Antisemitism in German Higher Education. Results from a Survey Experiment Among Students at a German University

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ABSTRACT. This study examines the extent of antisemitic bias in German higher education through a survey experiment conducted among students (N=1,416) at an average-sized German university in the fall of 2024/2025. Using a between-subjects design, participants were randomly assigned to evaluate English academic writing courses taught by fictitious instructors whose profiles varied by gender and ethnic/religious background—categorized as German, Israeli, and Jewish. Instructors were rated on sympathy and competence using a 7-point scale. While no significant differences emerged for competence ratings, results reveal notable bias in sympathy ratings: instructors identified as Jewish, particularly male Jewish instructors, received significantly lower ratings compared to their German counterparts. Instructors from Israel without a visible Jewish symbol were not rated significantly differently. There was also a gender bias, as female instructors with a German profile were rated less favorably than male instructors. Interestingly, the anti-Jewish bias was predominantly driven by female student raters, whereas male students primarily exhibited gender bias without significant antisemitic tendencies. These findings suggest that antisemitic motives, rather than anti-Israel sentiment, underlie the negative evaluations observed in this academic setting, and highlight the complex interplay between ethnic/religious prejudice and gender bias.

KEYWORDS: Antisemitism; German higher education; survey experiment; student evaluations; anti-Jewish bias; anti-Israel bias; gender bias; academia; university setting; vignette study

Introduction

The Hamas terrorist attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, in which numerous civilians were brutally murdered, injured, and taken hostage, triggered a global wave of antisemitism. In many countries, there was a significant increase in antisemitic incidents, including verbal and physical assaults on Jewish communities, antisemitic slogans at demonstrations, and vandalism of Jewish institutions (ADL 2024). Social media saw a surge in antisemitic conspiracy theories and open antisemitism, some of which justified, downplayed or even praised the terrorist attack.

Antisemitism on university campuses has received particular attention because it goes against the self-conception of universities as strongholds of enlightenment, reason and humanitarian values. While there has been a strong media focus on antisemitism on university campuses, empirical data on the topic is mostly based on observational data, such as surveys ethnographies, media and discourse analyses (Abrams and Armeni 2023; Helbling and Traunmüller 2024; Hinz, Marczuk, and Multrus 2024; Marcus 2007; Morstead and DeLongis 2025; Shenhav-Goldberg and Kopstein 2020; Wright et al. 2023; Wright et al. 2024).

Observational studies on antisemitism typically face problems of social desirability bias (Krumpal 2013), especially when dealing with sensitive topics such as opinions about Israel and attitudes towards Jews. Results from observational studies are likely to underreport and underestimate the true degree of antisemitism. In addition, results may be biased towards certain social groups, for instance, as more educated people may be more willing or more able to hide their true beliefs (Cheng 2022).

While experimental research on antisemitism does exist (see Beyer et al. 2025; Beyer and Krumpal 2010; Beyer and Krumpal 2013; Beyer and Liebe 2015; Cohen 2021; Cohen et al.

2009; Feinberg and Scott Lewis 2024; Krumpal 2012), it has been rare in university settings. In this study, we present the results of a survey experiment among students at an average-sized German university. The experiment examines biases in students' evaluations of course instructors. Participants are exposed to different instructor profiles, varying by gender and ethnic/religious background (German, Israeli, Israeli and Jewish), and are asked to rate them on sympathy and competence using a 7-point scale.

While we find no significant differences for competence, we do find notable bias in sympathy ratings. Instructors identified as Jewish are rated less favorably than their German counterparts. Furthermore, we find that the anti-Jewish bias is mainly observed for male Jewish instructors, and that the effect is mainly driven by female students. We also find that female instructors with a German background receive significantly lower sympathy ratings than their male German counterparts, suggesting gender bias towards female instructors, and that the effect is mainly driven by male students. Thus, unlike female students, male students do not show anti-Jewish bias but they do show gender bias towards German female instructors. Overall, the findings suggest that antisemitic motives may drive subjective evaluations of instructors on a German university campus.

Theoretical considerations and empirical findings

Our understanding of anti-Jewish bias and anti-Israel bias based on the IHRA (2016) working definition of antisemitism which states: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." The definition contains a number of examples. The first one relates antisemitism to anti-Israel

bias and a legitimate criticism of Israel: "Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic." As with any definition, this one generalizes from specific manifestations, expressions, historical trajectories, situational factors, key actors, and other elements that are essential for a context-sensitive understanding of the phenomenon. Antisemitism is highly adaptable and can align with a wide range of ideological, religious, and political beliefs. Within these particular belief-related contexts, it is framed in a way that makes it appear plausible.

Modern antisemitism can be conceptualized alongside other resentments against groups and minorities that "rationalize institutional exclusion, devaluation, and consequently, physical violence against a minority" (Rensmann 2022). This represents the generalizable dimension of antisemitism, which must be analytically distinguished from its specific dimension. The latter consists of "providing a comprehensive explanation of the (modern) world and its complex processes and conflicts by imagining Jews as the 'puppet masters' of world affairs" (Rensmann 2022). Social psychological models suggest that modern antisemitism involves projections of instinctual demands and an image of the Jew that is detached from reality and empirical Jewish life. The characteristics attributed to Jews, such as as liberality, a sense of community, dynamism and innovation, expressiveness, and cleverness "are portrayed as despicable," yet, as Leo Löwenthal aptly observes, they are "desirable advantages in the individual's struggle for existence" (Löwenthal 2021:95), which the antisemite envies in the image of the Jew. Thus, antisemitism is not merely a mistaken but rational perception of the world; rather, it is an "affect that seeks rationalization" (Grimm and Kahmann 2018:11) and a set of detached perceptions that crystallize into a worldview and an attitude towards the world.

