International Workshop

Jewish Commercial Cultures in Global Perspective

Advanced PhD and post-doctoral/early career workshop
Indiana University, Bloomington, October 11-12, 2015

Call for Papers

The Borns Jewish Studies Program and the Department of History at Indiana University, Bloomington, invite proposals for papers to be presented at a workshop on Jewish commercial cultures in global perspective. The workshop will take place in October, 11-12, 2015 and will feature new research on Jews and commerce in modern period, in the Mediterranean, Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans. We seek paper proposals specifically from junior scholars (advanced PhD, post-doctoral and early career historians) whose work will be engaged by established Jewish, economic, and global historians participating as keynote speakers, panel discussants and roundtable participants.

The workshop aims to introduce the notion of “Jewish commercial cultures” to discussions about networks, mobility, empires, migration and material life. We welcome especially proposals that examine Jewish merchants beyond trading diaspora frameworks, the overly determining contexts of “family” and “community”, or discuss their stereotypical representations in non-Jewish and anti-Jewish discourses. This includes approaches that view Jewish merchants anew as commercial citizens and legal agents in various regional and global settings from the early 18th- to the mid-20th centuries, a period shaped by the interrelated processes of an expanding modern culture (and technology) of commerce and the expansion and retraction of western and non-western empires. Topics for consideration may include:

- Intra- and cross-ethnic networks and relations and commercial litigation
- Formation and the cultural meanings of trust between sub-Jewish and Jewish-gentile business networks
- Epistolary and other communicative practices
- The interplay between Jewish merchants and economic, communal, urban and national institutions
- The changing legal status and Jewish institutional participation in chambers of commerce, stock exchanges, commercial tribunals, etc.
- The formation of Jewish business elites
The overlap of Jewish urban, communal and commercial networks and the impact of commerce on urban culture such as the relation between the commercial sphere and the public sphere
- The link between professional, ethnic and cosmopolitan identities in national, colonial, and imperial settings
- Commerce, acculturation and Jewish emancipation

Highlighting the multiple ‘spatialities’ and mobilities of Jewish merchants, the workshop will bring Jewish, trans-local and Global history into dialogue with one another. We welcome approaches that move beyond nation-state frameworks and explore urban, trans-national and/or trans-imperial spaces as well as borderlands and oceans.

The workshop will bring together 12 junior scholars of history and related disciplines (advanced graduate students, postdocs, and assistant professors (or equivalent). Graduate students should be ABD (candidates, who have completed all their qualifying PhD exams), should have completed research and be in the process of writing their dissertation.

The workshop will take place over two days at Indiana University, Bloomington and feature an opening keynote address by Professor Francesca Trivellato (Yale University). Panel commentators and round-table discussants will include Professor Derek Penslar (University of Toronto / Oxford University), Professor Jonathan Karp (SUNY Binghamton), Professor Matthias Lehmann (University of California, Irvine) as well as several Indiana University faculty working on Jewish, Atlantic and Global History, such as Professors Pedro Machado and Mirjam Zadoff. Papers of 20-25 pages will be pre-circulated to allow maximum time during panel sessions for questions and discussion.

Proposals should include a maximum 500-word abstract explaining the paper’s main hypothesis, its innovations, and the sources used as well as a CV. Accommodation and meals will be covered for the selected participants. Funding toward travel expenses is available on a limited basis. For details, please indicate your interest in your proposal.

Please send the proposals to merchant@indiana.edu by March 15, 2015. Successful applicants will be notified by April 10, 2015.

For more information and updates, please visit the workshop’s website.

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