

## AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

Fall, 2013

Professor Diner

Monday-Wednesday 9:30-10:45

HBRJD-UA 172

Office Hours:

Tuesdays, 10:00-11:00

AND BY APPOINTMENT

Office: 210 King Juan Carlos Center

(212) 998-8988

[hasia.diner@nyu.edu](mailto:hasia.diner@nyu.edu)

Grader: Allan Amanik – [allan.amanik@nyu.edu](mailto:allan.amanik@nyu.edu)

Writing Tutors: Brittany Mania - [bnm233@nyu.edu](mailto:bnm233@nyu.edu)  
Rebecca Rae – [rer296@nyu.edu](mailto:rer296@nyu.edu)

Tutor Mentor: Leeore Schnairsohn – [ls2588@nyu.edu](mailto:ls2588@nyu.edu)

This course takes as its subject the history of the Jewish people in America. It explores the social, political, economic, religious, and cultural development of Jewish life in America from the middle of the seventeenth century through the present and at the same time explores the impact of America—its culture, social structure, economic profile, and place in the world—upon the Jews who lived there. It will set that history into the larger contexts of American history and modern Jewish history, asking how the Jewish experience did or did not differ from that of others in America and from that of other Jews in other places. Central to the course will be the fact that the America, both before and after national independence, was a place characterized by religious, ethnic, and racial diversity and we will explore how Jews fit into that reality. We will focus much attention on the fact that Jews chose to migrate to the United States and that they sought ways to identify with their new home. At the same time they saw themselves as part of a worldwide people and behaved accordingly.

### REQUIREMENTS

1. Students are required to read all the assigned books. For the books by single authors students will turn in brief synopses (1 page) in which they will lay out the central questions, sources, organization, and conclusions. All books are available in the NYU bookstore. We will devote several sessions to discussing the books and as such it will be crucial that you read them.
2. Students will visit the Lower East Side Tenement Museum and the Eldridge Street Synagogue Museum and write a one page reaction papers to each of the museums, according to guidelines discussed in class.

3. Students will view several films at the Avery Fisher Center at Bobst Library: “The Jazz Singer (1927)” and “The Gentleman’s Agreement (1947),” “Exodus (1960),” and “Hester Street” 1975). Students will turn in brief reaction papers to each of the four films. Each reaction paper should be no more than one page.
4. There will be an in-class midterm examination. The midterm will count for one-quarter of the course points.
5. There will be no in class final. Rather students will visit the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia and will prepare a critique of the museum based on the readings and lectures. The College of Arts and Sciences has generously agreed to pay for your bus fare (Bolt or Megabus) to Philadelphia and your entry fee to the museum. Guidelines will be provided in class but please note, DO NOT VISIT THE MUSEUM UNTIL THE VERY END OF THE COURSE. The museum paper will be worth one-quarter of the class points.
6. Finally students will write three short papers, each of which should be from 3-5 pages. Each paper should clearly articulate an important question and come to clear conclusions based on detailed analysis of evidence. The three papers are:
  1. The first paper requires to students to analyze Documents 1-8 (to be provided) and synthesize an argument concerning the narrative they reveal about the status of Jews in early America. How, when, why did their bundle of rights change? What did that change mean in the larger context of American history? (3-5 pages, first draft due 9/16, final draft due 9/30)
  2. Drawing on at least 10 letters from Robert Rockaway’s *Voices of the Uprooted*, write a paper which analyzes these primary sources in the context of the historical period, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century mass east European Jewish migration to America. In what way do these texts offer a window into that world? Be sure to choose letters from several different perspectives to help explain the full scope of these stories of migration and negotiation. (3-5 pages, first draft due 10/21, final draft due 11/4)
  3. Using Deborah Dash Moore’s *GI Jews*, choose two distinct individuals who are featured in the book. How did they experience service during World War II in different ways? How do you account for such different perspectives on similar experiences? How does your juxtaposition of these voice help you explain the relationship of individual accounts to a larger historical understanding of the period? (3-5 pages, first draft due 11/25, final due 12/9)

**All papers must conform to NYU’s guidelines on plagiarism. If you get a fact or an idea from a book or article, you must give proper citation. Any words you take from a text must be in quotes with a citation as well.**

The three papers together will account for 1/4 of your grade. Each paper must be the product of a drafting process facilitated by the Undergraduate Writing Tutors Program (see below for more information on the writing tutor process). Class participation and evidence of having attended the museums and seen the films will constitute the final quarter of the course credit.

There will be a lecture given by Professor Randi Storch on November. One on November 3 (time and place to be announced). Students may receive up to 5 points of additional credit for attending the lecture and providing a one- page synopsis.