Israel-related antisemitism is one of the most widespread forms of contemporary antisemitism. It adapts and perpetuates classic antisemitic images. In many cases, age-old antisemitic stereotypes and defamations are recast in contemporary political terms, describing Israel and Zionism in ways historically applied to Jews and Judaism. In this way, Israel (mordantly characterized as the "Jew of the nations") is portrayed as demonically powerful, as conspiratorial, and as a malignant force responsible for the world`s evils" (Marcus 2013).

In terms of the content of anti-Jewish prejudice, the *Stereotype Content Model* (SCM) argues that Jews are seen as less likeable/warm but more competent than Christians (Fiske et al. 2002:892), and less likeable but more competent than average white-collar workers (Asbrock 2010:79). Besides antisemitism, anti-Israel bias refers to prejudiced attitudes, unfair criticism, or discriminatory behavior directed specifically at the State of Israel, often rooted in political, ideological, or cultural opposition to its policies, existence, or actions (Wistrich 2016). This bias can manifest itself in various ways, such as disproportionately singling out Israel for condemnation, applying double standards in evaluating its conduct compared to other nations, or denying its right to exist as a sovereign state. Importantly, anti-Israel bias can sometimes overlap with antisemitism, but it is distinct in that it primarily targets the nation or its policies rather than the Jewish people as a whole.

Antisemitism in Higher Education

Antisemitism is a form of prejudice that has presented itself with various legitimizations, leading to its spread throughout different eras and social contexts. This includes its resurgence based on narratives about the State of Israel and its presence in academia (Lasson 2019; Shainkman 2019). While education is now well-established as a factor that reduces prejudice, academic contexts are not immune to antisemitic narratives. The

perception of universities „as places of culture in a chaotic world, as protectors of reasoned discourse" (Lasson 2019:292) fails to take into account the history of antisemitism and especially the role of researchers and faculty in eugenics and the Holocaust. While crimes such as experiments on inmates in concentration camps were committed by German scientists, they were generally "greeted by the academic establishment as high-quality, worthy material" and "presented at prestigious conferences and scientific academies" (Bauman 1991:49). The Nazi movement was strong early on in the universities and among faculty as well as students (Sosada 2024:53). The role of academics as authority figures makes it particularly relevant to consider the spread of antisemitism in these contexts, as they establish new ways of thinking and speaking that precede actions. Antisemitism requires intellectuals who continually reinvent the phenomenon (Kosmin 2018:79f.), giving the hatred of Jews the more sophisticated-sounding name 'antisemitism', as Wilhelm Marr did, and creating organizational structures that appeal to their academically educated audience, just as Heinrich von Treitschke did when he founded the *Antisemitenliga*. The fact that education, culture, and antisemitism are not mutually exclusive is demonstrated by cultural history: from the antisemitism in Richard Wagner's operas to antisemitic characters in Fyodor Dostoevsky's works and the antisemitic kitsch propaganda at Documenta fifteen.

Antisemitism in academia does not primarily rely on physical violence, but rather directs the conceptual work necessary to open new avenues for antisemitism: to delegitimize Israel and reduce the Holocaust to one crime among many (Chaouat 2016; Haas 2024). American higher education in the early 20th century was an environment in which "Jewish faculty were rare and generally unwelcome" (Winston 2019:97). Lasson (2019) highlights the 1980s and early 2000s as periods in which Jewish students experienced increased harassment on American campuses due to rising anti-Israel sentiment. This has continued

into the 2020s: according to a report from 2023 by the Community Security Trust (Harris and Goldberg 2023), 150 antisemitic incidents were reported at universities in the UK between 2020 and 2022, a 22% increase from 2018-20. Jewish students often face hostility, exclusion, or harassment, particularly in political debates about Israel.

In the wake of the Hamas terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, many Western university campuses witnessed another surge of increased antisemitic incidents. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL 2024) reported more than 10,000 antisemitic incidents in the US between October 2023 and September 2024, with at least 1,200 occurring on college campuses—a 500% increase from the previous year. Several incidents took place at German universities as well. For instance, antisemitic graffiti and Hamas symbols were discovered on campus buildings in October 2024 (Die Welt 2024). Buildings at both the Humboldt University and the Free University of Berlin were defaced with Hamas symbols (Der Spiegel 2024); the Free University Berlin cancelled an exhibition on antisemitic pogroms for fears of protests (Crossland 2024).

With two notable exceptions (Helbling and Traunmüller 2024; Hinz et al. 2024), academic research on antisemitism at German universities remains relatively rare, despite these increases in anti-Jewish incidents. Two national surveys offer some insight into educated young adults in West Germany. Young adults in West Germany and men in general are more likely to hold antisemitic beliefs than older adults, East Germans and women, while the more educated people hold less antisemitic beliefs (Decker, Kiess and Brähler 2024; Decker et al. 2024; Zick and Mokros 2023).

The most recent study by Hinz et al. (2024) surveyed over 2,000 students in December 2023 to assess students' perspectives on the Israel-Gaza conflict and antisemitism at German universities. Findings reveal that while the majority viewed Hamas's attack on

Israel as an act of terrorism, around 12% saw it as part of a legitimate Palestinian liberation struggle. Additionally, 8% of students displayed general antisemitic attitudes, with a higher prevalence among those identifying as Muslim or with family origins in regions neighboring the conflict. The study also highlights that both Jewish and Muslim students frequently reported experiencing discrimination on the basis of their religious affiliation within the university environment. For Muslim students, this discrimination may contribute to their anti-Israel bias (Edthofer 2018).

