

## **CS 562: Jewish Social Research: Trends and Analysis**

HUC-JIR School of Jewish Nonprofit Management

Spring 2015

Tuesdays, 9-11:20am, room 025

Instructor: Sarah Bunin Benor

### **Course Description:**

This class is designed to expose students to social science research on contemporary American Jews, communities, and institutions. Students are expected to:

- 1) become critical consumers of such research
- 2) obtain the skills and experience to conduct their own research and
- 3) learn about trends and issues among contemporary American Jews.

Students will be introduced to the capstone project (thesis) requirement and will have an opportunity to begin their research.

### **Required Texts:**

Creswell, John W. 2002. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (older, but still good; available used very cheap from Amazon [here](#)).

Fishman, Sylvia Barack. 2000. *Jewish Life and American Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Wolfson, Ron. 2013. *Relational Judaism: Using the Power of Relationships to Transform the Jewish Community*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights.

Other readings, available on Sakai: <http://huc.cle.rsmart.com> and other websites.

### **Assignments** (explained in detail below):

1. 1-page proposal(s) of one or two potential research topics.
- 2-7. Six brief exercises in various research methods (interview, participant observation, survey design, annotated bibliography, data analysis, thesis review), preferably related to the student's potential capstone project topic.
8. Final paper: Proposal of the student's capstone project/thesis (or a comparable hypothetical research project) with details of methodology and preliminary literature review (total suggested length: 12-15 pages)

Note: Most assignments are due on Thursdays. Please note them in your calendars.

Assignments are due via Sakai, unless otherwise noted.

### **Grading:**

You will receive a letter grade for this class. Because the class is driven by discussion, it is crucial that students complete all reading assignments and participate actively in class.

Class participation: 30%:

- Quantity: Does the student participate regularly?
- Quality: Do the student's comments show understanding of and engagement with the material?
- Evidence of preparation: Has the student completed the readings in a thorough and thoughtful manner?
- Overall contribution to the class: Does the student contribute positively to the class vibe in a way that is not overbearing and not distracted?

Assignments 2-7: 30% (5% each)  
Assignment 8: 40%

**Laptop/tablet policy:**

Electronic devices can enhance classroom learning by allowing students to access readings without using paper, to visit specific websites on the instructor's request, and to take notes in an easily retrievable and searchable format. However, these devices have the potential to serve as a significant distraction for you, for those around you, and for me as instructor. When presenting ideas in class, I often gauge students' comprehension and responses by looking at their facial expressions. If students are reacting to a facebook post, email, or website, rather than to the classroom conversation, this can get confusing. To minimize such distractions, I maintain the following rules for laptops, tablets, and phones during class:

- 1) If you feel that you are able to use a laptop/tablet/phone during class without distracting yourself or others, you may do so.
- 2) All notifications must be turned off. This includes calls, emails, text messages, Google Hangouts, Skype, games, facebook, twitter, and all other social media.
- 3) You may not use any of these services during class, and you may not visit websites that are not directly related to class activities. If you think of something you must look up or convey to a friend, write yourself a note.
- 4) If you find that others are using their devices in a way that is distracting to you, I request that you let them (or me) know.
- 5) If I find that you seem distracted by your device, I will ask you to close it/turn it off. If this happens multiple times, I will restrict your use of electronic devices in class for the rest of the semester.

**Contact Info:**

Best way to reach me: e-mail [sbenor.huc@gmail.com](mailto:sbenor.huc@gmail.com) or [sbenor@huc.edu](mailto:sbenor@huc.edu) (they both go to the same account).

Office hours: by appointment after class or Wednesday or Thursday (don't be shy!).

Office in east wing of the basement. Office phone: 213-765-2187.

**Schedule**

Please complete the reading before each class, and bring a copy to class (print or electronic format).

**INTRODUCTION**

Jan 13: Introduction to the class

What makes an issue an issue among American Jews; types of research questions and methods; SJNM theses.

*Pre-class assignment: Explore and register for email updates from [eJewishPhilanthropy](#), the [Berman Jewish Policy Archive](#), and a Jewish newspaper or news service, such as the Los Angeles [Jewish Journal](#), [JTA](#), or the [Forward](#).*

Jan 20: Research approaches; literature search

Creswell, John W. 2002. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 13-62.

Fishman, Sylvia Barack. 2000. *Jewish Life and American Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press. 1-13.

