

History 5414x  
Fall 2009  
Prof. Jack Wertheimer

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

## The Changing American Synagogue: House of Prayer, Education, Assembly

### Revised

#### Requirements:

1. There will be an in-class exam on Tuesday, November 17. A review sheet with questions that will appear on the exam will be distributed two weeks earlier.
2. Each student will write a 12-15 page paper **either** on a research topic that will be chosen in consultation with the instructor **or** a think piece on something crucial and new you have learned in the course. That paper will be due on December 17
3. Each student will help to lead one class discussion in partnership with another student. Discussion leaders will identify 4 arresting themes, quotations, or arguments presented in the week's assignment and lead the class in a discussion about the significance of those 4 items.

#### Course Objectives:

The course is designed to survey the historical evolution of the American synagogue; to analyze recent trends in various realms of synagogue life; and to project ahead into the near term future. The course will also expose students to the developing field of congregational studies by requiring them to read some works on American churches. And through research papers, students will have the opportunity to delve more deeply into a specific aspect of American synagogue life. By involving each student as a discussant, the course also aims to help students develop leadership skills.

#### September 8--Introduction: Studying Congregations

##### I. The Historical Lens

#### September 15 – From Synagogue Community to Community of Synagogues

"The Earliest Extant Minute Books..." in A. Karp, ed, *The Jewish Experience in America*. I., pp.240-65.

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

Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism*, chapters 1, 2, pp. 1-61.

#### September 22—The Synagogue Center Model

David Kaufman, *Shul with a Pool: The Synagogue-Center in American Jewish History*, chapters, 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, pp. 10-50, 128-282.\*

#### September 29—The Mid-Century Suburban Synagogue and Its Critics

Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, chapters 4,5, Epilogue

Riv-Ellen Prell, *Prayer and Community: The Havurah in American Judaism*\*

### II. The Denominational Lens

#### October 6—The Evolution of Denominational Synagogues

Leon Jick, Jeffrey Gurock, Jack Wertheimer and Marc Angel chapters in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer, pp. 37-169.\*

Dana Evan Kaplan, *American Reform Judaism*, chapter on “The Worship Revolution,” pp. 89-112.

#### October 13—Liturgy and Liturgical Music

David Ellenson, “Envisioning Israel in the Liturgies,” in *Envisioning Israel*, Allon Gal, ed.

Chapters by Cohen, Heilman, Ritterband, Kosmin and Prell in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *Jews in the Center: Conservative Synagogues and Their Members*, pp. 13-65, 95-358.\*

Boaz Tarsi, “Voices in the Sanctuary: Musical Practices of the American Synagogue,” *Conservative Judaism* 55, Fall 2002

Kay Shelemay, “Music in the American Synagogue: A Case Study from Houston,” *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, pp. 395-415.

### III. Cross-Denominational Trends

October 20—Sacred Space, Sacred Choreography

Samuel Heilman, *Synagogue Life*. Chapters 2, 5, 6 on The Setting, Gossip, Joking.

*Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds., chapters 2-3, pp. 40-104.

October 27—Religious Leadership and Governance

Stephen Fried, *The New Rabbi*\*

Jack Wertheimer, “The Rabbi Crisis,” *Commentary*, May 2003.

<https://www.policyarchive.org/bitstream/handle/10207/17040/The%20Rabbi%20Crisis.pdf>

Naomi W. Cohen, *What the Rabbis Said: The Public Discourse of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Rabbi*, chapter 1, pp. 13-32.

November 3—Strife in the Synagogue

Jonathan Sarna and Paula Hyman articles in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, Jack Wertheimer, ed., pp. 185-205, 363-94.

Samuel G. Freedman, *Jew versus Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry*, chapters 4, 6.

Ruth R. Seldin, “Women in the Synagogue: A Congregant’s View,” and Esther Altshul Helfgott, “Beth Sholom’s Encounter with the Woman’s Question,” *Conservative Judaism* Winter 1979, pp. 80-88 and Spring 1986, pp. 66-76.

November 10—House of Study

Chapters 2, 4-8 in Jack Wertheimer, ed, *Learning and Community: Jewish Supplementary Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.\*

**November 17—In-Class Exam**

November 24—Niche and Post-Denominational Synagogues

Steven M. Cohen, et al *Emergent Jewish Communities and Their Participants*.  
[http://www.synagogue3000.org/emergentweb/survey/documents/NatSpirComStudyReport\\_S3K\\_Hadar.pdf](http://www.synagogue3000.org/emergentweb/survey/documents/NatSpirComStudyReport_S3K_Hadar.pdf)

Jack Wertheimer with Serene Victor, “Between Entrepreneurship and Jewish Mission: A Chabad Hebrew School,” in Wertheimer, ed., *Learning and Community*.

Moshe Shokeid, *A Gay Synagogue in New York*, chapters 1-3, 12, Epilogue.

#### December 1—The Future of Religious Congregations

Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*, chapters 1-4, pp. 1-85.

R. Stephen Warner, “Work in Progress Toward a new Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States,” in *A Church of Our Own: Disestablishment and Diversity in American Religion*, pp. 18-82.

#### December 8—Re-Imagining the Synagogue

Lawrence Hoffman, *Rethinking Synagogues: A New Vocabulary for Congregational Life*.\*

Hayim Herring, Riv-Ellen Prell and Michael Hammer essays in *Re-Envisioning the Synagogue*, Zachary Heller, ed., pp. 55-110, 119-132.

Synagogue 3000 blog: Rabbi Gerald Skolnik and his respondents  
<http://synagogue3000.org/synablog/?p=140>