

NEJS 162a
AMERICAN JUDAISM

Jonathan D. Sarna

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Meeting time: MW 2-3:30

Office hours: Monday 3:30-4:30 or anytime by
appointment

Classroom TBD

Office: LOWN 211a

Course Description:

This course surveys American Jewish history from the colonial period to the present. Proceeding chronologically, the course examines the American Jewish experience within the context of both American history and Modern Jewish history, paying special attention to social, economic and (particularly) religious trends, as well as to new historiography. The American Jewish community grew in both numbers and significance during the more than 360 years that this course covers. How and why this happened; the critical turning points in American Jewish life; the impact of America on Jews and of Jews on America – all will be considered in this course. In addition, we shall consider questions of distinctiveness – in what ways is the American Jewish experience unique both in terms of Jewish history and in terms of US history?

Course Requirements:

- (1) Assigned Reading; (2) Brief analysis (2-page) paper – due **September 21, 2015** (3) Midterm primary source paper – due **Oct 7, 2015** if you want chance to rewrite otherwise, **October 14, 2015**
- (4) Research Paper – one page prospectus due **October 21, 2015**, draft for first reading (optional) due **November 23, 2015**; papers due **December 2, 2015** (5) Final exam

Note: Regular attendance at lectures and at sections is necessary to obtain a good grade in this course. Attendance and participation will be considered when figuring the grade.

Grading Scale:

Brief analysis paper – 10%; midterm – 20%; lower of research paper & final – 30%; higher of research paper and final – 40% Attendance & participation will determine the grade, up or down, for students who are “on the line” between two grades.

Attention:

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Collaboration Policy:

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is

the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

Required Books:

1. Jonathan D. Sarna American Judaism: A History (2004) [=AmJud]
2. Gary Phillip Zola & Marc Dollinger, American Jewish History: A Primary Source Reader (2014) [=Zola]
3. Jonathan D. Sarna, The American Jewish Experience [=AJE], 2nd edition, 1997
4. Richard Breitman & Allan Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (2014)

B: available for purchase

W: available online (as pdf or as hyperlink) via course website - Latte

Required Reading

For additional bibliography, see Sarna, *AmJud* & *AJE*; *Modern Judaism*, 10 (1990), pp. 343-365; J. Gurock, *American Jewish History: A Bibliographical Guide* (1983); and B.Holtz (ed.) *The Schocken Guide of Jewish Books* (1992), pp.108-127.

I. From Spain to Recife to New Amsterdam (8/31)

1. **W:** Yosef Kaplan, “The Sephardim in North-Western Europe and the New World,” *The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. H. Beinart (Jerusalem 1992), II, 240-287
2. **B.** Sarna, *AmJud*, 1-8
3. **B.** Zola, 9-12
4. **W:** Paul Finkelman, “A Land That Needs People for its Increase: How the Jews Won the Right to Remain in New Netherland,” *New Essays in American Jewish History* (2010), 19-50
5. **W:** James Homer Williams, “An Atlantic Perspective on the Jewish Struggle for Rights and Opportunities in Brazil, New Netherland and New York,” *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West*, eds. P.Bernardini & N. Fiering (2001), 369-393. [recommended]
6. Samuel Oppenheim, “Early History of the Jews in New York, 1654-1664,” online at Google Books http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&id=jJEvn6AoYa8C&dq=Samuel+Oppenheim+New+York&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=hfeZdTYsHd&sig=tUKgYD-4f43NaCdAJp-zHDSvLg&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=4&ct=result#PPP1,M1 [recommended]

II. Colonial Jewry (9/2)

1. Sarna, *AmJud*, 8-30
2. Zola, 12-29
3. **W:** Holly Snyder, “Queens of the Household: The Jewish Women of British America, 1700-1800,” *Women and American Judaism*, eds. P.Nadell and J.D.Sarna (2001), 15-45.
4. **W:** Holly Snyder, “‘Under the Shado of Your Wings’: Religiosity in the Mental World of an 18th-Century Jewish Merchant,” *Early American Studies* 3 (Fall 2010), 581-622 [recommended]
5. **W:** Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Mystical World of Colonial American Jews,” *Mediating Modernity: Essays in Honor of Michael A. Meyer*, eds. L. Strauss and M Brenner (2008), 185-194. [recommended]
6. Edith B. Gelles (ed.) *The Letters of Abigaill Levy Franks*, (2004) [recommended]