Prell, Riv-Ellen. 2000. "Developmental Judaism: Challenging the Study of American Jewish Identity in the Social Sciences." *Contemporary Jewry* 21. 33-40 (intro parts).  
<http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=2884>

Jan 27: Ideological stances: traditionalists/survivalists v. transformationists

Zelkowitz, Tali E. 2013. "Beyond a Humpty Dumpty Narrative: In Search of New Rhymes and Reasons in the Research of Contemporary Jewish Identity Formation." *International Journal of Jewish Education Research (IJJER)*. 21-46.  
<http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=21247>

Find, read, and bring to class two opposing responses to the 2013 Pew study ("A Portrait of Jewish Americans"), representing survivalist and transformationist approaches. Some venues to search: *Forward*, *Mosaic*, *Jewish Journal*, *eJewishPhilanthropy*, *American Jewish Yearbook 2014*.

Thurs, Jan 29: *Assignment #1 due (proposal)*

## QUALITATIVE METHODS

Feb 3: Relational Judaism

Wolfson, Ron. 2013. *Relational Judaism: Using the Power of Relationships to Transform the Jewish Community*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights. 1-44, 59-61, 64-70, 85-241.

Feb 10: Ethnography; trends among contemporary Jews

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1-16.

Benor, Sarah Bunin. 2011. "Young Jewish Leaders in Los Angeles: Strengthening the Jewish People in Conventional and Unconventional Ways." In *The New Jewish Leaders: Reshaping the American Jewish Landscape*, ed., Jack Wertheimer. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press. 112-158.  
<http://huc.edu/sites/default/files/people/pdf/benor/Benor%20Young%20Jewish%20Leaders%20Book.pdf>.

Benor, Sarah Bunin. 2012. "Trends Among Contemporary American Jews, Focusing on Young Adults in Los Angeles." Los Angeles Jewish Federation, BJPA. 4 pages.  
<http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=14339>

Feb 17: Interviewing; engaging young adults in Jewish communal life

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press. 73-89, 111-118.

Barton, Rachel. 2014. *Beyond the Bus: Emerging Strategies for Engaging Birthrighters in Jewish Communal Life*. HUC-JIR School of Jewish Nonprofit Management Masters Thesis. <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=20776>

*By now you should have scheduled your interview between Feb 18 and Mar 2 and your observation between Feb 26 and Mar 10.*

*Thurs Feb 19: Assignment #2a due (interview guide)*

## **QUANTITATIVE METHODS**

Feb 24: Introduction to survey research; Pew study

Scheuren, Fritz. 2004. "What Is a Survey?" National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. 27-50, 63-68. <https://www.whatisasurvey.info/download.htm>

Pew Research Center. 2013. "A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews." <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>.

Mar 3: Survey creation

Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Stanley Presser. 2003. "The Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29. 65-88.

[https://www.extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/\\_docs/articles/Science%20of%20Asking%20Questions%20Article.pdf](https://www.extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/_docs/articles/Science%20of%20Asking%20Questions%20Article.pdf)

Browse through the Jewish Survey Question Bank (<http://jewishquestions.bjpa.org/>), which will be presented in class by its creator, Steven M. Cohen.

*Thurs Mar 5: Assignment #2b due (interview summary)*

Mar 10 (HUC Founders Day): Counting American Jews

Find the following articles using the USC library database:

DellaPergola, Sergio. 2013. "How Many Jews in the United States? The Demographic Perspective." *Contemporary Jewry* 33. 15-42.

Saxe, Leonard and Elizabeth Tighe. 2013. "Estimating and Understanding the Jewish Population in the United States: A Program of Research." *Contemporary Jewry* 33. 43-62.

*Thurs Mar 12: Assignment #3 due (observation writeup)*

Mar 17: Data analysis; quantitative research on organizations

Pyrczak, Fred. 2002. *Success at Statistics: A Worktext with Humor*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing. Selections on Sakai (about 30 pages).

Find, read, and bring to class a quantitative study of your choice relevant to Jewish nonprofits.

Mar 24: Intermarriage, secularism

Phillips, Bruce. 2010. "Accounting for Jewish Secularism: Is a New Cultural Identity Emerging?" *Contemporary Jewry* 30. 63-85.  
Phillips, Bruce. 2013. "New Perspectives on Studying Inter-marriage in the United States." *Contemporary Jewry* 33:1-2. 103-119.

*Thurs, Mar 26: Assignment #4 due (survey)*

## **PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH**

Mar 31: Writing

Creswell, John W. 2002. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 73-118.

