

History 219: The American Jewish Experience: From *Shtetl* to Suburb

University of Wisconsin, Madison

Fall 2014

M-W-F: 12:05-12:55 (1121 Humanities)

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Course Description

A century and a half ago, the United States was a backwater of the Jewish world, then centered in Europe and the Ottoman Turkish Empire. Yet, by the 1950s, the United States became home to the largest, most prosperous, and most secure Jewish community in modern history. Why did millions of Jews come to the United States? How has life in a liberal political and capitalist economic order shaped the Jewish experience in America? In turn, how have Jews influenced American culture, politics, and society? This course surveys the history of American Jews from the 18th century to the 21st century. Topics include patterns of politics, social mobility, Jewish culture in Yiddish and English, inter-ethnic group relations, gender and sexuality, religion, and problems in community building. The course combines lectures, in-class discussions, film, and audio recordings. Readings consist of secondary and primary sources.

Books

Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2005)

Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (Yale Univ. Press, 2004)

All assigned books are on reserve at College Library. They are also available for purchase at the Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative located at 426 W. Gilman.

The required course packet is available for purchase at the Social Science Copy Center (6120 Social Science Bldg.).

= scholarly articles in course packet

* = primary documents in course packet

Course Requirements

You are required to attend lectures and discussion sections. Failure to participate actively in the discussions will result in a failing grade for participation (see below). The assigned reading should be completed before your discussion section. Your TAs may give you brief assignments for sections.

Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and disciplinary action. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult with the teaching assistant or me.

Finally, computers or any other electronic devices are *not* permitted during lectures and discussions.

An in-class midterm exam, a second exam, and a final exam are required.

Participation and attendance: 20%

Midterm exam (Oct. 13): 25%

Second exam (Nov. 12): 25%

Final exam (Dec. 17): 30%

The Mosse Lectures

The Mosse Lectures, sponsored by the Mosse Program in History, will take place on Sept. 9-11. Each of the three lectures will start at 4:30 p.m. in Room L140 Elvehjem Building (Chazen Museum).

You are required to attend **one** of the three lectures and absences will not be excused. Please make whatever arrangements are necessary with your work or class schedules to be able to attend.

This year's Mosse Lecturer is Prof. Sarah Stein from UCLA. Her series is entitled "Misfits: Sephardi Jews, Citizenship, and the Persistence of Empire."

The titles of each lecture are:

Sept. 9: "Ottoman Jews, European Protection, and the Ambiguities of Extraterritoriality in the 20th Century."

Sept. 10: "'The Fears of the Present Time': The Balkan Wars, Portugal, and the International Rush on the Jews of Salonica."

Sept. 11: "Citizens of a Fictional Nation: Ottoman-born Jews in France and Britain"

during the First World War.”

The Kutler Lectures

The Center for Jewish Studies’ annual Kutler Lectures will take place on Nov. 3 and Nov. 4 @ 4:00 p.m in the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery (330 N. Orchard). Please make whatever arrangements are necessary with your work or class schedules to be able to attend. Attendance at **both** lectures is required; absences will not be excused.

This year’s Kutler Lecturer is Prof. Gary Zola (Hebrew Union College), who will speak on the following topics:

Nov. 3: “‘He Was Just Like One of Us’—Lincoln and American Jewry.”

Nov. 4: “The Reform Jewish Impulse in America and Germany.”

Note: due to the Mosse and Kutler lectures classes will be cancelled during the week of October 20-24. Sections will meet as usual during that week.

Lectures and Reading

Week 1 (Sept. 3-5): Introduction

Jonathan Sarna, American Judaism: A History, pp. xiii-xx.

Week 2 (Sept. 8-12): Becoming Citizens: Jews in Colonial and Early America

(Note: the Mosse Lectures will take place on Sept. 9, 10, 11. You are required to attend one of them.)

Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 1-61.

Course Packet:

*Documents on the political rights of Jews in the U. S (1776-1809).

Week 3 (Sept. 15-19): The Beginning of Mass Immigration

Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 62-207.

Course Packet:

*Conference of Reform Rabbis, “The Pittsburgh Platform” (1885).

*Solomon Schechter, “Catholic Israel” (1896).

*The Orthodox Jewish Congregational Union of America (1898).

Week 4 (Sept. 23-27): The Great Eastern European Migration

Tony Michels, A Fire in Their Hearts, pp. 1-25.