7. Laura A. Leibman, *Messianism, Secrecy and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life* (2012). [recommended]

[NOTE: 9/10 IS UNIVERSITY MONDAY – CLASS IN SESSION]

III. The Revolution and Its Impact (9/16)

1. Sarna, *AmJud*, 31-61
2. Zola, 31-66, 79-80.
3. **W:** J.D. Sarna, “The Democratization of American Judaism,” *New Essays in American Jewish History* (2010), 95-108.
4. **W:** Richard Morris, “The Role of the Jew in the American Revolution in Historical Perspective,” in G. Rosen, *Jewish Life in America* (1987), 8-27. [Recommended]
5. **W:** S.Chyet, “The Political Rights of the Jews in the United States,” *American Jewish Archives* 10 (April 1958), 14-75. [Recommended]
6. **W:** E.Eitches, “Maryland’s Jew Bill,” *American Jewish Historical Q.* 60 (March 1971), 258-280. [Recommended]
7. **W:** Sarna & Dalin, *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience*, 61-97. [Recommended]

[NOTE – ANALYSIS PAPER DUE ON 9/21]

[NOTE – NO CLASS ON 9/29 – BRANDEIS MONDAY.]

IV. Central European Immigration (9/30)

1. Sarna, *AmJud*, 62-102
2. Sarna, Sarna *AJE*, 41-81
3. Zola, 69-92.
4. **W:** Tobias Brinkmann, “‘German Jews?’ Reassessing the History of Nineteenth Century Jewish Immigrants in the United States,” *Transnational Traditions*, eds. Ava F. Kahn & Adam Mendelsohn (2014), 144-164.
5. Hasia Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration* (1995) recommended
6. Lance Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (1995) recommended
7. **W:** Israel Tabak, “Rabbi Abraham Rice of Baltimore,” *Tradition* 7 (Summer 1965), 100-120 Recommended
8. *Take a look online at the Isaac M. Wise Papers* (<http://americanjewisharchives.org/collections/wise/home.php>) and the *Isaac Leeser Papers* (<http://ubwebser.caajs.upenn.edu/>)

V. Union & Disunion (10/12)

1. Sarna, *AmJud*, 103-124
2. Zola, 93-128
3. **W:** Adam Mendelsohn, “Beyond the Battlefield: Reevaluating the Legacy of the Civil War for American Jews,” *American Jewish Archives* 64 (2012), 83-111.
4. **W:** Dianne Ashton, “Shifting Veils: Religion, Politics and Womanhood in the Civil War Writings of American Jewish Women”

[NOTE: MIDTERN PRIMARY SOURCE PAPER DUE ON OCTOBER 14; OCTOBER 7 IF YOU WANT FEEDBACK TO REWRITE.]

VI. Reconstruction, Awakening, Redefining Reform (10/19)

1. Sarna, *AmJud*, 124-151
2. **W:** Sarna, *A Great Awakening*
3. Sarna, *AJE*, 84-112
4. Zola, 113-117, 153-158, 165-169.

5. **W:** Michael R. Cohen, "Cotton, Capital and Ethnic Networks: Jewish Economic Growth in the Postbellum Gulf South," *American Jewish Archives* 64 (2012), 113-136.

[NOTE: PROSPECTUS FOR FINAL RESEARCH PAPER IS DUE ON OCTOBER 21ST.]