The Thesis Whisperer. 2011. "How to Write 1000 Words a Day (and not go bat shit crazy)." <http://thesiswhisperer.com/2011/03/24/how-to-write-1000-words-a-day-and-not-go-bat-shit-crazy/>

*Thurs, Apr 2: Assignment #5 due (annotated bibliography)*

Apr 7: No class: Passover break. But, by noon today:

*Please take your classmates' surveys online and find at least 3 other people to take your pilot survey and give you feedback on it. Then use their data for your data analysis assignment.*

Apr 14: Jewish and American

Fishman, Sylvia Barack. 2000. *Jewish Life and American Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press. 15-121.

*Thurs, Apr 16: Assignment #6 due (data analysis)*

Apr 21: Jewish and American

Fishman, Sylvia Barack. 2000. *Jewish Life and American Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press. 123-190.

Apr 28: The capstone requirement

A SJCS/SJNM masters thesis of your choice. All theses are on reserve in the library (cannot be checked out), and most are also in the stacks (can be checked out). Several of the more recent ones are on the Berman Jewish Policy Archive. See list on Sakai.

*Assignment #7 due – in-class presentation of thesis review*

May 5: Individual meetings (optional)

*Thurs, May 7: Assignment #8 due (capstone proposal)*

## Guide for Assignments

1. One or two 1-page proposals of possible research topics (expecting that your topic may change during and/or after the course). Each proposal should include:
  - a. Working title
  - b. Discussion of topic, research questions, why you're interested in this topic
  - c. Ideas for methods you might use and how they will help you answer your research questions
  - d. How you plan to complete assignments 2-4 and 7 using this topic (observe a meeting at X org, interview X person, create a survey about X for X population, read X thesis). If your topic is strictly qualitative or quantitative, choose a related topic for the other assignments.
  - e. At least five articles or books you might use in your research.
2. Interview
  - a. Interview guide (1 page): brief statement of who you plan to interview, your goals for the interview and how they relate to your research questions, and 10-15 questions you expect to ask in the interview.
  - b. Interview summary (at least 2 pages): summary of the information you collected from the interview; brief discussion of what you learned about interviewing as a research method, including an evaluation of your own interviewing skills.
3. Fieldnotes from mini-observation at a research site (at least tangentially) related to your research question (3-4 pages). Components (not necessarily in this order):
  - a. Research question(s) for this observation (may be different from overall research questions)
  - b. Description of physical surroundings
  - c. Description of characters
  - d. Discussion of events/interactions
  - e. Other details relevant to your research topic
  - f. Most significantly, detailed analysis of what you observed, especially in relation to your research question(s) for this observation
  - g. What you learned from this assignment about ethnographic observation
4. Survey design (2-6 pages + online questionnaire administered to your classmates, not to the actual research population)
  - a. Research population: describe who they are, # of people
  - b. Sampling strategy: How will you distribute your survey? Will you distribute it to your entire research population? If not, how will you determine who is in your sample (i.e., who is invited to complete the survey)? How will you make sure that various populations (independent variables) are represented? If you don't get the sample you need, how will you change your plan?
  - c. Questionnaire (at least 15 items): Posted on SurveyMonkey.com (login info to be distributed in class)

- d. Hypotheses about responses/correlations. Think beyond “The majority of respondents will respond X.” Hypotheses should include correlations like “Those who answer ‘yes’ to question 1 will be more likely to answer ‘Disagree or Strongly Disagree’ to question 14 than those who answer ‘no’ to question 1.” Every question should be mentioned at least once here. If you have no hypotheses about a question, maybe it does not need to be in the survey.
5. Annotated bibliography (4-6 pages)  
At least 10 books or articles that you might cite in your thesis, listed in full, consistent bibliographic format, with detailed notes on each. Your notes should be oriented toward your thesis topic and should include quotes that you might use.
6. Data analysis (1 page). Your classmates will participate in your survey (pretending they are part of your research population). Then you will test 2 important hypotheses from your survey using the SurveyMonkey data analysis tools or data analysis software (SPSS, SAS, JMP, etc.). At least one of the hypotheses must involve a correlation between two questions on your survey. Present your analysis in narrative form, including at least one table or bar graph and discussion of the results. Here are some examples of the types of hypotheses regarding correlations that you might test (from my survey on language and identity):
  - a. Reform Jews are more likely to say “temple,” and Conservative Jews are more likely to say “synagogue.”
  - b. Younger Jews are more likely than older Jews to use Israeli Hebrew words.
  - c. New Yorkers are more likely than non-New Yorkers to use Yiddish-influenced syntax, like “I don’t know from that” and “She has what to say.”
7. SJCS/SJNM thesis review (presented orally in class: 5-7 minutes; no writeup).  
Read a past thesis, preferably one relevant to your research topic, and evaluate it.
  - a. Summary: Research questions, methods, results, perceived audiences.
  - b. Evaluation: Are the research questions clearly articulated? Are the methods appropriate to answer them? Is the writing engaging, concise, and error-free? Is the topic useful for the field of Jewish Nonprofit Management / Jewish Communal Service? Is the literature review relevant to the topic and well integrated into the thesis?
8. Final paper: a 12-15-page proposal of your masters thesis (or a similar research project). Components:
  - a. Working title
  - b. Author
  - c. Introduction: statement of research questions, why this topic is important, why you chose it.
  - d. Literature review (3-5 pages): discussion of a good chunk of the relevant literature, including how your research fits in and fills gaps. You might also explain how you plan to use the literature in your thesis (e.g., to make your case for the need for a program, as background information about the history of your topic, etc.). This section should be in narrative form with

