sensibility.” (Derek Penslar, University of Toronto)

“Race, this remarkable anthology demonstrates, was about much more than science. Race was truly protean and reached far into the intricacies of collective existence. Race enslaved but it also emancipated; it stigmatized but it also became a medium of self-understanding, indeed, an almost indispensable instrument of thought, an organon. Race served to attack and protect, legitimize and delegitimize, obfuscate and illuminate. Mitchell Hart’s erudite introduction and judicious selection impeccably illustrate the extensive?and central?significance of race in modern Jewish thought. Jews and Race articulates as well a sobering warning on the enduring power of race.” (Gil Anidjar, Columbia University)

“It is impossible to understand the myriad ways in which Jews defined themselves in the six decades before World War II without comprehending the pervasiveness of notions of racial difference in this discussion. Mitchell Hart has made this task far easier with this thoughtful selection from the work of Jewish social scientists, natural scientists, physicians, and cultural critics who shaped the Jewish debate about Jewishness and race. By excerpting, translating, and contextualizing their work, Hart has made a signal contribution to the scholarship on Jewish self-definition from the fin de siècle to World War II.” (Todd M. Endelman, University of Michigan)

About the Author

MITCHELL B. HART is professor, Department of History, and Alexander Grass Chair in Jewish Studies at the University of Florida. He is the author of *The Healthy Jews: The Symbiosis of Judaism and Modern Medicine and Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity*.

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