

HIST-373/673 AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY



In 1654, twenty-three impoverished Jewish refugees fleeing the long arm of the Inquisition made their way from Brazil to New Amsterdam, later known as New York. Today, more than 350 years later, the American Jewish community, which they launched, is likely the largest Jewish community in the world (unless the State of Israel has already surpassed it) and, arguably, the most influential.

The five and half million men, women, and children of the contemporary American Jewish community—and demographers debate that number—constitute a "mixed multitude." They include Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews, Oriental Jews, *yordim*, Zionists, Orthodox Jews, Conservative Jews, Reform Jews, Reconstructionists, Havurahniks, feminist Jews, secularists, atheists, converts, bagels-and-lox Jews, and those who are "just Jewish." Although comprising less than three percent of the U.S. population, these Jews' educational, social, and economic patterns give Jews as individuals and the community as a whole heightened visibility.

In this course we trace the historical trajectory of the creation and evolution of the American Jewish community. In particular, we will focus on successive waves of immigration, the social and economic patterns that define the community, the ways in which American Jews construct their identities, and the reactions of others to Jews' entrance into American life.

### **Required texts:**

1. Jonathan D. Sarna, ed., *The American Jewish Experience*. 2nd edition.
2. Pamela S. Nadell, ed., *American Jewish Women's History: A Reader*
3. Kate Simon, *Bronx Primitive*.
4. Jacob Rader Marcus, ed., *The Jew in the American World*.
5. Additional readings are posted to e-reserves on Blackboard.

### **Student responsibilities:**

1. Class attendance and participation, 15 percent of final grade.  
*If you are not in class, you cannot participate. More than 6 absences constitute grounds for a significantly lower grade or failure for the course. If you do not keep up with the readings, your participation grade will reflect this.*
2. Midterm examination, tentatively scheduled for February 26, 20 percent of the final grade.
3. Book critique. Paper assignment to follow; due March 5, 20 percent of the final grade.
4. Research paper. Paper assignment to follow; due April 27; 25 percent of the final grade.
5. Final exam, Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2:10-4:40, 20 percent of final grade.

**Graduate Students:** All of the above requirements, **except** for the undergraduate research paper assignment (#4). See me to discuss the graduate student paper requirement.

### **Office hours and contacts:**

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Office hours: 11:15-2:00, 3:30-4:00, and Thursdays 11:15-2:00.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you acknowledge your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the Academic Integrity Code in general or as it relates to our course.

**TECHNOLOGY DURING CLASS:** I am, as much as anyone, a fan of the new technologies and welcome appropriate use during class. I define appropriate use to mean that you may use a laptop to take notes, to access documents on e-reserves, and, AT MY REQUEST, to retrieve information from the web. I define inappropriate use to include, but not be limited to the following: "texting" during class, reading your e-mail, writing on your friends' Facebook walls, watching YouTube, using IM, or surfing the web. **If I discover that you use technology inappropriately during class time, you will be**

marked absent for that class.

## SYLLABUS

### Jan. 12 Introduction: Periodization and Overview

*No advance reading is required. Today's lecture will be based on the following readings. Complete these for the next class.*

Jonathan D. Sarna, "Introduction," *The American Jewish Experience*, xiii-xix.

Jacob Rader Marcus, "The Periodization of American Jewish History," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society (1893-1961)* 47:3 (March 1958): 125-133; You can access this through the American Digital Archive of the Jewish Experience, available at <http://ajhs.org/reference/adaje.cfm> (Click on the link; when you get to the basic search window, type in Marcus, and for the date select 1958; scroll down to the title of the article and click on the link).

Jonathan D. Sarna, "Critical Dates in the History of American Judaism," in Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, 429-39, on Blackboard (this is for reference; do not memorize!)

Jonathan D. Sarna, "Appendix: American Jewish Populations Estimates, 1660-2000," in Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, 375-76, on Blackboard (this is for reference; do not memorize!)

### Jan. 15 America's Jews, 1654-1820

- A. Colonial settlement and acculturation  
Jacob Marcus, "The American Colonial Jew," in *The American Jewish Experience (AJE)*, 6-19  
Jacob Rader Marcus, ed., *The Jew in the American World*, documents on pages 29-33, 42-43, 47-48, 55-56, 63  
Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, pp. 1-20 on Blackboard  
"A Sense of Place" and Ellen Smith, "Portraits of a Community" in *American Jewish Women's History: A Reader (AJWH)*, 9-25

### Jan. 22

- B. The Revolution and Its Impact  
Jonathan Sarna, "The Impact of the American Revolution on American Jews," in *AJE*, 20-30

*Jew in the American World*, 95-98, 101-02, 105-09

- C. The Early National Era  
Malcolm H. Stern, "The 1820s," in *AJE*, 31-37  
*Jew in the American World*, 136-38, 140-43, 171-76, 177-83

**Jan. 26 Central European Migration, Settlement, and Emerging Leadership**

- A. Migration and Settlement in Christian America  
Stefan Rohrbacher, "From Württemberg to America," in *AJE*, 44-59;
- B. Economic Life  
Barry E. Supple, "A Business Elite," in *AJE*, 99-112  
*Jew in the American World*, 219-27  
Hasia Diner, "entering the Mainstream of Modern Jewish History: Peddlers and the American Jewish South," in *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History*, eds. Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark I. Greenberg, pp. 86-108, on Blackboard

**Jan. 29**

- C. The Civil War  
Naomi W. Cohen, "The Christian Agenda," in *AJE*, 84-98  
*Jew in the American World*, 192-93, 196-202  
Eli Evans, "The War between Jewish Brothers in America," in *From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America*, ed. Michael W. Grunberger, 47-68, on Blackboard

