

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Understanding Antisemitism

A Guide for the AU Community



Jewish Studies Program

COLLEGE of ARTS & SCIENCES • AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Understanding Antisemitism: A Guide for American University

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1. Introduction

Antisemitism has surged in recent years in the U.S. and around the world. In 2017, white nationalists hoisting tiki torches chanting “Jews will not replace us” marched across the campus of the University of Virginia. A year later, a gunman, who had posted “Jews are the children of Satan,” murdered eleven people in a Pittsburgh synagogue. A man in a sweatshirt reading “Camp Auschwitz” on the front and “staff” on the back stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. In October 2022, after the rapper Ye, formerly Kanye West, posted antisemitic screeds on social media, a white nationalist group hung a banner over a Los Angeles highway. It read: “Honk if you know Kanye is right about the Jews.”¹

In the U.S., antisemitic incidents—shootings in Jewish settings, a hostage-taking, physical attacks, flyers on lawns, online abuse including death threats, and graffiti, often deliberately targeting American Jews for their support of Israel—have reached historic highs in recent years.²

This resurgence of hate, according to the American Jewish Committee’s *State of Antisemitism in America Report 2022*, released on February 10, 2023, has left 40 percent of American Jews feeling less secure than they did just a year ago. More than a third avoid displaying symbols revealing that they are Jews. A quarter report being personally targeted by antisemitism. Almost two-thirds of American Jews have seen antisemitism online or on social media in the past year.³

This is the reality that AU’s Jewish students, faculty, and staff experience in their lives.

Cognizant of the long history and tremendous complexity of antisemitism, American University’s Jewish Studies Program has prepared this guide to help our community better understand antisemitism, how it manifests on our campus, and its effects on our AU Jewish community, especially our students.

This guide is modeled on and adapted from the Michigan State University’s excellent *Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel Guide on Antisemitism for the MSU Community 2023*.⁴

At American University, Professor Pamela Nadell took the lead in adapting this guide for our

¹ “Rise in antisemitism is feared after banner saying ‘Kanye is right’ is hung over Los Angeles freeway,” October 24, 2022, [Rise in antisemitism is feared after banner saying ‘Kanye is right’ is hung over Los Angeles freeway](#), October 24, 2022.

² [Anti-Defamation League Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#), May 3, 2022.

³ [Five Key Takeaways from AJC's State of antisemitism in America Report 2022](#), February 10, 2023.

⁴ The Serling Institute faculty and students worked collectively on their document to contribute to achieving the goals of diversity and inclusion by encouraging members of the MSU community to pay attention to the experiences of Jews as well as other minorities on their campus. We thank the main co-authors of the MSU guide Yael Aronoff, Kirsten Fermaglich, Ariana Mentzel, and Amy Simon for their extraordinary work and for their permission to benefit from their endeavors.

campus. She consulted with a cohort of interested faculty, staff, and students. Some are experts in antisemitism. Some have experienced it at AU or heard confidences from those who have shared their experiences. She thanks Jason Benkendorf, Michael Brenner, Jessica Emami, Lisa Leff, Saul Newman, Lauren Strauss, and Amanda Taylor for their assistance and feedback on earlier drafts of this guide. Insights shared by AU students, including those in her fall 2022 Complex Problems seminar Antisemitism: Enduring Hatred, proved invaluable.

Because no unit on campus has systematically collected data on antisemitism from multiple sources, we have no sense of the breadth of the problem on our campus.

Nevertheless, antisemitism has become such a serious problem in America that, in December 2022, the White House created an “interagency group” to coordinate U.S. government efforts to counter antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of hate and bias. “Its first order of business [is] “to develop a national strategy to counter antisemitism.”⁵

This AU Guide to Understanding Antisemitism, the various ways it is manifested, and how it appears on college campuses is in the spirit of the government’s new initiative to counter antisemitism.

2. Defining Antisemitism

Scholars wrestle with how best to define antisemitism. A concise, working definition posits that: **Antisemitism is rhetoric, discrimination, prejudice, promotion of conspiracy theories, hostility, and/or violence against Jews or Jewish institutions.**⁶

The term “antisemitism” was not coined until 1879 when Wilhelm Marr, founder of Germany’s Anti-Semites League, hit upon *Antisemitismus* to distinguish the modern basis of Jew hatred from historic Christian religious animosity which, blaming Jews for the death of Jesus, saw them as Christendom’s perpetual adversaries.