Another recent exception is a study by Helbling and Traunmüller (2024), who find that young, left-wing academics support Palestine without being antisemitic. They conclude that there is no general anti-Jewish bias in German academia. It should be noted, however, that they base this conclusion on their results for respondents with a university degree, so it is not clear how this result would transfer to undergraduates, or more specifically, to those working in universities.

To summarize, while Western universities have not historically been free of antisemitism, recent events have led to increased public discourse about the extent of antisemitism on university campuses. Current research, however, has been inconclusive on this issue. Based on these theoretical and empirical considerations, we propose the following hypotheses, which we will test experimentally in the empirical setting of a university:

*Hypothesis 1, anti-Jewish bias***:** Individuals identified as Jewish are subject to negative biases in evaluations, reflecting underlying antisemitic attitudes.

*Hypothesis 2, anti-Israel bias***:** Individuals associated with Israel are subject to negative biases in evaluations, suggesting that anti-Israel sentiment does play a substantial role in shaping perceptions or attitudes.

Data and methods

Sample

In the fall semester of 2024, we conducted a survey experiment among students of an average-sized German university. The experiment was designed to assess the students' perceptions of potential language courses designed to improve their English academic writing skills. Based on a complete list of all students, we sent out 20,902 email invitations. A total of 2,738 students accepted the invitation, 1,416 students responded to the two main dependent variables, and 1,335 students completed the survey to the last page. This yields a response rate of 13.1% (gross sample), 6.7% (realized sample) and 6.4% (net sample), respectively. Data and a replication file for this study are available for download at Open Science Framework.[1]

Treatment

Following the acceptance of the invitation, the survey randomly selected the respondents into one of six treatment groups. Each treatment group presented a vignette of two prospective English academic writing courses (one basic course and one advanced course) as an extracurricular option for the students to take in one of the future semesters. The vignette contained a brief description of the course along with information on the course instructor. See Appendix A and B for the original vignettes along with an English translation.

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[1] See the following link: <https://osf.io/nf2qs/?view_only=d2761748e02748a7b04cca598ebb8d2b>

Each course description presents a brief biographical section about the course instructor along with a picture. The information about the course instructor forms the primary experimental focus, which we systematically varied across a series of 2x3=6 dimensions. Two dimensions assess the instructor's gender (female and male). The picture of the instructor shows a woman in the female condition and a man in the male condition, along with the instructor's first and last name. The remaining three dimensions assess ethnic/religious bias, encompassing a 'German' condition, an 'Israeli' condition, and an 'Israeli and Jewish' condition. The instructor's biographical information in the German condition provides a short biography with no connection to Israel and no religious symbols. The first name and surname in the German condition did not appear to have any connection with Jewish heritage ('Georg Schmidt' and 'Julia Schmidt' respectively). The short biography states that the person was born in Germany, grew up in Lisbon, Portugal, studied at the University of Lisbon first and then at the University of Augsburg in Germany. The Israeli condition includes the same (male or female) photograph and brief biography, except that it indicates the instructor's place of birth as Israel, their initial studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and (as in the German condition) subsequent enrolment at the University of Augsburg. The instructor's name, 'Levitt Weizmann' for the male and 'Hannah Weizmann' for the female instructor, appears to have German roots, while also evoking Israeli-Jewish connotations. The third condition presents the same information as in the Israeli condition, but with an additional element: the instructor is depicted wearing a necklace with a small Star of David. Apart from this detail, the images remained consistent across all male and female conditions.

Experimental Design

We utilize a between-subjects design, in which each respondent is randomly assigned to a single condition, unaware of the existence of other conditions. This design prevents

respondents from recognizing the true purpose of the study, in this case, the study of antisemitism. Instead, it creates the illusion that respondents are participating in a study that focuses on their subjective opinions regarding an English language course offer for a future extracurricular program. Therefore, the design mitigates the potential for respondents to provide socially desirable responses.

Outcome variable

After the respondents were invited to the survey and assigned to one of the six conditions, they were presented with the two course descriptions as well as the biographical information and the picture of the instructor. They were then asked to rate the instructor on the basis of two dimensions, which function as our main dependent variables. On a 7-point scale, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements 'The course instructor seems likeable' and 'The course instructor seems competent'. Additionally, respondents were asked about the appeal of the course content and their willingness to enroll in similar courses. These survey items were included in order to ensure the aim of the study and make it look more realistic to the students. Consequently, these variables are not considered as dependent variables in this study.

Covariates & analytical strategy

We control for the gender of the student as well as their academic rank (undergraduate vs. graduate). We also control for migrant background, which we operationalize by asking what other language they speak at home with their families/relatives. The sample consists of 60% female respondents, 71% of undergraduate students, and 40% of students with migrant background. We estimate OLS models on the 7-point dependent variables "sympathy" and "competence". Each model starts with a baseline model estimating the

treatment effects without controlling for any covariates; the subsequent models enter the covariates successively.

Results

Descriptive findings

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, sample sizes, and ranges) for the two outcome variables–sympathy and competence–by the six treatment groups, (female/male) German course instructor, (female/male) Israeli course instructor, and (female/male) Jewish course instructor. The statistics are shown overall for the full sample as well as for male and female student respondents separately. As can be seen, both sympathy and competence are rated generally very positive on a 1–7 scale, with overall means of 5.84 for sympathy and 5.82 for competence. The 'German' condition (both for the male and female versions) tends to be rated slightly higher compared to the 'Israeli' and 'Israeli and Jewish' conditions. In the Jewish condition, ratings are generally the lowest for both sympathy and competence. Across all experimental conditions, female students consistently provide higher ratings than male students for both outcome variables (generally between 0.3 and 0.5 points). The gender gap is most pronounced in the German condition, especially in the female German condition for sympathy as well as in the male German condition for competence. The gap remains in the Israeli condition and becomes slightly smaller in the Jewish condition. Therefore, gender differences seem to be robust across the conditions, with female students generally perceiving both sympathy and competence more favorably than their male counterparts. As for rating differences between male and female instructors, the male condition scores slightly higher in the German condition, while the differences in the Israeli/ Jewish conditions are minimal.

