

## AMERICAN JEWS IN THE POST WAR PERIOD: 1945-1967

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Professor Hasia Diner

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### Course Description:

This seminar will explore the ways in which American Jews experienced the era from the end of World War II into the mid-1960s, a period of time generally understood as the “post war.” This is a period in American Jewish history which has received relatively little attention in the scholarship to date. Yet this era compassed the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust and the World War with their tremendous disruptions in Jewish life, the process of suburbanization, the Cold War, anti-Communism, the civil rights struggle, the development of television and its penetration into American homes, the rise of Israel as a sovereign state, debates in America about church-state separation, among other developments in which Jews functioned as both agents of change and reflectors of the forces around them, forces about which they had little control.

We will do common readings and students will have a chance to pursue an individual research project.

### Course Requirements:

This course presupposes some knowledge of the history of American Jews in the period before the post-war. Students who think that their base of knowledge to be shaky should read either Jonathan Sarna, American Judaism or Hasia Diner, The Jews of the United States.

In class we will analyze the books listed below which deal with the era as a whole as well as various specific aspects of the subject. These books all describe and analyze American Jewry in these years, although we will read one book on the larger narrative of America during the period 1945-1967 as context. Students will lead discussions of these works. Students are required to write a substantial research paper on some theme, issue, event, or individual arising from our deliberations. All papers must be based on primary source materials, topics must be cleared with the professor, and need footnotes and bibliography. Needless to say they must conform to all standards of scholarship and avoid plagiarism. Possible topics will be discussed in class. All students will make oral presentations of their research. The final two classes, January 2 and January 9 will be devoted to student presentations.

### Course outline and assigned readings:

Week 1: 9/5: Introduction to the class: discussion of the readings and the research projects

Week 2: 9/19: America in the Post-War Era: READING: Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974

Week 3: 10/10: Post-war American Jewry: An Interpretation. READING: Edward Shapiro, A Time for Healing

Week 4: 10/17: In the aftermath of the Holocaust: READINGS: Professor Diner will email segments of her forthcoming book, Fitting Memorials

Week 5: 10/24: In the aftermath of the Holocaust: READING: Kirsten Fermaglich, American Dreams, Nazi Nightmares

Week 6: 10/31: Suburbanization and Jewish Mobility: READING: Deborah Dash Moore, To the Golden Cities

Week 7: 11/7: A Religious Synthesis: READING: Will Herberg, Protestant, Catholic, Jew : Students will also read one of the following books by Marshall Sklare:

---Conservative Judaism

--Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier

--The Jews

Week 8: 11/14: Post-war politics of American Jewry (1): READING: Stuart Svonkin, Jews Against Prejudice

Week 9: 11/21: Post-war politics of American Jewry (2) READING: Marc Dollinger, The Quest for Inclusion

Week 10: 11/28: Post-war Politics of American Jewry (3): READING: Joshua Zeitz, White Ethnic New York

Week 11: 12/5: Jews and Blacks in Post-War America: READING: Cheryl Greenberg, Troubling the Waters

Week 12: 12/12: American Jewry and the Production of Popular Culture: Students will be asked to read one novel and see one film created during the post-war period authored by an American Jew/or which deals with a Jewish theme. Use Stephen Whitfield's, In Search of American Jewish Culture to both identify these works and to derive the context for them.

Week 13: 12/26: The End of the Post-War Period: READING: Michael Staub, The Jewish 1960s.

Week 14: 1/2: Student Presentations

Week 15: 1/9: Student Presentations