Marr borrowed the term “Semite” from linguists who had labeled languages with affinities to Hebrew and Arabic Semitic languages.⁷ While there are Semitic languages, there is no Semitic racial or ethnic group.

Drawing upon nineteenth-century pseudoscientific ideas about the races, their fixed hierarchy, and their immutability, Marr employed “antisemitism” to expose the real bedrock of Jewish distinctiveness and danger. Jewish danger came not from their enmity to Christians but rather from the notion that they were a distinct, debased race.⁸

In earlier eras, hatred of the Jews went by other names. Today we use antisemitism to refer to

⁵ Statement from White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Inter-Agency Group to Counter Antisemitism, December 12, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/12/statement-from-white-house-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-on-inter-agency-group-to-counter-antisemitism/>.

⁶ On definitions of antisemitism and their limits, see Association for Jewish Studies, [A Working Report from the AJS Task Force on Antisemitism and Academic Freedom](#).

⁷ The linguists invited the name “Semitic,” using the name Shem, one of the biblical Noah’s three sons. After the great flood, Shem and his descendants settled the Middle East, the lands where the Semitic languages originated. Genesis 10:30-31.

⁸ Moshe Zimmerman, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 88-90.

animosity towards Jews past and present.

Perhaps the most important thing to understand about antisemitism on the campus today and how it affects our students is that they arrive at AU with knowledge—sometimes deep and personal knowledge—of how antisemitism affected Jews in the past, their own encounters with it in the present, and the sense that antisemitism will continue to be a factor in their lives into the future.

3. Understanding Judaism and the Jewish People

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Judaism as the religion or culture of the Jewish people. But that definition does not fully grasp the complexity of Jewish civilization with its theology, religious rituals, literatures, histories, languages, laws, ideals, and values. For more than three thousand years, Jews have adapted Jewish civilization to different times and places. In 1654, they brought it to what would become the United States of America.

The origins of the Jewish people lie in the ancient land of Israel where they made Jerusalem their ancestral capital. After conquest first in the early 6th century B.C.E. by the Babylonians and then in 70 C.E. by the Romans, a thriving Jewish Diaspora emerged in lands ringing the Mediterranean and beyond. Yet, some Jews remained in their historic homeland, which was renamed Palestine by the first-century Romans. Consequently, the land of Israel remains central to the self-identity of the Jewish people.

There are currently about 15.3 million Jews in the world, roughly 0.2% of the global population. Slightly more than 7 million live in the modern State of Israel. Approximately 6 million live in the United States.⁹ There is a variety of Jewish denominations and religious expressions. Moreover, many Jews around the world, eschewing a religious self-definition, call themselves culturally, ethnically, or nationally Jewish.

4. Antisemitic Themes and Claims

4.1 Understanding Christian Anti-Judaism

Christianity evolved out of first-century Judaism. Jesus was a Galilean Jew, and many of his teachings were seen as fulfilling God's promises in the Hebrew Bible. The New Testament's Gospels blamed the Jews for urging the Romans to crucify him.

As Christianity became a distinct faith, separate from Judaism, and then, as it became in late antiquity the dominant faith in the Western world, Christians continued to see Jewish enmity. The historian David Nirenberg sees hostility to Judaism lying at the heart of Western culture as it developed under Christendom.¹⁰

⁹ Jewish Agency for Israel, [Jewish Population Rises to 15.3 Million Worldwide, with Over 7 Million Residing in Israel](#), September 25, 2022.

¹⁰ Michael N. Dobkowski summarizes this as the argument of David Nirenberg's *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* in his review; Jewish Book Council, April 11, 2013, <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/book/anti-judaism-the-western-tradition>.

The Church fathers, theologians who developed Christianity over the next half millennium, denounced the Jews for refusing to accept Christ and embrace Christianity. Their so-called “wicked obstinacy” led the Church to adopt a policy of permitting the Jews to survive but never to thrive.¹¹ Over the centuries that policy would result in laws restricting Jews and Jewish communities and even lead to the establishment of walled ghettos whose gates were locked each night. In medieval Europe, new malevolent stereotypes arose, and images portrayed the Jews as devils.