### **Working with Writing Tutors**

In this class, we are fortunate to have help from the Undergraduate Writing Tutors Program. Writing tutors are curious, well-trained peers who provide feedback to their peers on drafts of writing assignments. Their role is to encourage and challenge students to strengthen their writing. Writing tutors are trained to support the aims of the class, learning about the expectations for writing in the class and listening carefully to student writers. While writing tutors are not Teaching Assistants and will not assess papers, they will focus writing conferences with students on questions that generate both clearer writing and stronger thinking about the content. Writing tutors will also look for patterns of grammatical error in student papers, explaining how students can learn to correct these errors. But the writing tutors' main goals are to help students develop their writing and thinking in response to particular assignments and to become a better writers over the long term.

Students are required to meet outside class with writing tutors. Writing tutors should receive *complete drafts* from students, not outlines or rough notes. *Late submission* of drafts to tutors and missed writing conferences are reported to the Professor, who reduces the final grade on the finished version. You will turn in a first draft of your paper 10 to 14 days before your final draft is due. During that time you will receive written feedback from your tutor via email and then meet with your writing tutor at the writing center in a 30-minute draft conference tailored to help you revise your particular paper.

PLEASE NOTE: THE FINAL EXAMINATION WILL INVOLVE A VISIT TO AND CRITIQUE OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY IN PHILADELPHIA. DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED IN CLASS BUT THREE MATTERS SHOULD BE KEPT MIND:

- CAS WILL BE REIMBURSING YOU FOR A BUS TRIP TO PHILADELPHIA AND ENTRY TO THE MUSEUM
- YOU WILL HAVE TO SUBMIT YOUR BUS RECEIPT AND THE RECEIPT FROM THE MUSEUM
- YOU SHOULD NOT GO TO THE MUSEUM BEFORE THE LAST WEEK OF CLASS.

## Required Books:

Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States*  
Cahan, Abraham, *Yekl and the Imported Bridegroom*  
Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*  
Leon Stein, *The Triangle Fire*  
Robert Rockaway, *Voices of the Uprooted*  
Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews*  
Pamela Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbi*  
Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews*

There will be a set of primary documents provided electronically which will be required and referred to in the class schedule for the appropriate week.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

[Hasia Diner, The Jews of the United States will serve as our textbook; some section of it will be read each week.]

Week 1: 9/4 (9/6 no class)

Introduction to the course; basic themes: European legacies.

Week 2: 9/9-11

European Legacies/American Beginnings

Diner, Chapter 1

Documents 1-3

Week 3: 9/16-18

Jews in Early America

Diner, Chapter 2

Documents 4-10

[First draft of paper 1 due via email Monday, 9/16 by 5 pm,

Final due Monday, 9/30 in class]

Week 4: 9/23-25

The Beginnings of Mass Migration

Diner, Chapter 3

Documents 11-12, 14

Week 5: 9/25-27

A Nineteenth Century American Jewish Synthesis

Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery SYNOPSIS DUE*  
Documents 13, 15-17

Week 6: 9/30-10/2

The Rise of Reform

Documents 19, 20

Final Draft of Paper 1 due in class Monday, 9/30

MIDTERM Wednesday, 10/2

Week 7: 10/7-9

The Age of the Great Jewish Migration

Documents 24-25

Week 8: 10/16

The Immigrants and their New American Jewish Home

Robert Rockaway, *Voices of the Uprooted*

Documents 26, 34

Week 9: 10/21-23

The Worlds of the Jewish Immigrants

Abraham Cahan, *Yekl and the Imported Bridegroom*

Diner Chapter 4

[First draft of paper 2 due via email Monday 10/21 by 5 pm,

Final due Monday, 11/4 in class]

Week 10: 10/28-30

Work and Class:

Leon Stein, *The Triangle Fire SYNOPSIS DUE*

Diner, Chapter 5

Documents 27-30

Week 11: 11/4-6

The 1920's and the 1930's: An Era of American Anti-Semitism

Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews SYNOPSIS DUE*

Documents 21-23, 45-47

Final draft of Paper 2 due in class Monday, 11/4

Week 12: 11/11-13

Struggles over Jewish Life in America

Documents 31-33, 35-44

Week 13: 11/18-20

The Holocaust, World War II and American Jews

Diner, Chapter 6; Documents 48-51

Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews*

Week 14: 11/25-27

Post-World War Two and America's Jews

Diner, Chapter 7; Document 52

[First draft of paper 3 due via email Monday, 11/25 by 5 pm,

Final due Monday, 12/9 in class]

Week 15: 12/6-12/8

The 1960s and Beyond: A Revolution in American Jewish Life

Diner, Chapter 8

Nadell, *The Women Who 'Would be Rabbi* : *Synopsis Due*

Week 16: 12/9-11

Summary

Final Paper 3 due in class Monday, 12/9

There are certain rules for this class:

1. Be on time. If you come in late, it is very disruptive to everyone.
2. Turn off your cell phones.
3. Please do not leave in middle of class. Again, it is disruptive.
4. If you are taking notes on your laptop, that is fine but if you are doing Facebook, playing games, checking email or whatever it is not so nice to the instructor and I will have to ban laptops.
5. Try not to eat in class.