[**Table 1 about here**]

Regression results

Table 2 shows the results of OLS regressions on the 7-point dependent variables of the subjective "sympathy" (Models 1-3) and "competence" (Models 4-6) of the course instructor. The models in this table estimate the treatment effects collectively, with the condition 'male German instructor' serving as the reference category. If we compare the results between the two outcome variable sympathy and competence, the ratings of the course instructors reveal no significant differences in subjectively assessed competence, yet they do so in sympathy. Among the sympathy outcome, the 'Israeli' condition does not differ significantly from the German one, the 'Jewish' condition exhibits significant differences to the reference category, the male German profile. For the male Jewish instructor, the mean difference ranges from -.203 to -.291 scale points (Models 1 to 3) to the male German instructor. In the first model (Model 1), which includes no control variables, the difference is not significant. It becomes significant after we control for the gender of the student rater in Model 2, which suggests a gendered pattern (which we further examine below). For the female Jewish instructor, the mean differences range from -.342 to -.352 scale points, with statistically significant differences throughout all models. The female German instructor is also rated significantly more negative than the male German instructor, indicating evidence of gender bias towards female instructors.

[**Table 2 about here**]

Table 3 splits the analysis according to the gender of the course instructor for the sympathy rating. This time, there is no significant anti-Jewish bias observable for the female instructor (the coefficient is almost zero with -.0938 in Model 3), as can be seen in Models 1 to 4. This suggest that the significant differences for the female Jewish instructor that we

see in Table 2 come entirely from differences in comparison with the male German instructor. The differences therefore come from gender bias rather than anti-Jewish bias. Any anti-Jewish bias is measurable only among the male instructors, as Models 5 to 8 in Table 3 suggest. However, again, the coefficients become significant only after we control for the gender of the students. This suggests a gendered rating pattern among the students, which we further examine in Table 4.

[**Table 3 about here**]

Table 4 presents the analysis divided by female/male raters (i.e., students) as well as by female/male instructors on the dependent variable "sympathy". For comparison, the first two models estimate all conditions together, again with the male German profile as reference category. The subsequent models then estimate the conditions by female/male instructors separately. Model 1 in Table 4 shows the ratings by female students, Model 2 the ratings by male students. As can be seen from Model 1, female students show significant anti-Jewish bias in their ratings, while male students do show significant gender bias, though no anti-Jewish bias. For male students, the anti-Jewish bias shows a mean difference of -.229 scale points, however, but it is not statistically significant. It is possible that if the sample size had been larger, this difference might have reached statistical significance. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the non-significance of this result comes from non-relevance or from the relatively smaller sample of male students, which produces less statistical power. In any case, however, the effect for female students in Model 1 is notably larger, with an effect size of -.313 scale points for the male Jewish instructor and -.373 for the female Jewish instructor. This suggests stronger evidence of anti-Jewish bias among female students than among male students.

Since the coefficients in Models 1 to 2 all relate to the male German instructor as the reference group, Models 3 to 6 turn to same- as well as to cross-gender comparisons for a more nuanced analysis. Model 3 to 4 show same-gender comparisons, while Models 5 to 6 deal with cross-gender comparisons. Regarding same-gender comparisons, the results do not appear to suggest any anti-Jewish or anti-Israel bias, although the differences for the Jewish instructor are negative but not significant. Therefore, it seems that anti-Jewish bias seems to be stronger when it comes to cross-gender comparisons, i.e., female students rating male instructors. Models 5 to 6 provide evidence for this. In the cross-gender comparison (Models 5 to 6), anti-Jewish bias is significant for female students on the ratings of male instructors. Again, anti-Jewish bias does not to appear evident among male students. Therefore, the overall bias that we saw in the previous models is driven predominatly by animosity expressed by female students towards male Jewish instructors.

[**Table 4 about here**]

Conclusion

To the best of our knowledge, this study is one of the first to provide evidence on antisemitism in a university setting based on an experimental design. While prior studies have mostly been observational, the contribution of this study is to provide causal evidence of anti-Jewish and anti-Israel bias.

The analysis finds no significant differences in perceived competence of course instructors, but does reveal bias in sympathy ratings. Female instructors with a German background receive significantly lower sympathy ratings than male instructors, indicating a possible gender bias towards women. Anti-Jewish bias is mainly observed for male Jewish

instructors, driven primarily by female students' ratings. Male students exhibit gender bias but no significant anti-Jewish bias. The analysis does not find any significant differences with regard to instructors from Israel without openly Jewish connotations. This suggests that antisemitic motives rather than anti-Israel sentiment seems to influence subjective ratings, with female students being the main source of negative ratings for male but not for female Jewish instructors.

At the respondent level, these results contradict previous observational research on antisemitism among young Germans: male students would be expected to be more antisemitic (Zick & Mokros 2023), but we find that anti-Jewish bias is expressed mainly by female students. While this is a puzzling result, one possible explanation could be psychological research arguing that harm-aversion and self-protection within one's own social environment tends to have higher evolutionary fitness value for women, with the possible consequence of censoring or opposing others when they do not conform to one's own attitudes or preferences (Armstrong, Friesdorf, and Conway 2019; Benenson, Webb, and Wrangham 2022; Clark et al. 2024; Hess et al. 2010). An alternative explanation for this result is offered by the hypothesis that male outgroup members experience more discrimination than female outgroup members, with male and female ingroup members likely having different motivations for this behavior (Navarrete et al. 2010; Veenstra 2013). This may be compounded by women being socialized to display more empathy (Baez et al. 2017; Löffler and Greitemeyer 2023) and/or the notion that Palestinian struggles are a specifically feminist issue (see for example Pratt et al. 2025; Sharoni et al. 2015).