On too many occasions, the policy that allowed for Jews to survive but not to thrive gave way to eruptions of anti-Jewish violence. For example, during the Black Death of 1348-1349, when Jews were accused of causing the great plague by poisoning the wells, thousands of Jews were massacred.¹² It was also during the Middle Ages that Jews, whose economic activities were often restricted by the authorities to moneylending, acquired the image of the greedy moneylender. Collectively, these images convey the sense that Jews, conspiring across time and space, are Christendom’s ultimate enemies.

4.2 Bloodthirsty Jews kill Christian Children

In the Middle Ages, Jews were first accused of kidnapping and murdering Christian children to use their blood for religious rituals. These “ritual murder” or “blood libel” accusations targeted hundreds of Jewish communities in Europe, the Middle East, and even, on rare occasions, the U.S. No Jewish practice has ever used human blood. Yet, such accusations often ended in violence for the Jews accused.¹³

The blood libel accusation has resurfaced in the contemporary era due in part to the right-wing internet conspiracy theories of QAnon, which moved to mainstream social media.¹⁴

QAnon believers are convinced that a secret cabal of Satan-worshiping pedophiles is plotting to run the world and murder babies. QAnon’s emphasis on the Jewish philanthropist George Soros, a frequent target of antisemites, as one of the cabal’s masterminds evokes the blood libel. The anonymous “Q” also retweeted an antisemitic image of a knife-wielding Jew, wearing a Star of David necklace who stands knee-deep in the blood of Russians, Poles, Hungarians and Ukrainians, asking, “Why do they persecute me so?”¹⁵

Similarly, media images of Israelis depict them as killers thirsty for Palestinian children’s blood.

4.3 Jews are Corrupted by Money

¹¹ This was the position of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430); James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword, The Church and the Jews: A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 233.

¹² Jedwab, R., et al. (2019). "Negative Shocks and Mass Persecutions: Evidence from the Black Death." *Journal of Economic Growth* 24: 345-395.

¹³ Magda Teter, [Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth](#).

¹⁴ Southern Poverty Law Center, [What You Need to Know About QAnon](#), October 27, 2020.

¹⁵ Jonathan D. Sarna, [The symbols of antisemitism in the Capitol riot](#), January 11, 2021.

Negative associations of the Jews and money appear in the Gospels where Judas betrays Jesus for “thirty pieces of silver,”¹⁶ and Jesus says, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon,”¹⁷ Yet, in the Middle Ages, limitations on Jewish economic endeavors forced Jews into pawnbroking and moneylending. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare gave the world the prototype of the greedy, wicked moneylender Shylock, who would carve out his bond from the flesh of his debtor. Jews have been stereotyped as greedy and avaricious, corrupted by money, and willing to use nefarious means to acquire it.

Criticism of greed and the financial sector often targets Jews as a group or references well-known Jewish financiers, like the Rothschilds. Even the terms “banks” and “bankers” can be antisemitic dog whistles.

Another antisemitic false claim about Jews and money asserts that the Jews controlled the slave trade, a charge repeatedly raised by Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam and his followers.¹⁸

4.4 The Jews’ Deviant Body

A long visual history depicts Jewish bodies as malformed, grotesque, animalistic, or associated with the Devil.



Satanic figures wearing the Jewish badge.
Title page of *Der Juden Erbarkeit*, Germany, 1571

American iconography also displays deviant Jewish bodies, with large noses and also

¹⁶ Matthew 26:15

¹⁷ Matthew 6:24 KJV

¹⁸ For the breadth of Farrakhan’s antisemitic claims, see [Farrakhan: In His Own Words](#). For research disproving this charge, see Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

racialized as non-white.



U.S. postcard, 1901, published by Franz Huld

The German inscription reads: “Here I send you the view of many of my fellow countrymen, Richard.”

From the [Arthur Langerman Collection](#)

4.5 The Conspiracy Theory of Jewish World Domination

The medieval conspiracy theory that Jews poisoned Europe’s wells, springs, and rivers to cause millions of Christians to perish in the Black Death of 1348-1349 was already noted.

The notion of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy for power and control emerged in the nineteenth century and became especially virulent in the twentieth century with the dissemination of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. First published in 1903, this fiction alleges that the Jews foment liberal revolutions to destroy the world order and that they control governments, economies, and the media. In the U.S., the business tycoon Henry Ford disseminated the *Protocols* in the early 1920s.

