



Prof. Steven Fine

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Sp. 2021, M/W 3:00

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The Arch of Titus: Between Rome and Jerusalem

The Arch of Titus, built to commemorate Roman triumph in the Jewish War of 66-74 CE, has stood as a touchstone of Western civilization for nearly 2000 years. This course explores the shifting meaning and significance of this monument – for the victorious Romans, for the defeated Jews, and for both Christians and Jews over the subsequent millennia. Built on Rome’s Via Sacra, the “Sacred Road,” around 82 CE, the Arch of Titus features sculptural reliefs depicting Titus’s triumphal procession into



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the Eternal City in July, 71 CE. Painfully for Jews, the sacred vessels of the Jerusalem Temple are shown being carried into Rome by victorious Roman soldiers. At the center of the representation of the *Spoils of Jerusalem* is the seven-branched golden menorah, which, since 1949, has been used as the emblem of the State of Israel.

The Arch of Titus has undergone many physical changes over the course of its long history. Having fallen into a ruinous state by the 19th century, it was restored by Pope Pius VII in the 1823. Recent discoveries by Yeshiva University's *Arch of Titus Project* indicate that the Arch's sculptural reliefs were originally painted, a common practice in Roman sculpture. This project has produced a life-size carved replica of the existing *Spoils of Jerusalem* relief panel from the interior passageway of the Arch, based on three-dimensional and polychrome scanning conducted in 2012. This replica, onto which is projected imagery from a colorized reconstruction, aims to provide a richer sense of the monument's original character and appearance.

This course stretches from the Roman era to the present. It explores the image and symbolism of the Arch from various vantage points – from emperors and popes to Jews and Christians, who re-interpreted the meaning of the Arch in modern times. Rare artifacts from collections in Italy, Israel and the United States illuminate this monument's vibrant history, as the Arch itself went from monumentalizing victory to falling into ruination and, eventually, to being restored in the modern era. This course celebrates Professor Fine's forthcoming book, *The Arch of Titus: From Jerusalem to Rome, and Back*. Students will plan the celebration!

Skill goals:

- a) To develop skills of critical inquiry and argument
- b) To make connections and integrate knowledge across disciplines
- c) To present a point of view orally and in clear expository prose.

Content goals:

- a) To develop historically-informed knowledge of the Roman world, the Jewish place in it, and the continuing value of this encounter.
- b) To investigate the reception of Roman and Jewish history from a variety of cultural artifacts through the focal lens of the Arch of Titus.

Course Requirements:

1. By choosing this course, you are committing to participate actively in each session. You commit to arriving to class having completed **each** assignment in its entirety, and prepared to actively discuss its contents (on occasion as the discussion leader). In order to maintain a community based upon dialogue and real communication, please keep your screen on at all times, and do not eat during class. **No one will be admitted to class after 3:04.** 10% of grade.



2. You will sign up for Coursera's Arch of Titus: Rome and the Menorah, following the stream of the course. You will present copies of your assignments (these may be screen shot) and your certificate of completion, and a two-three page evaluation of the course. Due: last week of classes. 25% of grade.
<https://youtu.be/LOGWUJpWNSg>

3. Midterm Project. This project will examine your ability to apply themes and knowledge gained in this course in essay form. 30% of your grade.



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4. Help organize the final conference of the Arch of Titus Project, date TBA.



5. Participate in at least one Revel, Center for Israel Studies or other scholarly lecture, and write a one page reflection paper, due with your final. 5%

6. Final examination. 30% of your grade.

Please visit my [personal website](#) and the [Arch of Titus Project](#) website.

Office hours are immediately after class or by appointment

This syllabus is subject to change during the course of the semester. Yeshiva YU's undergraduate dress codes of personal conduct will set the ground rules for this course.

Required Book:

Steven Fine, *The Menorah: From the Bible to Modern Israel* (Harvard University Press, 2016)

Other resources required for this course are mounted [here](#) or will be linked.

https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B8_ZWr37HQ5Bfm5uaUotNol6cUwxaFctR2FyXzJuczZxRUhudG5vVC1nQUVDDkVQTGJIbnc

Unit 1. Introduction: History, the Arch of Titus and the Arch of Titus Project

Pierre Nora, "[Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire](#)"

https://www.stljewishlight.com/from-rome-to-charlottesville-a-statue-is-never-just-a-statue/article_8ca9ddcb-276d-5ce1-af56-cf6ffb9231d2.html

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-just-adding-context-controversial-monument-may-not-change-minds-180976583/>

[Smart History, The Arch of Titus](#)

[Megaim, The Arch of Titus](#)

Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis, "[The architecture of memory and commemoration: the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch, Brooklyn, New York and the reception of classical architecture in New York City.](#)"

View the various websites linked to the [Arch of Titus Project](#)

Unit 2. The Roman Context

C. Kelley, *The Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, ch. 1.

View this [video](#) about Vespasian.

Suetonius *The Lives of the Caesars*, Vespasian-Titus-Domitian and the articles on each of these emperors on that site



Unit 3. The Jewish War: Josephus, Jerusalem and the Roman Triumph

Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Introduction, books 6-7.

Shaye Cohen. "Roman Domination: The Jewish Revolt and the Destruction of the Second Temple"
BBC, Josephus.

L. Feldman, "Financing the Colosseum."

Unit 4. The Arch of Titus in Color

Survey Arch of Titus project website; reading materials on the Coursera site.

Rochelle Gurstein, "In Praise of Ruins"

Fine, *The Arch of Titus*, article by Fine, Schertz, Sanders.

Unit 5. The Temple Implements after 70 CE.

Fine, *The Menorah*, introduction, chapters 1, 5.

Fine, "When I went to

Rome, there I Saw the Menorah...': The Jerusalem Temple Implements between 70 C.E. and the Fall of Rome,"

R. Boustán, "The Spoils of the Jerusalem Temple at Rome and Constantinople Jewish Counter-Geography in a Christianizing Empire."

Unit 6. The Arch of Titus: Middle Ages

Champagne in Fine, *The Arch of Titus*.

Daniella Di Castro, The Roman Jewish and the Investiture of the Popes. Fine, *The Menorah*, ch. 2.

Unit 7. Early Modern Period

Stenhouse, Fine on Moses Mendelssohn in Fine, *The Arch of Titus*.

Unit 8. The 19th and early 20th Centuries

Fine, *The Menorah*, ch. 3; in Wise, Schwartz, Fine, *The Arch of Titus*.

Unit 9. The Menorah in Modern Israel

Fine, *The Menorah*, ch. 4, 6, 7

Isaac Herzog, "The Shape of the Menorah in the Arch of Titus"

Lo Raq Semel

Unit 10. Menorah Myths

Fine, *The Menorah*, ch. 4.