At the instructor level, our results partly support Fiske et al. (2002), with Jewish instructors being perceived as less likeable but not less competent than non-religious instructors. Our findings confirm this primarily for male Jewish instructors. While this gendered effect may

be somewhat unexpected, it does align with the finding by Enstad (2024) that Jewish men are more likely to experience negative treatment than Jewish women. Enstad's finding that wearing Jewish identity symbols increases the risk of negative treatment is also in line with our results.

Regarding the two recent German studies on antisemitism, Hinz et al. (2024) and Helbling and Traunmüller (2024), our results are consistent with and extend those of Hinz et al. (2024) and Helbling and Traunmüller (2024) in several respects. Similar to Hinz et al. (2024), who document survey evidence of general antisemitic attitudes among university students—with a minority expressing legitimizing views of the Israel-Gaza conflict—we provide experimental evidence by showing that such biases manifest specifically as a rejection of Jewish individuals in terms of perceived warmth or sympathy, while competence evaluations remain unaffected. This finding is noteworthy because it delineates the dimensions of antisemitism that may not be captured by observational methods alone.

In contrast to Helbling and Traunmüller (2024), who argue that there is no general anti-Jewish bias in German academia based on a sample of highly educated respondents, our study, conducted among a broader student population, reveals a more nuanced pattern. Our findings suggest that anti-Jewish bias is particularly evident in the evaluation of male Jewish instructors and is primarily driven by female students. This suggests that, while a general bias may not be evident among academics, antisemitic sentiments can emerge in specific evaluative contexts within the student body.

While this study is the first to provide insights into antisemitic biases in (German) higher education through experimental evidence, yet it is important to acknowledge several limitations that could influence the interpretation of its findings. First, the research was

conducted at a single mid-sized German university, which raises questions about the generalizability of the results to other institutions across Germany or in different cultural contexts. Student populations in other regions or countries might differ in their attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, the voluntary nature of survey participation introduces potential sampling and response biases. Students who opted to participate might systematically differ from those who did not, possibly skewing the data in ways that under- or overestimate the prevalence of antisemitic attitudes. However, according to official university statistics, our sample is consistent with the proportions of undergraduates and graduate students as well as between male/female students.

Another limitation arises from the vignette design itself. While our between design is an improvement over within-designs and provides results of relatively high internal validity, vignettes in general cannot fully capture the complexity and nuance of actual interpersonal real-life dynamics within academic settings. Furthermore, even though the study controls for factors such as student gender, academic rank, and migrant background, there may be additional unobserved confounding variables—such as prior exposure to antisemitic discourse or personal experiences—that could affect the outcomes.

Finally, the research was conducted in the immediate aftermath of a global surge in antisemitism triggered by a significant geopolitical event. This temporal context might have amplified certain biases, making it challenging to determine whether the observed effects are enduring features of student attitudes or reactions to a specific moment in time. Taken together, these limitations suggest that while the study contributes valuable experimental evidence to the discussion of antisemitism in higher education, its findings should always be interpreted with caution and viewed as a foundation for further, more broadly representative research.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Descriptive overview for the two outcome variables by the six treatment groups, overall and by gender of student respondent

Instructor category (treatment group)		Outcome 1 „Sympathy"					Outcome 2 „Competence"				
		Mean	SD	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	N	Min	Max
Male German	overall	6.00	1.27	215	1	7	5.89	1.31	215	1	7
	female students only	6.21	1.04	115	1	7	6.11	1.04	115	1	7
	male students only	5.83	1.40	83	1	7	5.64	1.54	83	1	7
Male Israeli	overall	5.87	1.31	238	1	7	5.89	1.28	238	1	7
	female students only	6.04	1.23	140	2	7	6.06	1.21	140	1	7
	male students only	5.69	1.27	81	1	7	5.68	1.24	81	1	7
Male Jewish	overall	5.79	1.47	246	1	7	5.74	1.40	246	1	7
	female students only	5.91	1.43	159	1	7	5.82	1.35	159	1	7
	male students only	5.59	1.59	78	1	7	5.67	1.53	78	1	7
Female German	overall	5.81	1.36	264	1	7	5.75	1.36	264	1	7
	female students only	6.08	1.11	154	1	7	5.93	1.21	154	1	7
	male students only	5.39	1.53	95	1	7	5.48	1.51	95	1	7
Female Israeli	overall	5.96	1.30	205	1	7	5.88	1.34	205	1	7
	female students only	6.15	1.28	123	1	7	6.04	1.24	123	1	7
	male students only	5.76	1.14	66	2	7	5.76	1.30	66	2	7
Female Jewish	overall	5.65	1.58	248	1	7	5.77	1.41	248	1	7
	female students only	5.86	1.54	148	1	7	5.93	1.35	148	1	7
	male students only	5.58	1.38	86	1	7	5.69	1.20	86	1	7
Total	overall	5.84	1.39	1416	1	7	5.82	1.35	1416	1	7
	female students only	6.03	1.30	838	1	7	5.97	1.25	838	1	7
	male students only	5.63	1.41	487	1	7	5.64	1.40	487	1	7

Table 2: Results of OLS regressions on the subjective rating of the course instructor's "sympathy" (Models 1-4) and "competence" (Models 5-8)

