

History 500/Jewish Studies 631: Blacks and Jews in Urban America
Prof. Tony Michels
Thursday 3:30-5:25
Humanities 5257

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Course Description

This seminar is an investigation into the experiences of two migrant groups to northern cities for the purpose of illuminating the history of race and ethnicity in the United States. Both African-Americans and Jews were persecuted minorities in their places of origin and continued to suffer discrimination after migration. Yet their positions in American society differed in key respects. Jews came voluntarily to the United States; most African Americans were forcibly brought to the United State. Jews attained equality before the law with much less difficulty than Blacks and suffered less discrimination and violence. With recognition of these and other differences, we will examine how Blacks and Jews adapted to life in the urban north in the twentieth century. As a seminar, this course does not survey comprehensively the histories of African Americans and Jews. Rather, it selectively examines topics important to the histories of both groups and provides a beginning to further examination.

Requirements and Grades

Active participation is crucial. I urge you to take risks, test ideas, and raise questions regardless of whether you're convinced of them. A successful seminar is one with lively, probing, freewheeling conversation.

DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION (40% of total grade): Your participation will be assessed in three ways:

1. a) **General class participation (25%):** You should come to each session prepared for engaged discussion.
2. b) **Discussion leading (10%):** In addition to participating every week, students will lead discussions every class meeting. The discussion leader for each week should send 3 discussion questions to by 9:00 am the Tuesday before the class meets. I will distribute these questions to the class.
3. c) **Quick responses (5%):** Each week, all students should write a response (around 200 words) to one of the *central* issues posed in the scholarly readings by 9:00 am on the day of class. These responses will be given a pass/fail grade without comments (unless you would like to discuss them with me).

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (60% of total grade):

- a) **Book Summary (10%):** All students should write a 500-word summary of the major argument in books by Schwartz, Duneier, Lee, or Pritchett. The summary is due on the day of class dedicated to their respective books.
- b) **Book Review (10%):** All students should write a 500-word summary of the reading by Goldstein. The summary is due on the day of class dedicated to his book.
- c) **Final Essay Assignment (40%):** This essay should address a key question in the readings. You should decide on your question, in consultation with me by April 16. Length of paper for undergraduate students: 3,500 words. The assignment is due on May 10.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the major questions and concerns of the course
- Discern and integrate divergent and contradictory perspectives, identify and question assumptions, and assess evidence and methods
- Develop close-reading skills; write original, coherent, and compelling arguments that push beyond summary to analysis; engage in reflective writing practices; respond critically to feedback; and assess one's own communicative strengths
- Engage in deep discussion with peers in a respectful manner

Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/.

Plagiarism or cheating may result in a failing grade for the assignment.

Please use the *Chicago Manual of Style* for all citations. For guidance, please see writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. This class supports the free exchange of ideas and intense discussion in an open and supportive environment. You may find yourself disagreeing with your fellow students who will likely arrive

to class with opinions and perspectives different from your own. I ask that you come to class ready to listen to your peers as well as to engage in thoughtful debate.

READINGS

Week 1 (Jan. 22): Introduction

Week 2 (Jan. 29): Discussing One Another

Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America. A Symposium Compiled by Midstream Magazine, ed. Shlomo Katz (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967)

Lucy Davidowicz, pp. 15-21

Ben Halpern, pp. 64-69

Arthur Hertzberg, pp. 69-74

Paul Jacobs, pp. 74-80

C. Eric Lincoln, pp. 86-94

Floyd B. McKissick, pp. 97-99

Marie Syrkin, pp. 117-123

James Baldwin, "Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," *The New York Times* (April 9, 1967)

Week 3 (Feb. 5): Origins of the Ghetto

Daniel B. Schwartz, *Ghetto: The History of a Word* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2019), pp. 1-8, 49-124

Week 4 (Feb. 12): Studying the Ghetto

Mitchell Duneier, *Ghetto: The Invention of a Place, The History of An Idea* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux (2016), pp. IX-XII, 26-138

Week 5 (Feb. 19): The Changing Face of the Ghetto

Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 1-49, 81-103, 147-173

Week 6 (Feb. 26): Intergroup Relations

Jennifer Lee, *Civility in the City: Blacks, Jews, and Koreans in Urban America* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2002), pp. 1-47, 71-92

Week 7 (March 5) Radical Multiculturalism

Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York Univ. Press, 2011), pp. 1-16, 123-198

Week 8 (March 12): Race and Whiteness

Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), pp. 1-7, 86-137

Week 9 (March 19) Imagining America

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (1903), pp. 1-12

Rabbi Judah Magnes, "A Republic of Nationalities" (1909)
Horace M. Kallen, "Democracy versus the Melting Pot: A Study of American Nationality" (1915), pp. 67-92
Jean Toomer, "Race Problems and Modern Society" (1929), pp. 168-189
George S. Schuyler, "The Case for Integration" (1937), pp. 17-19
Claude McKay, "For Group Survival" (1937), pp. 19-21
Daniel Bell, "A Parable of Alienation" (1946), pp. 41-62
Ben Halpern, "Letter to an Intellectual" (1946), pp. 63-75

Week 10 (March 26): Black Culture/Jewish Culture

George S. Schuyler, "The Negro-Art Hokum" (1926), pp. 309-312
Zora Neale Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression" (1935), pp. 224-236
Jacob Glatshstein, "By Ourselves" (1938), p. 802
Harold Rosenberg, "Is There a Jewish Art?" (1966), pp. 223-231
Cynthia Ozick, "America: Toward Yavneh" (1970), pp. 264-280
Amiri Baraka, "Black Art" (1987), pp. 23-30

Week 11 (April 2): Spring Break

Week 12 (April 9): "Black and Jewish America: An Interwoven History" (PBS documentary)

Week 13 (April 16): Grappling with Evil: Slavery and Holocaust

Laurence Mordekhai Thomas, *Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust* (Temple Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 3-13, 117-205

Week 14 (April 23): Black Jews

Bruce D. Haynes, *The Soul of Judaism: Jews of African Descent in America* (New York Univ. Press, 2018), pp. 111-198

Week 15 (April 30): Civil Rights

Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton Univ. Press), pp. 1-14, 114-204

Final Assignment: due May 10