

History 5531x
Fall 2009
Prof. Jack Wertheimer

Office: Unterberg 604
Telephone x 8869
Hours: T 3:15-4:00; Thurs 12:15-1:00

American Jewish History until World War II

Requirements:

1. Each student will write a 12-15 page paper on a topic that will be chosen in consultation with the instructor. The nature of the paper will be discussed in the first class meeting. Topics must focus on the American Jewish experience prior to 1945. Each student will offer a 5 minute presentation about the paper topic of her/his choice during one of the last class sessions.
2. There will be a written Final Exam.
3. Each student will help to lead one class discussion in partnership with another student. Discussion leaders will identify 4-5 arresting themes, quotations, or arguments presented in the week's assignment and lead the class in a discussion about the significance of those items.

Course Objectives:

1. The course will survey the history of the Jews in the U.S. from the Colonial era until the end of World War II with a particular emphasis on the organized activities of American Jews.
2. It will expose students to a broad range of primary and secondary sources and introduce them to some of the main topics of historical debate.
3. Students will have the opportunity to explore a particular issue in greater depth by researching and writing a paper on a topic of their own choosing.
4. Students will have the experience of leading a class discussion.

September 10--Introduction: Jewish Life in Colonial America.

September 17 -- The Early National Period.

Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, chapters 1-2, pp. 13-67.

"The Earliest Extant Minute Books..." in A. Karp, ed, *The Jewish Experience in America*. I., pp.240-65. Please Xerox and bring to class.

Joseph Blau and Salo W. Baron, eds., *The Jews in the U.S., 1790-1840: A Documentary History* vol. II, Part 6. Begin reading for next week.

Holly Snyder, "Re-Thinking the Definition of Community for a Migratory Age, 1654-

1830,” in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, pp. 3-27.

September 24--The German Wave: Social and Economic Characteristics.

Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd* pp.1-280 *

Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation: The German Jews in the U.S., 1830-1914*. chapters 1-3.

October 1--Religious and Communal Life in the 19th Century

Leon Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*.*

October 8--Social Characteristics of the East European Group.

Samuel Joseph, *Jewish Immigration to the U.S., 1881-1914*. You can read this online at:
<http://books.google.com/books?id=CmVDAAAIAAJ&pg=PA21&dq=Jewish+Immigration+to+the+United+States>

I. Metzker,ed., *A Bintel Brief*. vol. I*

October 15--The Immigrant Community.

Moses Rischin, *The Promised City*. chapters 7-12, Epilogue.*

Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880-1939*, chapters 4-5, pp. 81-142.

October 22--The Experience of Women and Children.

Anzia Yezierska, *Breadgivers*.*

Susan Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, chapters 2, 4, 6.

October 29—Two Types of Judaism

Jonathan Sarna, ed. *People Walk On Their Heads*, pp. 33-114.

Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism*, chapter 4, pp. 135-207

November 5—Uptown and Downtown Jews

Essays by Felicia Herman and Eric Goldstein in *Women and American Judaism*, ed. Pamella Nadell and Jonathan Sarna

Karla Goldman, "The Limits of Imagination: White Christian Civilization and the Construction of American Jewish Womanhood in the 1890s," in *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, ed., Jack Wertheimer, pp. 191-211.

Jonathan Sarna, *A Great Awakening: The Transformation That Shaped 20th Century American Judaism and Its Implications for Today*.
http://my.mli.org.il/Mli_Pdf/Publications/Eng/AGreatAwakening.pdf

November 12--Forging a Community.

Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation Jews in New York*.

November 19--Anti-Semitism and Jewish Defense

Read: Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, pp. 35-149
Michael Alexander, *Jazz Age Jews*, Introduction and Part III, pp. 1-8, 133-183.

November 26—Thanksgiving--No classes

December 3—The Interwar Era

Beth Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression*, pp. 54-102, 166-206.

Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism*, chapter 5, pp. 208-271.

December 10—World War II as a Turning Point

Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews*.*

Paper Topics:

1. How did Jewish life in the West, the heartland and in small communities differ from the East Coast experience?
2. Slavery and American Jews
3. What was American Jewish literature in the 19th century?
4. Reform liturgy
5. How did American Zionism Differ?
6. When and why did American Jews become overwhelming supporters of the Democrats?
7. The nature of the Yiddish theater and/or cinema?