On 27 October 2018, Robert Bowers entered the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh carrying a Colt AR-15 rifle and three Glock .357 handguns. After announcing his hatred of Jews, he opened fire, killing 11 people. This was the deadliest attack on Jews in the United States.

On 11-12 August 2017, members of the alt-right, Neo-Nazis, neo-Confederates, white nationalists, and others descended on the UVA campus for the "Unite the Right" rally where they chanted—among other things—"Jews will not replace us." The violence culminated with James Alex Fields Jr. driving his car into the crowd of counterdemonstrators, killing one person and injuring 19 others.

These are just two of many examples of antisemitism in our society: in 2017 there were 1,986 incidents of antisemitism in the US, which marked a 57% rise from 2016. Between 2016-2017, these types of incidents on college campuses rose 89%.

In this course, students will investigate the origins of antisemitism in the ancient world and trace its various manifestations through the Crusades, the Inquisition, and into early 20th century. The course's primary goal, though, is to understand how that history relates to the 21st century and affects the communities—local and global—we live in.

This course is explicitly designed as an academic, intellectual response to the Charlottesville rally and the Pittsburgh attack. Any students who have an interest in contextualizing these events within a broader history of antisemitism are welcome in the class. The course does NOT assume prior knowledge of Religious Studies or Judaism.