Contemporary conspiracy theories draw upon the *Protocols*, blaming the Jews for catastrophes, like 9/11 and the Covid pandemic. Related accusations about Jewish power—their power in Hollywood or the media, where Jews are disproportionately represented but do not control those industries—have also surfaced.

A contemporary variation on the *Protocols* characterizes the State of Israel as part of this sinister world conspiracy. It blames Israel and Israelis, Zionism and Zionists for the region’s and the world’s problems.

4.6 Jews and Leftist Politics as a Source of Antisemitism

Targeting all Jews as political radicals grows out of the history of Jews and left-wing politics. In Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, the Nazis, convinced that the Jews fomented communist revolutions as part of their plan for world domination, attacked so-called “Judeo Bolsheviks.” In the U.S. as in Eastern Europe, when early-twentieth-century impoverished Jews, radicalized by intolerable working and living conditions, were also drawn to labor unions and left-wing politics, antisemites vilified all Jews as revolutionaries and leftists.

A related conspiracy theory shows immigrant Jews taking over America as the country’s “First Families” flee before the horde.



“The New Jerusalem,” *Judge Magazine*, January 23, 1892

In “Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism,” Eric Ward explains that “white replacement theory” claims Jews are orchestrating the immigration of foreigners into the nation and the campaigns of civil rights, feminist, and LGBTQ movements.¹⁹

In the twentieth century, American Jews were also active in progressive movements that called for open immigration, cultural pluralism, and civil rights for African Americans. Today, about 70 percent of American Jews identify with or lean towards the Democratic

¹⁹ Eric Ward, “Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism,” <https://politicalresearch.org/2017/06/29/skin-in-the-game-how-antisemitism-animates-white-nationalism>, June 29, 2017.

Party. American Jews' support for liberal causes, like civil rights, led white nationalists to bomb synagogues, Jewish community centers, and rabbis' homes in the 1950s and 1960s. In October 2018, when a lone gunman murdered eleven Jews at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue, he stated that one of his reasons was the congregation's support of HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, a progressive organization aiding refugees and asylum seekers around the world.

4.7 The Accusation of Dual Loyalty

Antisemites accuse Jews of being more loyal to Israel, or to the Jewish people, than to the countries where they reside. Some hold Jews, Israelis, or Jewish institutions collectively responsible for real or imagined wrongdoings committed by Israel.

5. Antisemitism and the Holocaust

The Holocaust, the persecution and murder of six million Jews by Nazi Germany and their collaborators from 1933-1945, was an unprecedented tragedy in Jewish history and the trauma it caused is still felt today by Jewish communities around the world, including in the United States.

Jewish students bring to campus knowledge, sometimes deep knowledge, of this event. Some are direct descendants of survivors of the Holocaust. Others have visited Auschwitz and other European sites of the persecution and murders to learn more about this history that has affected their families and community. Some learned about the Holocaust in Jewish religious schools or by visiting the many Holocaust memorials and museums dotting the American landscape. Others studied it in school since currently some twenty states mandate teaching the Holocaust. For Jewish students, knowledge of the Holocaust is part of their cultural legacy, a prism through which they filter their encounters with contemporary antisemitism.

Contemporary antisemites target Jews using Nazi and Holocaust imagery, especially by graffitiiing swastikas. When antisemites compare Israel and Israelis to Nazi Germany and the Nazis, they attack Jews, Jewish memory, and Jewish identity. They twist the symbols of the attempted genocide of the Jews to attack the only Jewish majority state in the world. Jokes about the Holocaust distort this history. Denying the history of the Holocaust is another form of contemporary antisemitism.

6. Antisemitism and Israel

Since Israel's establishment in 1948, antisemitism has also been aimed at the world's only Jewish majority state.²⁰

²⁰ The Pew Research Center's [The Global Religious Landscape](#) (December 18, 2012) finds 2.2 billion Christians (32% of the world's population living in some 158 Christian-majority countries and territories), 1.6 billion Muslims (23%, living in some 50 Muslim-majority countries), 1 billion Hindus (15%), nearly 500 million Buddhists (7%) and 14 million Jews (0.2%) around the world as of 2010. More than 400 million people (6%) practice various folk or traditional religions. An estimated 58 million people—slightly less than 1% of the global population—belong to

The Zionist movement led to the establishment of the State of Israel. Zionism upholds the Jewish right to national self-determination, a right protected under international law.²¹

Zionism, one of many nineteenth-century European nationalist movements, was a response not only to discrimination against Jews but also to the violence of the pogroms, anti-Jewish riots in the Russian Empire. These attacks persisted well into the twentieth century before the rise of the Nazis, with an estimated 100,000 Jews murdered in Ukraine between 1918 and 1921.²²

Zionism is also rooted in the traditional Jewish belief that sustained the Jews across the millennia that one day they would return to Zion, the biblical name for Jerusalem and the historic Jewish homeland.

