History 219: The American Jewish Experience: From Shtetl to Suburb
University of Wisconsin, Madison
Fall 2015
M-W-F: 1:20-2:10 (Science 180)

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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
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. Students who use these in class—even once—will receive a failing grade for participation, with or without notification from us.

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

Participation and attendance: 20%
Midterm exam (Oct. 12): 25%
Second exam (Nov. 16): 25%
Final exam (Dec. 22): 30%

**The Kutler Lectures**
The Center for Jewish Studies’ annual Kutler Lectures will take place at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 9 and Tuesday, Nov. 10 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. Lila Corwin Berman (Temple Univ.) who will speak on the following topics:
Nov. 9: “The Death and Life of Jewish Urbanism.”

**Lectures and Reading**

**Week 1 (Sept. 2-4): Introduction**
Week 2 (Sept. 9-11): Becoming Citizens: Jews in Colonial and Early America  
(Note: Class cancelled for Labor Day on Sept. 7)

Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 1-61.  
Course Packet:  
*Documents on the political rights of Jews in the U. S (1776-1809).

Week 3 (Sept. 16-18): The Rise of American Jewry  
(Note: Class cancelled for Rosh Hashana on Sept. 14)

Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 62-134.  
Course Packet:  
*Conference of Reform Rabbis, The Pittsburgh Platform (1885).

Week 4 (Sept. 21, 25): The Great Eastern European Migration  
(Note: class cancelled on Sept. 23 for Yom Kippur)

Tony Michels, A Fire in Their Hearts, pp. 1-25.  
Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 135-207.  
Course Packet:  
*Lucy Robins Lang, “Rebellion Raged within Me” (1948).  
*The Orthodox Jewish Congregational Union of America (1898).

Week 5 (Sept. 28-Oct. 2): Immigrants in Revolt
Course Packet:  

Week 6 (Oct. 5-9): The Yiddish Cultural Renaissance
Michels, A Fire in Their Hearts, pp. 125-216.  
Course Packet:  

Week 7 (Oct. 12-16): Judaism Reconstructed  
(Note: midterm exam, Oct. 12)

Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 208-271.  
Course Packet:  
*Solomon Schechter, “Catholic Israel” (1896).  
Week 8 (Oct. 19-23): At Home in America?
Course Packet:
*“There Is No Jewish Race!”* *The Maccabean* (1910).

Course Packet:
*Dearborn Independent*, “The Jewish Aspect of the ‘Movie’ Problem” and “Jewish Supremacy in the Motion Picture World” (1921).

Week 10 (Nov. 2-4): Years of Depression and War
(Note: Class cancelled on Nov. 6)

Course Packet:

Week 11 (Nov. 11-13): Israel
(Note: the Kutler Lectures take place on Nov. 9-10. You are required to attend both of them.)

Course Packet:
*David Ben-Gurion and Jacob Blaustein, “An Exchange of Views”* (1950)

Week 12 (Nov. 16-20): Contentment and Its Costs: Jews in Post-War America
(Note: second exam on Nov. 16)

Course Packet:
Week 13 (Nov. 23): Contentment and Its Costs (cont.)
(Note: class cancelled on Nov. 25 and 27 for Thanksgiving. All sections cancelled during the week.)

Week 14 (Nov. 30-Dec. 4): Community in Crisis
Course Packet:

Week 15: (Dec. 7-11): Jews and Judaism at the New Millennium
Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 272-374.

Course Packet:
*Rabbis Joel Roth and Akiba Lubow, A Standard of Rabbinic Practice Regarding Determination of Jewish Identity (1986).
*Camille Shira Angel, “Rabbi’s Welcome” and Selections (2009).


Final Exam: Dec. 22 @ 7:45-9:45 a.m. Location to be announced.