	(1) Sympathy	(2) Sympathy	(3) Sympathy	(4) Sympathy	(5) Com-petence	(6) Com-petence	(7) Com-petence	(8) Com-petence
Male German instructor	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*
Male Israeli instructor	-0.130 (-0.99)	-0.177 (-1.35)	-0.184 (-1.41)	-0.189 (-1.45)	0.00659 (0.05)	-0.0264 (-0.21)	-0.0282 (-0.22)	-0.0309 (-0.24)
Male Jewish instructor	-0.203 (-1.56)	-0.288* (-2.23)	-0.288* (-2.23)	-0.291* (-2.26)	-0.149 (-1.17)	-0.186 (-1.48)	-0.179 (-1.41)	-0.180 (-1.43)
Female German instructor	-0.189 (-1.48)	-0.255* (-2.01)	-0.259* (-2.04)	-0.259* (-2.04)	-0.135 (-1.08)	-0.190 (-1.53)	-0.183 (-1.47)	-0.183 (-1.47)
Female Israeli instructor	-0.0393 (-0.29)	-0.0662 (-0.49)	-0.0878 (-0.64)	-0.0927 (-0.68)	-0.0103 (-0.08)	-0.00673 (-0.05)	-0.00377 (-0.03)	-0.00662 (-0.05)
Female Jewish instructor	-0.342** (-2.64)	-0.344** (-2.67)	-0.352** (-2.73)	-0.352** (-2.73)	-0.122 (-0.97)	-0.123 (-0.97)	-0.121 (-0.96)	-0.120 (-0.95)
Student: female		0.422*** (5.57)	0.416*** (5.45)	0.409*** (5.40)		0.357*** (4.81)	0.349*** (4.68)	0.345*** (4.63)
Student: under-graduate			-0.105 (-1.29)	-0.0908 (-1.12)			0.0455 (0.57)	0.0537 (0.68)
Student: migrant background				-0.293*** (-3.89)				-0.172* (-2.32)
Constant	5.995*** (63.19)	5.810*** (55.99)	5.899*** (48.51)	6.010*** (48.37)	5.888*** (63.75)	5.714*** (56.27)	5.689*** (47.82)	5.754*** (47.16)
Observations	1416	1348	1333	1333	1416	1348	1333	1333
Adjusted R^2	0.003	0.025	0.025	0.035	-0.001	0.016	0.014	0.018
rmse	1.391	1.346	1.346	1.339	1.354	1.317	1.317	1.315
F	1.818	6.756	5.844	7.062	0.705	4.640	3.754	3.971

Notes: t statistics in parentheses; $^+ p < 0.10$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$

Table 3: Results of OLS regressions on the subjective rating of the course instructor's "sympathy," split by female instructors (Models 1-4) and male instructors (Models 5-8)

	(1) Sympathy (female instructor only)	(2) Sympathy (female instructor only)	(3) Sympathy (female instructor only)	(4) Sympathy (female instructor only)	(5) Sympathy (male instructor only)	(6) Sympathy (male instructor only)	(7) Sympathy (male instructor only)	(8) Sympathy (male instructor only)
Female German instructor	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*				
Female Israeli instructor	0.149 (1.13)	0.186 (1.43)	0.170 (1.29)	0.166 (1.26)				
Female Jewish instructor	-0.154 (-1.22)	-0.0899 (-0.73)	-0.0933 (-0.75)	-0.0926 (-0.75)				
Male German instructor					*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*
Male Israeli instructor					-0.130 (-1.02)	-0.173 (-1.34)	-0.183 (-1.41)	-0.189 (-1.47)
Male Jewish instructor					-0.203 (-1.60)	-0.281* (-2.21)	-0.284* (-2.21)	-0.288* (-2.26)
Student: female		0.488*** (4.53)	0.482*** (4.44)	0.470*** (4.34)		0.353*** (3.32)	0.347** (3.24)	0.347** (3.26)
Student: under-graduate			-0.0715 (-0.62)	-0.0537 (-0.47)			-0.144 (-1.25)	-0.135 (-1.18)
Student: migrant background				-0.251* (-2.33)				-0.335** (-3.18)
Constant	5.807*** (66.21)	5.515*** (51.23)	5.576*** (40.89)	5.670*** (39.98)	5.995*** (64.85)	5.849*** (52.66)	5.968*** (41.56)	6.096*** (41.14)
Observations	717	682	673	673	699	666	660	660
Adjusted R^2	0.004	0.032	0.029	0.036	0.001	0.017	0.018	0.032
rmse	1.425	1.363	1.364	1.359	1.356	1.329	1.328	1.319
F	2.546	8.452	6.099	5.997	1.302	4.933	4.044	5.298

Notes: t statistics in parentheses; $^+ p < 0.10$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$

Table 4: Results of OLS regressions on the subjective rating of the course instructor's "sympathy," split by female and male students (Models 1-2) and by same-gender ratings (Model 3: female students on female instructors; Model 4: male students on male instructors) and cross-gender ratings (Model 5: male students on female instructors; Model 6: female students on male instructors)