Today, the world's two largest Jewish communities in Israel and the U.S. comprise about 85 percent of world Jewry.²³ For the great majority of American Jews caring about Israel forms a powerful part of their Jewish identities.²⁴

American Jews hold a variety of opinions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

According to the *Working Report from the Association for Jewish Studies Task Force on Antisemitism and Academic Freedom*, “criticism of Israel is not equivalent to antisemitism.”²⁵ Recognizing that all university members not only have the right to their own positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that universities should neither stifle robust debate nor free speech, the report states:

However, if one's position on Zionism and Israeli policies or if one's position on Palestinian movements serves as a proxy for invoking hateful symbols and tropes (whether antisemitic, Islamophobic, or otherwise bigoted) and/or acts as a litmus test for inclusion in activities or clubs, then the protections of academic freedom no longer stand.²⁶

The *Working Report* recognizes that invoking bigoted symbols and tropes about the Israel-Palestine conflict crosses the line into hate speech. Similarly, demanding that students

other religions.

²¹ See, e.g., [United Nations Charter, Article 1 \(2\) Equal rights and self-determination of peoples](#), 1945.

²² Jeffrey Veidlinger, *In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The Pogroms of 1918-1921 and the Onset of the Holocaust* (New York: Picador, 2021).²³ Jewish Agency for Israel, [Jewish Population Rises to 15.3 Million Worldwide, with Over 7 Million Residing in Israel](#), September 25, 2022.

²³ Jewish Agency for Israel, [Jewish Population Rises to 15.3 Million Worldwide, with Over 7 Million Residing in Israel](#), September 25, 2022.

²⁴ Eight-in-ten U.S. Jews say caring about Israel is an essential or important part of their Jewish identities; Pew Research Center [Jewish Americans in 2020](#), May 11, 2021 (page 137 of the full report.)

²⁵ The Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) is the leading learned society for Jewish scholars. AU Professor Pamela Nadell is a past president of the AJS. AU Senior Professorial Lecturer Lauren Strauss currently sits on its board. Other members of the AU faculty are members of the AJS.

²⁶ Association for Jewish Studies, [A Working Report from the AJS Task Force on Antisemitism and Academic Freedom](#).

disassociate themselves from Israel in order to participate in any aspect of campus life violates the nondiscrimination policies universities uphold.

This is the crux of the issue for the campus. When does discourse about Israel cross the line to antisemitism?

Allegations that demonize Israel and Israelis by calling Israelis Nazis, accusing them of committing genocide, or disproportionately singling out Israel's immoral behavior while ignoring that of other nations has crossed the line to antisemitism. Similarly, targeting Israel as a settler-colonial state not only denies Jewish history but also is used to demand that Israel, as a nation, cease to exist.

The following are some illustrations of how antisemitism around Israel is manifested, especially on the campus.

- **Denouncing Israel as a litmus test for participating in university life.** When campus activists demand that Jewish students or Jewish student organizations denounce Israel in order to participate in their activities, the line to antisemitism has been crossed. These demands deny Jewish students the right to embrace support for Israel as an aspect of their intersectional identities.
- **Holding all Jews accountable for Israeli policies.** When all Jews are held accountable for the actions or policies of the State of Israel, that is antisemitism. Jews born outside of the State of Israel are not its citizens. They do not vote there. They do not make its governmental policies.
- **Using antisemitic myths and symbols to criticize Israel.** When those condemning Israel employ antisemitic tropes in their critiques—swastikas, comparisons to Nazis, blood libel, charges of Jewish power and conspiracies to dominate, charges that Jews are more loyal to Israel or to Jews around the world than they are to the countries where they are citizens—criticism of Israel has become antisemitic.
- **Denying the history of Jews and Jewish sovereignty in ancient Israel.** Denying the history of Jews and Jewish sovereignty in ancient Israel and the continuous Jewish presence in the region over the millennia denies the Jewish historic experience, the right of this people to its own history.
- **Calling for the destruction of Israel.** Calls for the end of the Jewish state or for the expulsion of its people are calls for genocide, for the destruction of half of the Jewish people.