VII. East European Immigration (10/26)

1. Sarna, *AmJud*, 151-207
2. Sarna, *AJE*, 117-82
3. Zola, 129-151, 170-180
4. **W:** Shelly Tenenbaum, "Borrowers or Lenders Be: Jewish Immigrant Women's Credit Networks"
5. **W:** Alice Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable"

VIII. From the Great War through the Great Depression [11/9]

1. Sarna, *AmJud*, 208-258
2. Sarna, *AJE*, 197-270
3. Zola, 181-242
4. **W:** Beth Wenger, "Budgets, Boycotts, and Babies: Jewish Women in the Great Depression," in *American Jewish Women's History*, ed. P. Nadell (2003), 185-200.
5. **W:** Regina Stein, "The Road to Bat Mitzvah in America"
6. **W:** Jenna W. Joselit, "The Jewish Priestess and Ritual"

IX. Confronting the Holocaust [11/18]

1. Sarna, *AmJud*, 258-271
2. Sarna, *AJE*, 273-292
3. Zola, 243-274
4. **B:** Richard Breitman & Allan Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (2014)

X Postwar Judaism and Jewish Life [11/30]

1. Sarna, *AmJud*, 272-374
2. Sarna, *AJE*, 293-355
3. Zola, 275-436
4. **W:** Paula Hyman, "Jewish Feminism Faces the American Women's Movement," in *American Jewish Women's History*, ed. P. Nadell (2003), 297-312.
5. Tom W. Smith, *Jewish Distinctiveness in America: A Statistical Portrait* (2005)[available online at <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/Studies/details.cfm?StudyID=617>]
6. Pew Research Center, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans* (2013) [available online at <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/10/jewish-american-survey-full-report.pdf>]

[NOTE: FINAL RESEARCH PAPER IS DUE BY DECEMBER 2ND; PLEASE SUBMIT BY NOVEMBER 23RD IF YOU WANT ADVANCED FEEDBACK.]

XI A Look Ahead [12/9]

BRIEF ANALYSIS PAPER

Due September 21, 2015

Brief (500-750 words.) Analysis Paper due: Read Paul Finkelman's article, "A Land that Needs People for its Increase" (under week 1), Why does he think that Peter Stuyvesant sought to expel Jews from New Amsterdam and why did the Dutch West India Company overrule him? Is his argument persuasive?

Why or why not? Make sure that you support your argument with *footnoted* references. Do *not* just summarize the Finkelman article. Instead, focus on shaping a coherent, well-conceptualized argument supported by your reading. *Be sure to use quotation marks around any direct quotes and to footnote them appropriately.*

MIDTERM PRIMARY SOURCE PAPER

Due October 7, if you are submitting draft; final paper on October 14. [Be sure to submit both first draft and final draft if you wrote both.]

This year we are using a new documentary reader by Gary Zola and Marc Dollinger. Pretend we are living a thousand years from now, and you suddenly uncover this collection and are using it to understand the interesting “ancient” people known as American Jews. Your assignment is to select one document, or a small group of documents, read it/them very closely, and write a paper that (a) introduces your document(s). (b) annotates your document(s) and (c) discusses its/their significance for understanding 18th or 19th century America (do *not* select a 20th century source). Be sure to explain any unusual terms or names in the document and explain how the document helps us to understand American Jewish life. You are encouraged to use secondary sources to help provide **suitable background and context** for your document. Use **footnotes to explain anything in your document that requires an explanation, and to mention the sources (primary and secondary) that you are employing in your research.** Unusual and historically revealing documents are more likely to succeed than routine boring ones. Be sure to say what pages of the Zola/Dollinger volume you are using. Note that if Zola & Dollinger only provide “selections” you are welcome to look up the entire document and present it. In that case, please supply a copy. [3-10 pages of writing should suffice]

RESEARCH PAPER

Select one of the following research projects. You must report your choice, in writing, by **October 21st**. Spell out in your prospectus what you plan to research, what questions you plan to ask, and what sources you plan to consult. Students may submit a draft of their paper to their TA by **November 23rd** if they want preliminary comments. **Last day to submit papers is December 2nd. Please submit in hard copy and in electronic form.** *Be sure to use quotation marks around any direct quotes and to footnote your sources appropriately.*

Option #1 – Trace any theme in American Jewish life based on materials in “Jewish Life in America” that you can find under the databases page of the Brandeis library catalog ([http://www.jewishlife.amdigital.co.uk/resources.library.brandeis.edu/](http://www.jewishlife.amdigital.co.uk/resources/library.brandeis.edu/) and/or the 19th Century Masterfile; the on-line edition of *The Occident* (<http://www.jpress.org.il/publications/OCC-en.asp>); 19th century US newspapers; Proquest’s holdings of American Jewish newspapers; or other primary sources. Possible topics include: “Jewish-Christian Relations,” “Jews and Christian Missionaries,” “Jewish Religious Life,” “Jewish Women,” “Southern Jewish Life,” “Jewish economic life” and “American Jewish Culture,” but many other topics are possible; use your imagination. Make sure to use secondary sources

to provide context and background. Remember that your job is both to present your primary data and to analyze it based upon close reading of the texts. The point is to develop a theme in American Jewish history based on a careful study of *original sources*. [Note: Do not use material from midterm paper. This paper must be in narrative form.]

