

# History Access Reading Group

Meet with Professor Sarah Abrevaya Stein  
to discuss her new book:

*Making Jews Modern:  
The Yiddish and Ladino Press  
in the Russian and Ottoman Empires*

Friday, February 6

1:30 – 3:20

Smith 306

Please RSVP, (206) 543-5691

The book will be available at the UW bookstore at Will Call  
after December 24.

Ask for the “History Access Reading Group” selection.  
It may also be purchased on-line from Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

Book summary and study questions on the reverse.

On the eve of the 20th century, Jews in the Russian and Ottoman empires were caught up in the major cultural and social transformations that constituted modernity for Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jewries, respectively. What language should Jews speak or teach their children? Should Jews acculturate, and if so, into what regional or European culture? What did it mean to be Jewish and Russian, Jewish and Ottoman, Jewish and modern? Sarah Abrevaya Stein explores how such questions were formulated and answered within these communities by examining the texts most widely consumed by Jewish readers: popular newspapers in Yiddish and Ladino.

#### Study Questions:

1. What are the reasons for looking at the development of modern Yiddish and Ladino culture in tandem? Why have scholars of Jewish culture avoided such a comparative study before?
2. Why is the popular press a compelling source for the historian of modern Jewish culture?
3. What social, economic, cultural, and political factors shaped Jewish reading practices in the Russian and Ottoman Empires?
4. To what extent did turn-of-the-century readers of Yiddish and Ladino resemble one another? What are the most striking points of divergence in their histories?
5. How did the popular press in Jewish vernacular languages change Jewish culture in the Russian and Ottoman Empires?
6. Stein's Epilogue traces the history of Yiddish and Ladino, the Jewish popular press, and Russian and Ottoman Jewries forward in time, until the outbreak of the Second World War. In what ways was the impending fate of Yiddish and Ladino—and these Jewries—similar, and how did it differ?