7. Antisemitism on the College Campus

Antisemitism has surged on college campuses in recent years and is often, but not always, related

to the discourse over the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, has just released its 2022 survey of American antisemitism. This year, for the first time, it asked young Jews about their antisemitic experiences.

- 14 percent of American college students and recent graduates reported feeling or being excluded from a campus group or event because of an assumed or actual connection to Israel.
- 18 percent reported feeling uncomfortable or unsafe at a campus event because they were Jewish.
- 21 percent avoid wearing or carrying things that identify them as Jewish.
- 85 percent of American Jews ages 18-29 were the targets of antisemitism online or have seen it online at least once in the past 12 months.²⁷

Here are a few examples, mostly from 2022, of antisemitism reported from campuses around the country, including from American University.²⁸

- A teaching assistant at the University of Vermont publicly suggested lowering the grades of pro-Israel students. (*See 6. Antisemitism and Israel: Holding all Jews accountable for Israeli policies.*)
- At the University of Wisconsin in Madison students returning to campus saw chalk messages calling Jews “racist” and “genocidal.” (*See 5. Antisemitism and the Holocaust.*)
- At the University of California at Berkeley, nine student groups adopted a bylaw banning supporters of Zionism from speaking at events. (*See 6. Antisemitism and Israel.*)
- At Northwestern University, after Lily Cohen faced antisemitism on campus, she wrote a column in the school newspaper sharing anguish over attacks on her Jewish identity and expressing her view that the slogan “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free” calls for the destruction of Israel as the state and the murder of Israelis from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, the eastern and western borders of Israel at its founding in 1948. She not only received tremendous backlash on social media, but a banner composed of 40 copies of her column taped together was emblazoned with the slogan “From the River to the Sea” and hung on campus. (*See 3. Understanding Judaism and the Jewish People and 6. Antisemitism and Israel.*)

²⁷ American Jewish Committee, [The State of Antisemitism in American 2022](#), question #8, 26, 27a, 27c.

²⁸ The following come from American Jewish Committee, [Behind the Numbers: Young American Jews' Encounters with Antisemitism](#), February 13, 2023



Source: American Jewish Committee

[Behind the Numbers: Young American Jews' Encounters with Antisemitism](#), February 13, 2023

- At George Washington University, Students for Justice in Palestine demonstrated outside the Hillel Jewish student building during the fall Jewish holidays protesting a speech by a former Israel Defense Forces intelligence official. Their chants and signs reading “There is only one solution, intifada revolution” called for violence. The word intifada was first used to describe the armed uprising by Palestinians against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.²⁹ (*See 3. Understanding Judaism and the Jewish People and 6. Antisemitism and Israel.*)
- A Title VI complaint has been submitted to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights about a professor’s antisemitism in a mandatory graduate course in diversity in George Washington University’s Professional Psychology Program. The complaint asserts that the professor denied the students the uniqueness of their Jewish identities and erases Jewish history and that this antisemitism began on the first day of class when a Jewish student from Israel introduced herself and the professor responded, “It’s not your fault you were born in Israel.”³⁰ (*See 3. Understanding Judaism and the Jewish People and 6. Antisemitism and Israel.*)
- The swastika, identified with the Nazis, is recognized internationally as an antisemitic symbol. Many campuses report discovering swastikas carved into campus property.³¹ (*See 5. Antisemitism and the Holocaust.*)

²⁹ [George Washington University's Shameful Response to Antisemitism](#), *National Review*, November 2, 2022.

³⁰ [StandWithUs files Title VI complaint against GWU for discriminatory, retaliatory antisemitic conduct](#), January 12, 2023.

³¹ The *AU Eagle* staff editorial [Recognizing hate alone isn't enough for students](#) responded calling for education about “antisemitism and Jewish cultural traditions” and specifically mentioning AUx2, October 6, 2022.