Option #2 – Trace any theme dealing with American Jewry and the Civil War based on the primary materials available at: <http://www.theoccident.com/civilwar.htm> or other data bases (see civil war data bases on library website). For background, be sure to look up B.W.Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, and R.Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, or J.D.Sarna and A. Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Civil War*. Remember that your job is both to present your primary data and to analyze it based upon close reading of the texts. The point is to develop a theme in American Jewish history based on a careful study of *original sources*.

Option #3 – Trace any theme in American Jewish life (1895-1899) using the on-line edition of *The American Jewess* (available at www.jwa.org). This was the first English-language Jewish periodical aimed at women, and it is full of interesting material bearing on women's history. While *The American Jewess* will be your main source, you certainly want to use secondary sources to provide context and background. Remember that your job is both to present your primary data and to analyze it through close reading of the texts. The point is to develop a theme in American Jewish history based on a careful study of *original sources*.

Option #4–Trace any theme in American Jewish life using online JTA: Global News Service of the Jewish People (1923-present) or other Jewish newspapers and periodicals online (see listing below). Be sure to use secondary sources to provide context and background. Remember that your job is both to present your primary data and to analyze it based upon close reading of the texts. The point is to develop a theme in American Jewish history based on a careful study of *original sources*.

Option #5 – Compare the published histories of several American synagogues (the library has many such histories in its collection; for a bibliography see J.D. Sarna & A.S.Korros, *American Synagogue History*; see also K.Olitzky, *The American Synagogue: A Historical Dictionary & Sourcebook*). Try to explain why changes took place, what influenced the different synagogues, who the agents of change were, and so forth, making sure to note and explain both similarities and differences. For background on the study of congregations, see J.Wind and J.Lewis, *American Congregations*.

Option #6 – Compare any issue or period in American Judaism with a parallel issue or period in the history of at least one other American faith. (For example: religious challenges faced by immigrant Jews and immigrant Catholics or Muslims; the limits of religious liberalism in Reform Judaism and Unitarianism; the problem of “Americanization” in Judaism and Catholicism; the issue of women's ordination in Judaism and Protestantism.)

Option #7 – Use one of the microfilm collections of documents (letters of Louis Brandeis, Henrietta Szold, Louis Marshall etc.) available at Brandeis, or the online editions of the Isaac Leeser or Isaac M. Wise papers, and analyze in terms of the themes of the course. What can you learn from this material about American Judaism? How does the correspondence illuminate an era or a theme? [For a list of microfilm collections of American Jewish manuscripts in the Brandeis library, see the library's home page].

Option #8 – Use one of the volumes of American Hebrew responsa or sermons or related works to shed light on American Jewish life. Y. Goldman, *Hebrew Printing in America* is a fine guide to this material. Full texts of many primary sources are available at www.Hebrewbooks.org. Only those with good Hebrew skills and some familiarity with rabbinic texts should select this option.

Option #9 – Select a research project of your own choosing. The project must utilize primary sources, ask significant questions, and be doable in one semester. Students are advised to discuss these projects with the instructor. Approval of the one-page prospectus outlining the subject is essential.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Brandeis databases: Jewish Life in America (primary sources); Proquest Historical Newspapers – *American Hebrew, American Israelite, Jewish Advocate, Jewish Exponent, Jewish Messenger*. See also JSTOR for *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* and *American Jewish History*. Many other data bases in US history contain valuable material.