	(1) Sympathy (female students only)	(2) Sympathy (male students only)	(3) Sympathy (female students/ female instructors only)	(4) Sympathy (male students/ male instructors only)	(5) Sympathy (male students/ female instructors only)	(6) Sympathy (female students/ male instructors only)
Male German instructor	*Ref. cat.*	*Ref. cat.*		*Ref. cat.*		*Ref. cat.*
Male Israeli instructor	-0.198 (-1.21)	-0.143 (-0.66)		-0.142 (-0.64)		-0.196 (-1.23)
Male Jewish instructor	-0.313* (-1.97)	-0.229 (-1.03)		-0.233 (-1.03)		-0.312* (-2.02)
Female German instructor	-0.145 (-0.91)	-0.433* (-2.05)	*Ref. cat.*		*Ref. cat.*	
Female Israeli instructor	-0.0982 (-0.58)	-0.0791 (-0.34)	0.0486 (0.30)		0.357 (1.60)	
Female Jewish instructor	-0.373* (-2.32)	-0.245 (-1.14)	-0.227 (-1.49)		0.187 (0.91)	
Student: under-graduate	-0.147 (-1.50)	-0.0500 (-0.35)	-0.172 (-1.21)	-0.141 (-0.66)	0.0323 (0.16)	-0.124 (-0.91)
Student: migrant background	-0.309*** (-3.34)	-0.185 (-1.43)	-0.254^{+} (-1.89)	-0.224 (-1.19)	-0.151 (-0.84)	-0.363** (-2.85)
Constant	6.453*** (44.54)	5.945*** (30.34)	6.304*** (41.85)	6.028*** (25.23)	5.437*** (25.13)	6.458*** (39.78)
Observations	829	484	420	241	243	409
Adjusted R^2	0.017	0.000	0.012	-0.005	-0.003	0.022
rmse	1.288	1.398	1.324	1.426	1.375	1.253
F	3.105	1.009	2.267	0.688	0.817	3.301

Notes: t statistics in parentheses; $^{+} p < 0.10$, $^{*} p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$

Appendix

Appendix A: Vignettes used in this study; German original and translated into English

A1: Sample vignette, composed of course description 1 and instructor profile:

Basic English Proficiency

Zielgruppe: Studierende aller Fachrichtungen mit grundlegenden Englischkenntnissen

Dauer: zweitägige Blockveranstaltung während der Vorlesungszeit

Kursbeschreibung: Der Kurs ist darauf ausgerichtet, die sprachlichen Fähigkeiten von Studierenden aufzufrischen und zu vertiefen. Der Fokus liegt auf der Weiterentwicklung der mündlichen und schriftlichen Kommunikationsfähigkeiten. Die Teilnehmenden werden durch interaktive Aktivitäten, Diskussionen, Präsentationen und Leseverständnisübungen gefördert.
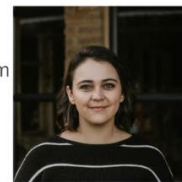
Kursinhalte:
- akademisches Schreiben für Studierende aller Fachrichtungen
- Verbesserung der schriftlichen Ausdrucksfähigkeiten
- Erweiterung und Training mündlicher Kommunikationsfähigkeiten
- Schulung in professionellen Präsentationstechniken
- wissenschaftliches Leseverständnis: Übungen zum Verstehen und Interpretieren von wissenschaftlichen Texten

Teilnahmebestätigung: Die Teilnehmenden erhalten nach erfolgreichem Abschluss des Kurses eine Teilnahmebestätigung.

Die Kursleiterin

M.A. Julia Schmidt
Die gebürtige Deutsche wuchs in Lissabon auf und schloss ihr Studium an der Universidade de Lisboa in Lissabon mit einem Bachelor-Abschluss in Anglistik ab. Sie setzte ihre akademische Reise an der Universität Augsburg fort, wo sie einen Master in professioneller Kommunikation erwarb. Als erfahrene Dozentin bringt sie Kenntnisse im Bereich fortgeschrittener sprachlicher Kompetenzen mit. Ihre Lehrmethoden kombinieren anspruchsvolle Texte, wissenschaftliche Diskussionen und praxisorientierte Übungen, um Studierenden mit sehr guten Englischkenntnissen eine herausfordernde und bereichernde Lernerfahrung zu bieten. Sie strebt danach, die Studierenden in ihrer akademischen und beruflichen Entwicklung zu unterstützen, indem sie fortgeschrittene sprachliche Kompetenzen in verschiedenen Kontexten fördert.

Translation of course description 1:

"Basic English Proficiency

Target group: students of all disciplines with a basic knowledge of English

Duration: two-day block course during the lecture period

Course description: The course is designed to refresh and deepen students' language skills. The focus is on developing oral and written communication skills. Participants will improve through interactive activities, discussions, presentations and reading comprehension exercises.

Course content:
- academic writing for students of all disciplines
- improvement of written expression skills
- enhancement and training of oral communication skills
- training in professional presentation techniques

- academic reading comprehension: exercises in understanding and interpreting academic texts.

Certificate of attendance: Participants will receive a certificate of attendance upon successful completion of the course."

A2: Sample vignette, composed of course description 2 and instructor profile:

Advanced English Mastery

Zielgruppe: Studierende aller Fachrichtungen mit guten bis sehr guten Englischkenntnissen

Dauer: zweitägige Blockveranstaltung während der Vorlesungszeit

Kursbeschreibung: Der Kurs richtet sich an Studierende mit bereits sehr guten Englischkenntnissen, die ihre sprachlichen Fähigkeiten auf ein höchstes Niveau bringen möchten. Der Kurs legt besonderen Wert auf die Verbesserung des sprachlichen Ausdrucks, sowohl mündlich als auch schriftlich. Die Teilnehmenden werden durch anspruchsvolle Texte, Diskussionen und komplexe schriftliche Aufgaben herausgefordert.

Kursinhalte:
- akademisches Schreiben auf Expertenebene, Verfeinerung der schriftlichen Ausdrucksfähigkeiten für verschiedene akademische Disziplinen auf fortgeschrittenem Niveau
- mündliche Kommunikation in der Forschung: Entwicklung von Kommunikationsfähigkeiten für Konferenzen, Diskussionen und wissenschaftliche Präsentationen
- fortgeschrittene Berufskommunikation: Anwendung von Sprachkenntnissen in akademischen Kontexten
- fortgeschrittenes wissenschaftliches Leseverständnis: Vertiefung des Verständnisses und der Analyse von komplexen wissenschaftlichen Texten

Teilnahmebestätigung: Die Teilnehmenden erhalten nach erfolgreichem Abschluss des Kurses eine Teilnahmebestätigung.