- In April 2022, at American University, the AU Muslim Student Association canceled its participation in a planned interfaith seder and Iftar event commemorating Passover and Ramadan because of “Hillel’s continued support for the state of Israel. Despite the fact that the event was supposed to be a joint celebration of religious holidays, the AU Muslim Student Association’s own statement continued: “We stand in solidarity with Palestine,” and called Israel “a settler-colonial and apartheid state.”³² (*See 3. Understanding Judaism and the Jewish People 6. Antisemitism and Israel: Holding all Jews accountable for Israeli policies.*)
- Jewish students find peers harassing them about Israel’s policies or handing them “BDS” literature. BDS stands for Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions, an international movement working to end support for Israel’s oppression of Palestinians. (*See 3. Understanding Judaism and the Jewish People and 6. Antisemitism and Israel: Holding all Jews accountable for Israeli policies.*)
- Conforming to religious tradition, some Jewish students put a mezuzah, a Jewish amulet containing biblical verses, on their dorm room doors. Too often, those mezuzahs are stolen or ripped off and their desecrated texts lying on the floor. Or their dormmates, knowing a Jew sleeps in that room, scrawl on their whiteboards: “F--- Israel/Free Palestine.” (*See 3. Understanding Judaism and the Jewish People and 6. Antisemitism and Israel: Holding all Jews accountable for Israeli policies.*)
- In 2022 Jewish students around the country objected to a lecture tour by Mohammed El-Kurd, whose tweets about Jews’ thirst for blood echo the medieval blood libel.³³ Posting their concerns on social media from various campuses, Jews were often told that they did not understand antisemitism. (*See 4.2 Bloodthirsty Jews kill Christian children.*)³³
- On too many campuses, students report antisemitism propounded or marginalized in their classes.
 - Often this relates to the historic antisemitic charge associating Jews and money. For example, in class, an instructor played the rapper Jay-Z’s song “The Story of O.J.” When students objected to its line—“You wanna know what’s more important than throwin away money at a strip club? Credit / You ever wonder why the Jewish people own all the property in America? This how they did it”—their instructor dismissed their concerns. (*See 4.3. Jews are corrupted by money.*)
 - Claims about Zionism, asserting that it is a white supremacist movement, promote antisemitism and ignore Jewish history. (*See 5. Antisemitism and*

³² Andrew Lapin, [American University Muslim student group withdraws from interfaith seder with Hillel over its Israel support](#), *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, April 21, 2022.

³³ On Mohammed El-Kurd’s antisemitism, see Anti-Defamation League, [Mohammed El-Kurd](#).

the Holocaust and 6. Antisemitism and Israel.)

- Some claims reflect prejudice and ignorance, such as when faculty assert that all Jews benefit from white privilege. That claim ignores the diversity of the American Jewish community, especially of the campus Jewish community: The Pew Research Center reports that 28 percent of Jews under the age of thirty are racially and ethnically diverse.³⁴
- Students report faculty inappropriately joking about Nazis or even making the Nazi salute in class. They feel this demeans the memory of the Holocaust. (*See 5. Antisemitism and Holocaust.*)

8. American University Resources

If you believe that, as a member of the Jewish community, you have been treated differently at AU, we encourage you to reach out to [AU's Office of Equity and Title IX](#).

AU has significant resources to support students encountering difficulties, including facing antisemitism.

- For assistance in facilitating conversations among individuals, student groups, or student organizations, contact the AU Office of the Dean of Students for a [restorative practices request](#).
- AU's range of wellness-related services include individual and group psychotherapy, victim/survivor advocacy services, and crisis intervention (through free 24-7 AUProtoCall Services at 202-885-7979). Contact the AU [Center for Well-Being Programs and Psychological Services](#) for further assistance.
- Find more tips and tools on topics like mental and physical health, friendships and finding balance, log in to [You@American](#).
- AU has many [clubs and organizations](#). Several connect [Jewish students](#), among them [AU Hillel](#). The [faith communities](#) at AU's Kay Spiritual Life Center are also important resources.

³⁴ Using the broadest definition of diversity offered as an example in this chapter, nearly three-in-ten Jewish adults under 30 (28%) identify as Hispanic, Black, Asian, other race or multiracial; identify as Sephardic and/or Mizrahi; or are immigrants or children of immigrants to the U.S. from outside Canada, Europe or the former Soviet Union – compared with a total of 7% of Jews ages 65 and older who meet any of those overlapping dimensions of diversity.” Pew Research Center [Jewish Americans in 2020](#), May 11, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/race-ethnicity-heritage-and-immigration-among-u-s-jews/>