Course Packet:

*Michael Gold, Jews Without Money (1930), pp. 357-362.

*Bella Spewack, Streets: A Memoir of the Lower East Side (1922), pp. ix-xxviii, 3-42.

Week 5 (Sept. 29-Oct. 3): Immigrants in Revolt

Michels, A Fire in Their Hearts, pp. 26-124.

Course Packet:

**Di nyu-yorker yidishe folkstsaytung*, "Strong, Firm, and Correct Propaganda" (1886).

*Alexander Berkman, "The Attempted Assassination of Henry Clay Frick" (memoir, 1912).

*Rose Pastor Stokes, "The Right to Control Birth" (1916).

Week 6 (Oct. 6-10): The Yiddish Cultural Renaissance

Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, pp. 125-216.

Course Packet:

*Chaim Zhitlovsky, "Our Future in America" (1915).

Week 7 (Oct. 13-17): At Home in America?

(Note: midterm exam, Oct. 13)

Course Packet:

#Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), pp. 138-186.

#Jonathan Pollack, "Jewish Problems: Eastern and Western Jewish Identities in Conflict at the University of Wisconsin, 1919-1941," *American Jewish History* (June 2001): 161-180.

*"There Is No Jewish Race!" *The Maccabean* (1910).

Week 8 (Oct. 20-24): classes cancelled

Note: Discussion sections will take place as usual.

Week 9 (Oct. 27-Oct. 31): Judaism Reconstructed

Sarna, *American Judaism*, pp. 208-271.

Course Packet:

*Mordecai Kaplan, "The Reconstruction of Judaism" (1920).

*Ludwig Lewisohn, "The Fallacies of Assimilation" (1925).

Week 10 (Nov. 3-7): Jews in American Popular Culture

(Note: the Kutler Lectures take place on Nov. 3 and Nov. 4. You are required to attend both of them.)

Course Packet:

#Michael Alexander, *Jazz Age Jews* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), pp. 133-179.

Michael Rogin, "Black Sacrifice, Jewish Redemption," in *African Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century*, eds. V. P. Franklin, et. al. (Univ. of Missouri Press, 1998), pp. 87-101.

*Samson Raphaelson, "How I Came to Write 'The Jazz Singer'" (1927).

Week 11 (Nov. 10-14): Jews in Popular Culture (cont.)

(Note: second exam on Nov. 12)

Week 12 (Nov. 17-21): Years of Depression and War

Course Packet:

#Beth S. Wenger, New York Jews and the Great Depression (Yale Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 103-135.

*Irving Howe, "A Memoir of the Thirties" (1961), pp. 349-364.

#Aaron Berman, Nazism, the Jews and American Zionism, 1933-1948 (Wayne State Univ. Press, 1990), pp. 96-184.

*American Council for Judaism, "Statement of Policy" (1944).

*Alexander Bittelman, "The New State of Israel" (1948).

*David Ben-Gurion and Jacob Blaustein, "An Exchange of Views" (1950)

Week 13 (Nov. 24-26): Contentment and Its Costs: Jews in Post-War America

(Note: class cancelled on Nov. 28 for Thanksgiving.)

Course Packet:

#Riv-Ellen Prell, Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender, and the Anxiety of Assimilation, (Beacon Press, 1999), pp. 142-208.

*Arlene Peck, "Coming of Age in the South: The Southern Jewish American Princess in the Fabulous Fifties" in The Ethnic American Woman, ed. Edith Blinksilver (1978).

*Mopsie Strange Kennedy, "The Jewish American Prince," (1976).

*Arthur Hertzberg, "America is Galut," (July 1964).

Week 14 (Dec. 1-5): Community in Crisis

Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 272-355.

Course Packet:

#Michael Staub, Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America (Columbia Univ. Press, 2003), pp. 76-111.

*"Negro-Jewish Relations in America: A Symposium" (1966).

*"Aviva Cantor Zuckoff, "Oppression of America's Jews" (1971).

*"Ezrat Nashim: Jewish Women Call for Change" (1972).

Week 15: (Dec. 8-12): Jews and Judaism in the New Millennium

Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 356-374.

Course Packet:

#Jeffrey Shandler, Jews, God, and Videotape: Religion and Media in America (NYU Press, 2009), pp. 230-74.

Final Exam: Dec. 17@7:45-9:45 a.m. Location to be announced.