parenthetical citations, NOT a list of books with a paragraph about each. You should cite *at least 10* articles, books, or chapters (agency websites and opinion pieces do not count but are allowed as primary sources).

- e. Proposed methods and expected results (2-4 pages): *detailed* discussion of how you plan to research this topic, goals of each method you plan to use, and how they will help you answer your research questions. If you plan to use observation, discuss what events you will observe and what you will focus on. If you plan to use a survey or interviews, explain who will be in your research population and sample and how you will find them and convince them to participate. Give examples of questions you will ask and hypotheses about responses or correlations. Discuss your expectations for findings, based on anecdotal observations, previous literature, or your own pilot studies.
- f. Practical applications and audience: how your research might impact the field of Jewish Nonprofit Management / Jewish Communal Service, whom you expect to direct your writing to and distribute the final product to, and potential venues for your brief article.
- g. Format and outline: what you expect your final product to look like (traditional thesis, resource guide, business plan, etc.). Detailed outline of chapters/sections (this may change later, but it's good to envision it in advance).
- h. Detailed timeline: for conducting your research, building on the uniform SJNM capstone timeline. When will you complete each portion of your literature review? If you have a survey, when will you draft it, pre-test it, edit it, administer it, and analyze it? If you are doing interviews, when will you finalize your interview protocol, contact interviewees, schedule interviews, finish interviewing, transcribe/summarize, and analyze them?
- i. Access and ethical issues: how you plan to gain access to the community, ethical issues you expect may arise and how you plan to deal with them.
- j. Bibliography: list all books and articles cited in the proposal. Follow consistent guidelines (APA or a similar system). Use within-text parenthetical citations (e.g., Cohen, 1998, p. 17), rather than footnotes.
- k. Appendix: Consent forms: Attach the consent form(s) you plan to use.

### **How the proposals will be evaluated**

1. good idea for a research project with potential for impact on Jewish nonprofits
2. clear articulation of your research questions
3. appropriate proposed use of method(s), good sense of how the method(s) will help you attain your research goals
4. strong literature review well integrated into your proposal
5. clear, concise, and engaging writing

### **Suggested regular reading**

As Jewish communal leaders, you will be better able to serve your constituencies by keeping up with academic and popular writings about them. In addition to your local



Jewish newspaper and publications in your field of specialty (e.g., social work, business, etc.), I recommend the following, including their email update services:

*EJewishPhilanthropy*

*Forward*

*Mosaic*

*Sh'ma*

*Journal of Jewish Communal Service*

*Tablet*

*Jerusalem Post*

*Contemporary Jewry*

*Moment*

### **Jewish communal resources**

Berman Jewish Policy Archive: <http://www.bjpa.org/>. **Amazing** treasure trove of articles of interest to Jewish professionals. Monthly email updates.

Berman Jewish Databank: <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/>. Local Jewish and national population studies, FAQs, and useful reports on Jewish demography and trends.

Jewish Survey Question Bank: <http://jewishquestions.bjpa.org/>. Database of Jewish communal surveys and survey questions that can be used for future surveys.

### **Thesis writing resources**

Resource on writing and formatting, including APA format:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Advice on writing a thesis (geared toward undergrad earth science students, but still useful): [http://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/~martins/sen\\_sem/thesis\\_org.html](http://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/~martins/sen_sem/thesis_org.html)