

Undergraduate Prize Announcement:

The Leo Baeck Institute-NY Essay Prize in German-Jewish History and Culture

The Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies at Boston University in conjunction with the Leo Baeck Institute (New York) is pleased to announce the 2017 submission guidelines for the annual Leo Baeck Institute-NY undergraduate essay prize. The award is aimed at stimulating interest in the history and culture of German Jewry among undergraduates enrolled at North American colleges and universities.

Jewish history and culture in German-speaking countries dates back to Roman times, when Jews settled along the Rhine. In the Middle Ages, Jewish traders helped connect German villages with the wider world, while towns like Mainz, Speyer, and Worms became centers of Jewish learning in Europe. When medieval German Jews migrated to the East and established thriving communities in Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian lands, they took their Germanic dialect with them, creating the Yiddish vernacular as the hallmark of Ashkenasic culture. Jews were present at the diet of Worms, when Luther defended his ninety-five theses before Emperor Charles V. Later, the Berlin Enlightenment included the Jewish thinker Moses Mendelssohn, hailed as the “German Socrates,” and mixed salons heralded a new age of social mobility and cultural renewal. Over the following 150 years, German-speaking Jews would not only make key contributions to philosophy and psychoanalysis, politics and art, science and technology, and business and education, but also launch a religious renewal that would culminate in the various strands of reform, conservative, and neo-orthodoxy we recognize in North America today. Despite the formal emancipation of the Jews, however, a new and unforgiving form of Jew-hatred evolved that would soon destroy the German-Jewish community. The majority of German Jews managed to escape the Holocaust to other lands, under duress and often without resources. A small group returned to Germany after 1945, where they lived in often-difficult circumstances. The passing of the generation of Germans with a living memory of Nazism together with an influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union and Israel has created a completely new German-Jewish community.

This prize is aimed at stimulating greater interest in the German-Jewish experience and the many aspects of its rich religious and secular history. Students enrolled in an undergraduate program at a North American college or university are encouraged to submit an essay of between 4500 and 7500 words on any topic related to the history and cultures of German-speaking Jews. A cash prize of \$500 will accompany the award. The deadline is May 15, 2017. All inquiries and submissions for the prize should be submitted by email to [ewcjs@bu.edu](mailto:ewcjs@bu.edu), with “Leo Baeck-NY Prize” in the subject line.

**Eligibility:**

- 1) Only students officially enrolled in an undergraduate program of study at an accredited North-American college or university may compete. Undergraduates at any level from freshman to senior year are eligible.
- 2) All entries must be work submitted for a grade in an upper-division undergraduate or graduate level course counting toward the undergraduate degree. The course may be offered by any department, school, or program at an accredited institution. Portions of a thesis or similar project may also be submitted for consideration.
- 3) A student may submit only one paper per year for consideration.

**Requirements, procedures, and deadline for submissions:**

- 1) Essays must be between 4,500 and 7,500 words, including notes and bibliography, and submitted in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format. Entries must be written in English. The text should be free of all instructor's comments, corrections, and grades.
- 2) Each entry must be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from a supervising faculty member of up to 200 words in length explaining why s/he considers the essay worthy of consideration. Entries without such a recommendation will not be accepted.
- 3) No entries will be accepted after the deadline.

**Criteria and Process of Evaluation:**

- 1) While entries may include material not directly related to German Jews, they must engage substantially with a subject, theme, issue, or specific figure or figures relevant to German Jewry and its cultural or religious legacy.
- 2) Entries will be judged on originality, command of relevant criticism, cogency of thesis and argumentation, handling of evidence, and stylistic clarity and coherence.
- 3) The winner will be selected by a BU Elie Wiesel Center faculty committee.

**Award & Publication:**

In addition to the cash prize, winning entries may be eligible for publication in a future online open-access or print medium.