<http://www.jta.org/jta-archive/archive-page> - archives of JTA: Global News Service of Jewish People, from 1923-present

<http://web.nli.org.il/sites/JPress/English/Pages/default.aspx> - Historical Jewish Press site - Growing number of American Jewish newspapers in English, Hebrew, Ladino & Yiddish [*Including Bnai Brith Messenger, Chicago Sentinel, Occident, Jewish Morning Journal (Yid), Die Wahrheit, La Amerika, El Progresso*]

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/> - on-line exhibit covering all of American Jewish history with excellent pictures and some primary documents

<http://www.jewish-history.com/Default.htm> - fine collection of materials on 19th century, particularly Civil War and Westward expansion; also ten volumes of *The Occident* on-line.

<http://www.americanjewisharchives.org> – home page of American Jewish Archives

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/> - American Jewish Committee on-line archives. Contains wonderful documents and sound archives, as well as the full text of all volumes of the *American Jewish Year Book* (1899-present)

<http://www.ajhs.org/> - homepage of the American Jewish Historical Society

<http://www.cjh.org/academic/findingaids/ajhs/> -- Selected finding aids of the American Jewish Historical Society's archival collections

<http://www.jwa.org/> - home page of Jewish Women's Archive (and access to *The American Jewess*).

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/> - excellent collection of American Hebraica all digitized, including some English language Orthodox texts and magazines

<http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/morais/index.cfm> - The ledger of Sabato Morais, first President of Jewish Theological Seminary. Excellent primary source.

<http://www.jtsa.edu/library/digitalcollections.shtml> - two excellent digital collections: 100 rare American Jewish pamphlets and images of Jews in American newspapers. Excellent primary sources

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/> - important collection of sources concerning the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. See also *Triangle*, by David Von Drehle.

<http://www.celebrate350.org/> - contains useful material bearing on American Jewish history and life, compiled for 350th anniversary of Jews in America. See especially the listing of "traveling and online exhibits."

<http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/collections/exhibits/tam/JLC/opener.html> - Deals with the Jewish Labor Committee and the battle against Nazism. Brandeis has both microfilms and published primary sources from the Jewish Labor Committee fully documenting its activities

http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/University_Library/exhibits/yiddish/ - exhibit of American Yiddish sheet music

<http://www.jewishwomenexhibit.org/journey.asp> - Exhibit on East European Jewish immigrant women's lives in Midwest [see L.Schloff, *And Prairie Dogs Weren't Kosher*]

<http://www.fathom.com/course/21701756/index.html> - Illustrated on-line course based on Deborah Dash Moore's *G.I.Jews*

<http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/jewwom/jwmain.htm> - Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Archival Resources on the History of Jewish Women in America, compiled by Phyllis Holman Weisbard. This takes viewers to the 2004 update to Weisbard's 1997 bibliography which first appeared in *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*.

http://www.jewishlaborcommittee.org/2006/01/readings_on_the_american_jewis.html - Bibliography re American Jewish Labor Movement

www.loc.gov/ammem - American memory site of Library of Congress. A search under “Jews” and “Judaism” will turn up hundreds of items (many hundreds more are listed under separate headings – e.g. Brandeis)

<http://pjn.library.cmu.edu/> - Pittsburgh Jewish newspaper project (1895- present) newspapers with some search capacity.

<http://israelite.galileo.usg.edu/israelite/search/> - [Southern Israelite \(1929-1986\) - Atlanta newspaper with good search engine](#)

<http://www.ohiomemory.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/ojc> - [Columbus] Ohio Jewish Chronicle, 1922-1994

<http://www.djnfoundation.org/the-archive/> - *Detroit Jewish News*, 1942 –

<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/jewishnewspapers> - *Jewish Floridian* (1927-90) – search using “text search”

http://jhssc.org/Jews_of_SC_in_Print.html - Bibliography on Jews of South Carolina with some full texts.

<http://lowcountrydigital.library.cofc.edu/web/browse/all/index.php> - Zionism in Charleston and other collections.

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> - Library of Congress site on American newspapers 1836-1923.

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn94051168/> - *The Jewish South* 1893-1899

<http://www.jpress.org.il/publications/OCC-en.asp> - *The Occident*

For other urls, see <http://www.usa-people-search.com/content-jewish-history-resources.aspx>