**Feb. 2**

- D. Reforming Judaism  
Michael Meyer, "America," in *AJE*, 60-83  
*Jew in the American World*, 240-44  
Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, pp. 121-50 on Blackboard  
Dianne Ashton, "The Lessons of the Hebrew Sunday School," in *AJWH*, 26-42

**Feb. 5**

- E. New Roles for Women  
Jonathan D. Sarna, "A Great Awakening" in *AJWH*, 43-63  
Faith Rogow, "Gone to Another Meeting," in *AJWH*, 64-74

**Feb. 9 The Great Migration: East European Jews in America**

- A. The Great Migration  
Eric Goldstein, "The Great Wave: Eastern European Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1880-1924," in *The*

*Columbia History of Jews and Judaism*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael, 70-92

- B. Life in the Immigrant Jewish Quarter  
Andrew Heinze, "Adapting to Abundance," in *AJE*, 166-84  
*Jew in the American World*, 375-80  
Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880-1939*, 1-9 on Blackboard

Feb. 12

- C. Work, the Labor Movement, and Neighborhood Politics  
Lucy S. Dawidowicz, "The Jewishness of the Jewish Labor Movement," in *AJE*, 183-96  
Linda Mack Schloff, "We Dug More Rocks," in *AJWH*, 91-99  
Alice Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable," in *AJWH*, 100-115  
*Jew in the American World*, 326-29  
Paula E. Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest," in *AJWH*, 91-128

Feb. 16

- D. Communal Life, Politics, and Protests  
*Jew in the American World*, 334-36, 346-47, 356-62, 367-68  
Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 1-25 on Blackboard  
Stephen J. Whitfield, *American Space, Jewish Time: Essays in Modern Culture and Politics*, 106-128, on Blackboard

Feb. 19

**From World War I Through World War II: At Home in America**

- A. The Midpassage of American Jewry  
Lloyd Gartner, "The Midpassage of American Jewry," in *AJE*, 222-36  
"A Wider World," in *AJWH*, 151-52
- B. Coming of Age in these Years  
Kate Simon, *Bronx Primitive*, all
- C. Rising Antisemitism  
Leo P. Ribuffo, "Henry Ford and *The International Jew*," in *AJE*, 201-19  
Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton*, 110-136, on Blackboard

Feb. 26

**Midterm**

**Mar. 2 Paper Topics and Bibliography Due**

- D. Zionism and America's Jews  
Melvin Urofsky, "Zionism," in *AJE*, 245-57  
Joyce Antler, "Zion in Our Hearts," in *AJWH*, 129-50  
Louis D. Brandeis, "Zionism is Consistent with American Patriotism (June 1915)," in *The Jew in the Modern World*, eds. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, pp. 496-97, on Blackboard

**Mar. 5 Book Critique Due**

- Mar. 16** E. American Judaism: In Public and in Private Settings  
Jeffrey Gurock, "The Emergence of the American Synagogue," in *AJE*, 219-35  
Jenna Weissman Joselit, "The Jewish Home Beautiful," in *AJE*, 236-44  
Jenna Weissman Joselit, "The Jewish Priestess and Ritual"; in *AJWH*, 153-174  
Mordecai M. Kaplan, in *Jew in the American World*, 445-46  
Pamela S. Nadell, "Conservative Judaism," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, linked under Course Information on Blackboard

- Mar. 19** F. American Jewry, World War II, and the Holocaust  
Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews*, 49-85, on Blackboard  
Henry Feingold, "Who Shall Bear Guilt for the Holocaust?" in *AJE*, 274-93  
Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 19-59, on Blackboard

**Mar. 23 A Certain People**

- A. Postwar realities  
Arthur Goren, "A 'Golden Decade' for American Jews, in *AJE*, 294-313  
Riv-Ellen Prell, "Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance: American Jewish Life from the End of World War II to the Six-Day War," in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism*, edited by Marc Lee Raphael, 114-41
- B. Exodus to the Suburbs and the Golden Cities  
Deborah Dash Moore, "Jewish Migration in Postwar America," in

AJE, 314-29

Mar. 26

- C. Religious trends  
Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, 272-306, on Blackboard  
Sue Fishkoff, *The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch*, 1-32, on Blackboard  
*Jew in the American World*, 546-52

Mar 30

- E. Prisms of American Jewish Popular Culture  
Stephen J. Whitfield, *In Search of American Jewish Culture*, 1-31, on Blackboard
1. Food  
Marcie Cohen Ferris, "From the Recipe File of Luba Cohen," in *AJWH*, 219-80

April 2

2. Film  
See make-up assignment.

April 6

3. Literature  
See make-up assignment

April 9 **First day of Passover, no class**

April 13

- E. Challenges
1. Jews and Race  
Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 209-39, on Blackboard  
Cheryl Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century*, 114-49, on Blackboard  
Debra L. Schultz, "Going South," in *AJHW*, 281-96

April 16 **No class, 7<sup>th</sup> day of Passover**

April 20

2. Jewish Feminism  
Paula Hyman, "Jewish Feminism Faces the American Women's Movement," in *AJWH*, 281-312  
Pamela S. Nadell, "Bridges to a 'Judaism Transformed by Women's Wisdom': The First Generation of Women Rabbis," in *Women Remaking American Judaism*, 211-28, on Blackboard.

April 23

3. Intermarriage

Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Double or Nothing?: Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage*, 1-13, 39-47, 57-76, on Blackboard.

April 27

**Research Paper Due**

May 4

**Final Exam: 2:10-4:50**