Der Kursleiter

M.A. Levitt Weizmann
Der gebürtige Israeli wuchs in Jerusalem auf und schloss sein Studium an der Hebrew University in Jerusalem mit einem Bachelor-Abschluss in Anglistik ab. Er setzte seine akademische Reise an der Universität Augsburg fort, wo er einen Master in professioneller Kommunikation erwarb. Als erfahrener Dozent bringt er Kenntnisse im Bereich fortgeschrittener sprachlicher Kompetenzen mit. Seine Lehrmethoden kombinieren anspruchsvolle Texte, wissenschaftliche Diskussionen und praxisorientierte Übungen, um Studierenden mit sehr guten Englischkenntnissen eine herausfordernde und bereichernde Lernerfahrung zu bieten. Er strebt danach, die Studierenden in ihrer akademischen und beruflichen Entwicklung zu unterstützen, indem er fortgeschrittene sprachliche Kompetenzen in verschiedenen Kontexten fördert.

Translation of course description 2:

"**Advanced English Mastery**

Target group: students of all disciplines with a very good command of English

Duration: two-day block course during the lecture period

Course description: The Advanced English Mastery course is aimed at students who already have a very good command of English and wish to improve their language skills to the highest level. The course places particular emphasis on improving language expression, both oral and written. The participants are challenged by demanding texts, discussions and complex written tasks.

Course content:

● expert-level academic writing; refinement of written expression skills for various academic disciplines at an advanced level

● oral communication in research: developing oral communication skills for conferences, discussions and scientific presentations

● advanced professional communication: application of language skills in professional contexts for academics

● advanced scientific reading comprehension: deepening the understanding and analysis of complex scientific texts.

Certificate of attendance: Participants will receive a certificate of attendance upon successful completion of the course."

Appendix B: Instructor profiles

B1: Male German instructor

Teilnahmebestätigung: Die Teilnehmenden erhalten nach erfolgreichem Abschluss des Kurses eine Teilnahmebestätigung.

Der Kursleiter

M.A. Georg Schmidt
Der gebürtige Deutsche wuchs in Lissabon auf und schloss sein Studium an der Universidade de Lisboa in Lissabon mit einem Bachelor-Abschluss in Anglistik ab. Er setzte seine akademische Reise an der Universität Augsburg fort, wo er einen Master in professioneller Kommunikation erwarb. Als erfahrener Dozent bringt er Kenntnisse im Bereich fortgeschrittener sprachlicher Kompetenzen mit. Seine Lehrmethoden kombinieren anspruchsvolle Texte, wissenschaftliche Diskussionen und praxisorientierte Übungen, um Studierenden mit sehr guten Englischkenntnissen eine herausfordernde und bereichernde Lernerfahrung zu bieten. Er strebt danach, die Studierenden in ihrer akademischen und beruflichen Entwicklung zu unterstützen, indem er fortgeschrittene sprachliche Kompetenzen in verschiedenen Kontexten fördert.

Translation:

"**The course instructor**

M.A. Georg Schmidt

Born in Germany, he grew up in Lisbon and graduated from the Universidade de Lisboa in Lisbon with a Bachelor's degree in English Studies. He continued his academic journey at the University of Augsburg, where he obtained a Master's degree in Professional Communication. As an experienced lecturer, he has a strong knowledge of advanced language skills. His teaching methods combine engaging texts, academic discussions and practice-oriented exercises to provide

a challenging and enriching learning experience for students with a very good command of English. He strives to support students in their academic and professional development by promoting advanced language skills in a variety of contexts."

B2: Female German instructor

Teilnahmebestätigung: Die Teilnehmenden erhalten nach erfolgreichem Abschluss des Kurses eine Teilnahmebestätigung.

Die Kursleiterin

M.A. Julia Schmidt
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B3: Male Israeli instructor

Teilnahmebestätigung: Die Teilnehmenden erhalten nach erfolgreichem Abschluss des Kurses eine Teilnahmebestätigung.

Der Kursleiter

M.A. Levitt Weizmann
Der gebürtige Israeli wuchs in Jerusalem auf und schloss sein Studium an der Hebrew University in Jerusalem mit einem Bachelor-Abschluss in Anglistik ab. Er setzte seine akademische Reise an der Universität Augsburg fort, wo er einen Master in professioneller Kommunikation erwarb. Als erfahrener Dozent bringt er Kenntnisse im Bereich fortgeschrittener sprachlicher Kompetenzen mit. Seine Lehrmethoden kombinieren anspruchsvolle Texte, wissenschaftliche Diskussionen und praxisorientierte Übungen, um Studierenden mit sehr guten Englischkenntnissen eine herausfordernde und bereichernde Lernerfahrung zu bieten. Er strebt danach, die Studierenden in ihrer akademischen und beruflichen Entwicklung zu unterstützen, indem er fortgeschrittene sprachliche Kompetenzen in verschiedenen Kontexten fördert.

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B4: Female Israeli instructor

Teilnahmebestätigung: Die Teilnehmenden erhalten nach erfolgreichem Abschluss des Kurses eine Teilnahmebestätigung.

Die Kursleiterin

M.A. Hannah Weizmann
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B5: Male Jewish instructor

Teilnahmebestätigung: Die Teilnehmenden erhalten nach erfolgreichem Abschluss des Kurses eine Teilnahmebestätigung.

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B6: Female Jewish instructor

Teilnahmebestätigung: Die Teilnehmenden erhalten nach erfolgreichem Abschluss des Kurses eine Teilnahmebestätigung.

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